

Open Call for Consultancy Services

- Title:** State of play and potential options for recognition of pre-University degrees in the Western Balkans
- Contracting Authority:** Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat
- Duration:** February – April 2023
- Application Deadline:** 31 January 2023
- Eligible:** Respective consulting companies/consortia of individual consultants
- Reference Number:** 102-022

TERMS OF REFERENCE:

I BACKGROUND

The purpose of the assignment is to support the implementation of Common Regional Market (hereinafter: CRM) Action Plan 2021-2024, endorsed at Sofia Summit of the Berlin Process in November 2020, which aims to enable an unobstructed flow of goods, services, capital and highly skilled labour, making the region more attractive for investment and trade, while accelerating convergence of the Western Balkans (WB) with the European Union (EU).

The objective of this assignment is to commission technical assistance on exploring the options for recognition of pre-University diplomas in the Western Balkans as a direct support to the CRM action Agreement on Access to Study in Higher Education.

The assessment will be delivered to the Western Balkans governments through the Working Group on Recognition of Academic Qualifications to facilitate the process of discussion on the next steps and way forward.

II DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Objectives and scope of the assignment

The objective of this assignment is to both assess the current state of play on recognition of pre-University degrees in the Western Balkans and provide policy options on achieving recognition of the said degrees in a regionally all-inclusive manner.

In achieving the main objective of the assignment, specific tasks include but are not limited to the following:

- 1) Provide a concise and factual assessment of the current state of play of recognition of pre-University degrees in the Western Balkans among the economies; including:
 - a. Provision of the framework used within each of WB economies to recognise pre-University degrees for continuing education of students in any other WB economy;
 - b. List any existing bilateral agreements on recognition of pre-University degrees, if any, as well as any plans to do so;
 - c. Identify any potential legal or policy challenges in each of WB economies related to recognition of pre-University degrees;
- 2) Elaborate policy options on recognition of pre-University degrees, including EU best practices;
- 3) Identify the model which leads to a semi-automatic recognition of pre-University degrees;
- 4) Propose the most feasible option for WB economies in recognition of pre-University degrees.

The task will be implemented in close consultation with the RCC Secretariat.

The contracted bidder will report to the Expert on Human Capital Development at the Regional Cooperation Council.

Tasks/Deliverables

- *Methodology and detailed work plan*
- First draft by 25 February 2023
- Final draft by 20 April 2023

Timeframe

The engagement will be starting on early February and finishing by 20 April 2023.

Deliverable	Deadline/Timeframe
Detailed Work Plan	February 2023
First draft	February 2023
Revisions and reflection of comments	March 2023
Submission of the final document	April 2023

III COMPETENCIES

RCC is looking for consulting subjects with strong background in the relevant field, as well as in the educational systems and knowledge of and experience in the field of education policies and relevant EU standards in the Western Balkan economies.

Qualifications

Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Advanced university degree in the area of social and humanistic sciences.
Experience:	<p>Qualifications required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Minimum of 7 years of experience in similar tasks, including knowledge of education sector;Experience of working in more than one country in SEE will be considered an asset;<u>Proven analytical skills and ability to conceptualise and write concisely and clearly;</u>Proven communication and presentation skills and ability to work in an environment requiring liaison and collaboration with multiple actors including government representatives, businesses,

	international organisations, civil society institutions and other stakeholders.
Language requirements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fluency in English, as the official language of the RCC; ▪ Knowledge of other RCC languages is an advantage.
Other:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Familiar with MS Office applications.

Core competencies

- Demonstrates professional competence to meet responsibilities and post requirements and is conscientious and efficient in meeting commitments, observing deadlines and achieving results;
- Results-orientation: Plans and produces quality results to meet established goals, generates innovative and practical solutions to challenging situations;
- Communication: Excellent communication skills, including the ability to convey complex concepts and recommendations in a clear and persuasive style tailored to match different audiences;
- Team work: Ability to interact, establish and maintain effective working relations with a culturally diverse team; and
- Client orientation: Ability to establish and maintain productive partnerships with regional and national partners and stakeholders and pro-activeness in identifying the needs of beneficiaries and partners, as well as matching them to appropriate solutions.

Core values

- Demonstrates integrity and fairness by modelling RCC values and ethical standards;
- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability.

IV QUALITY CONTROL

Quality control by the Regional Cooperation Council

The consultants' outputs in the form of comprehensive research documents comprising targeted and tailor-made recommendations shall be reviewed by the Regional Cooperation Council. The approved final documents will be subject to a quality assessment by the Programme Department of the Regional Cooperation Council, upon whose endorsement the documents and deliverables will be distributed and made public.

V. APPLICATION RULES

The application needs to contain the following:

- Technical Offer;
- Financial Offer.

Technical Offer

For consulting companies and consortia of individual consultants:

- Company profile including a brief description (up to 2 pages) of the company. In case of a bidding consortium, the team leader should submit the profile of the consortium;
- Copy of Company's Registration Certificate (in case of consulting companies);
- In case of bidding consortia of individual consultants participating in this Call, they must indicate the members and show how the work is divided between them. Specifically, all members must name the team leader and authorise this member to represent the consortium and receive payments on behalf of the other members. A corresponding written authorisation, power of attorney must be attached to the bid;
- Financial records - company's balance sheet and profit-and-loss statement for the past 2 years (only in case of a bidding of consulting companies);
- CVs of experts, outlining relevant knowledge and experience as described in the Terms of References, along with contact details of referees;

- An outline work programme of a maximum of 3 pages. The Work Programme should include the initial outline of the content of the separate documents/action plans;
- List of references for relevant activities implemented over the past years demonstrating relevant experience in the subject matter;
- Application Submission Form (Annex I);
- Signed Statement of Availability (Annex II).

Financial Offer (Free format)

The financial offer should reflect the following:

- The figures should be expressed in EUR;
- Use a free format for the budget providing the global price for the work to be provided.
- Maximum budget should not exceed 20,000 EUR

NOTE:

- When preparing the financial offer, the applicant should take into account that the fee rates should be broadly consistent with the regional framework rates for these types of professional services.
- For companies from Bosnia and Herzegovina, VAT should be presented.
According to the Indirect Taxation Authority Instruction and its status of an international organisation, the Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat is entitled to VAT refund and is exempted from customs duties in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Submission of applications:

Applications need to be submitted by 31 January 2022, by 17:00 Central European Time to the following address ProcurementforRcc@rcc.int

- Please make sure that the application is submitted in two separate folders one containing Technical Offer and the other Financial Offer. The documents should be submitted in a form of copies of the originals.

VI. EVALUATION RULES:

- The consultancy will be awarded to the highest qualified bidder based on the relevance of skills and expertise to this assignment;
- The applications are evaluated following these criteria:

EVALUATION GRID	Maximum score
A. Technical Offer (A.1+A.2+A.3)	100
A.1. Work experience, references list: Relevant work experience; evidence of other contracts of the size comparable to that of the Call; experience with clients comparable to the Contracting Authority.	35
A.2. Quality and professional capacity of the consultant(s): CV(s) satisfy the criteria set forth in the Terms of Reference, education and experience demonstrate professional capacity and experience required.	35
A.3 Quality of the work plan: An outline of work programme describing the main issues, information, data sources, research and analytical tools to be employed by the author, as well as the timeline.	30
B. Financial Offer/ lowest price has maximum score	100

Score for offer X =

A: [Total quality score (out of 100) of offer X / 100] * 80

B: [Lowest price / price of offer X] * 20

In addition to the results of the technical and financial evaluation, a competency-based interview might be held with the selected bidder.

Information on selection of the most favourable bidder

The RCC Secretariat shall inform candidates and bidders of decisions reached concerning the award of the contract as soon as possible, including the grounds for any decision not to award a contract for which there has been competitive tendering or to recommence the procedure.

Standard letter of thanks for participation to unsuccessful bidders shall be sent within 15 days after the contract is signed with the awarded bidder.

The candidates and bidders wishing to receive a feedback may send a request within 15 days after receipt of the standard letter of thanks.

The request may be sent to the e-mail address ProcurementforRcc@rcc.int or to the address of the RCC Secretariat:

Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat
Attention to: Administration Department
Building of the Friendship between Greece and Bosnia and Herzegovina
Trg Bosne i Hercegovine 1/V
71000 Sarajevo
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Appeals procedure

Bidders believing that they have been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may petition the RCC Secretariat directly. The RCC Secretariat must reply within 15 days of receipt of the complaint.

The appeal request may be sent to the e-mail address ProcurementforRcc@rcc.int or to the address of the RCC Secretariat:

Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat
Attention to: Administration Department
Building of the Friendship between Greece and Bosnia and Herzegovina
Trg Bosne i Hercegovine 1/V
71000 Sarajevo
Bosnia and Herzegovina

ANNEX I:

APPLICATION SUBMISSION FORM

REF: 102-022 Open Call for Consultancy Services

Subject: State of play and potential options for recognition of pre-University degrees in the Western Balkans

One signed copy of this Application Submission Form must be supplied.

1 SUBMITTED by:

	Name(s) and address(es) of the bidder submitting this tender
Full Company Name or Name of the legal entity/consortia of individual consultants	

2 CONTACT PERSON (for this Call)

Name	
Surname	
Address	
Telephone	
Fax	
e-mail	

3 DECLARATION

[Company Name or Name of the Consortia of Individual Consultants] _____ hereby declares that we have examined and accepted without reserve or restriction the entire contents of the Open Call for Consultancy 102-022.

And we are not in one of the following situations:

- (a) Bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;

- (b) Have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment which has the force of res judicata;
- (c) Have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the Contracting Authority can justify;
- (d) Have not fulfilled obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the Contracting Authority or those of the country where the contract is to be performed;
- (e) Have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation or any other illegal activity.
- (f) Are civil servants or other agents of the public administration of the RCC Participants, regardless of the administrative situation, excluding us from being recruited as experts in contracts financed by the RCC Secretariat.

We offer to provide the services requested in the open call for consultancy on the basis of supplied documentation subject of this call, which comprise our technical offer and our financial offer.

Name and Surname	
Signature	
Date	

ANNEX II: STATEMENT OF AVAILABILITY

REF: 102-022

State of play and potential options for recognition of pre-University degrees in the Western Balkans

By representing the Entity _____ we agree to participate in the above-mentioned tender procedure. We further declare that we are able and willing to work for the period(s) foreseen for the position for which our CVs have been included in the event that this tender is successful, namely:

Full Name	Available from (Date)	Available until (Date)	Acceptance by signature	Number of man-days associated to each task from the ToR