



Open Call for Consulting Services

Title:	Support to the RCC Secretariat with Policy Analysis on biodiversity and nature conservation contributing to the development of WB Biodiversity Strategic Plan 2030
RCC Department:	Programme Department
Number of Consultants:	Consulting companies/bidding consortia of individual consultants or individual professionals
Reporting to:	RCC Secretariat
Duration:	December 2024 to January 2025
Application Deadline:	30 November 2024
Reference Number:	062-024

I. BACKGROUND

The Hamburg Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB), endorsed at the First GAWB Ministerial Meeting, and GAWB AP welcomed the strategic guidance provided in the Analytical Paper for the development of Western Balkans Biodiversity Strategic Plan (WBBSP) 2030, committing the WB6 to proceed with the development of WBBSP through the Biodiversity Task Force of the Western Balkans (BDTF WB) and Regional Working Group on GAWB (RWG GAWB).

IUCN has been tasked with coordination of the Protection of Nature and Biodiversity pillar, and will be coordinating the development of WBBSP in close cooperation with the BDTF WB and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) which has the overall steering and oversight role regarding the GAWB, in line with the Hamburg Declaration and in accordance with the division of responsibilities outlined in the updated Note on Governance, Coordination, Monitoring and Reporting of the GAWB Action Plan.

The development of WBBSP is a pivotal activity under the Protection of Nature and Biodiversity pillar of the GAWB Action Plan and represents a significant milestone in addressing the region's growing biodiversity loss and bolstering ecosystem resilience. WBBSP will be aligned within the broader framework of international and EU biodiversity standards, including the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), and most importantly the GAWB, specifically Action 51 under the Protection of Nature and Biodiversity pillar.

WBBSP aims to align the WB6 with these standards while fostering regional cooperation on biodiversity conservation. The governance structure for the development of this document is built on strong regional coordination through the BDTF WB and RWG GAWB. These intergovernmental platforms ensure that the plan is inclusive, transparent, and aligned with both regional priorities and global commitments.

This assignment involves conducting a comprehensive analysis of policy frameworks relevant to biodiversity and nature conservation in the Western Balkans Six, identifying gaps, areas for improvement, and opportunities to harmonise with EU and international policy frameworks, including the GAWB.

II. DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Objectives and scope of the assignment

This assignment will produce a comprehensive Policy Analysis that assesses legal and policy frameworks relevant to biodiversity and nature conservation in the Western Balkans Six, alignment with EU policies, Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, and other international standards. The Policy Analysis will contribute to the development of WBBSP by providing a strong foundation for aligning regional policies and enhancing regional cooperation within the framework of the GAWB Protection of Nature and Biodiversity pillar.

Specific Tasks

The tasks specified herewith are:

1. Review and Assessment of Current Legal and Policy Frameworks

1.1 Review existing biodiversity-related legal framework, including strategies and action plans in each Western Balkans 6. The review should focus on compliance with and integration of key international frameworks, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), EU Birds and Habitats Directives, and Natura 2000.

1.2 Analyse gaps in legal and institutional frameworks, focusing on areas critical for biodiversity conservation.

1.3 Provide a detailed overview of the network of protected areas, including their size, distribution, and representativeness of key ecosystems and species, in addition to major gaps in the region regarding the designation and effective management of protected and conserved areas, including terrestrial and marine OECMs.

1.4 Review the status of development of ecological networks, including identification of potential Natura 2000 sites.

1.5 Evaluate the legal frameworks for protecting threatened and endemic species, including the presence of recovery plans and legal protection against exploitation or trade, in addition to gaps in policy support for species protection, with an emphasis on threatened and endemic species.

1.6 Identify the WB6 agencies or bodies responsible for biodiversity management and assess their mandates.

1.7 Evaluate the capacities of WB6 institutions responsible for biodiversity management in terms of staffing and technical expertise. This includes identifying major gaps in resources, coordination mechanisms, and enforcement of biodiversity-related policies by means of a questionnaire or other suitable tools.

2. Alignment with EU Policies, GAWB and other international standards

2.1 Assess the alignment of WB6 policies with the GAWB, EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, and other relevant EU directives and Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). Map out areas where WB6 are meeting or falling short of these standards, especially in relation to protected area management, species recovery, and ecological networks, including commitments to protect 30% of land and sea areas and restore 25,000 km of rivers by 2030.

2.2 Assess the integration of GBF targets, especially related to ecosystem restoration, reducing threats to biodiversity, and improving the sustainable use of biodiversity resources.

3. Stakeholder Consultation and Coordination

3.1 Conduct stakeholder consultations with relevant government bodies, NGOs, civil society, and international organisations involved in policy-making and biodiversity conservation.

3.2 Liaise with the BDTF WB and RWG GAWB, and hold consultation meetings through IUCN and Regional Cooperation Council to validate data and gather insights from these stakeholders. This process should ensure that regional biodiversity strategies consider local needs and priorities.

Methodology

The experts are expected to propose the best methodological approach for undertaking this task. However, the following guiding principles should be taken into consideration:

1. Desk review/research and data collection, processing, validation, visualisation, and interpretation;
2. Communication/interviews/consultations with the representatives of regional organisations, national administrations and other relevant stakeholders in the respective areas to collect qualitative inputs;
3. Any other method applicable.

This assignment will be developed in close consultations with the RCC Secretariat in several stages.

RCC is responsible to provide all contacts necessary to fulfil the tasks provided in this Terms of Reference.

Lines of Communication

- The experts will report to the RCC Secretariat. Upon completion of activities as defined in the timeframe within the Terms of Reference, a detailed report will be prepared and sent to the RCC Secretariat for review and approval.
- Meeting with RCC experts will be organised to elaborate further on expectations and deliverables.

Timeframe

The following deliverables will be produced and transferred to the RCC Secretariat during the course of the assignment, as per the timeframe specified below.

III. REQUIRED OUTPUTS/REPORTING

	Deliverables¹	Due date
1.	Methodology, work plan, and stakeholder engagement plan.	10 December 2024
2.	An initial draft detailed report assessing current legal and policy frameworks, with an emphasis on their alignment with EU and international biodiversity standards. The report should also identify gaps in the legal, institutional and policy frameworks across the WB economies, with recommendations for improvement.	5 February 2025
3.	Based on the input from the BDTF and IUCN, and with reflected comments by the RCC Secretariat and RWG GAWB members, produce a consolidated report, with actionable recommendations for improving policy coherence and integration into the WBBSP 2030.	28 February 2025

IV. COMPETENCES

Expert Qualifications:

Criteria related to the experts delivering the service²

¹ The timeline for the deliverables is subject to change, and can be extended for 3. to March/April

² These criteria apply to the main expert(s) and not for administrative or logistical team members

Education:	<p>A Master’s degree in environmental sciences, engineering, economy, law, statistics, or other areas related to the subject of this assignment.</p> <p>A relevant PhD degree is an advantage.</p>
Experience:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimum of 10 years of relevant experience in biodiversity and nature conservation, especially in the context of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives, Natura 2000, and Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework; ▪ Experience in conducting biodiversity assessments, protected area management, and species recovery programmes. ▪ Experience in working with governments, statistical offices, regional organisations, and/or EU institutions on developing monitoring and reporting mechanisms in areas relevant to the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans is considered an advantage; ▪ At least two similar (in scope and complexity) projects completed in the last three years; ▪ Proven analytical skills, data collection, processing, verification and visualisation abilities; ▪ Demonstrable experience in writing and reporting on complex multi-sector or multi-country programmes implementation; ▪ Proven communication skills and ability to work in an environment requiring liaison and collaboration with multiple stakeholders including government representatives, businesses, civil society institutions, international and regional organisations and other stakeholders to collect and verify data, and consult on each deliverable; ▪ Familiarity with biodiversity governance challenges in the Western Balkans region is highly desirable.
Language requirements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fluency in written and spoken English, as the official language of the RCC; ▪ Knowledge of other RCC languages is desirable.
Other:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N.A.

Core Values

- Demonstrates integrity and fairness by modelling values and ethical standards;
- Independent and free from conflicts of interest in the responsibilities defined by the Terms of Reference;
- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability.

Core Competencies

- Demonstrates professional competence to meet responsibilities and post requirements and is conscientious and efficient in meeting commitments, observing deadlines and ,achieving results;

- Result-oriented; plans and produces quality results to meet the set goals, generates innovative and practical solutions to challenging situations;
- Communication: Excellent communication skills, including the ability to convey complex concepts and recommendations clearly;
- Teamwork: ability to interact, establish and maintain effective working relations in a culturally diverse team;
- Ability to establish and maintain productive partnerships with regional and national partners and stakeholders.

V. QUALITY CONTROL

The expert should ensure internal quality control during the implementation of the assignment. The quality control should ensure that the draft reports and deliverables comply with the above requirements and meet adequate quality standards before sending them to stakeholders for comments. The quality control should ensure consistency and coherence between findings, conclusions and, recommendations. It should also ensure that the findings reported are duly substantiated and that conclusions are supported by relevant judgment criteria.

The views expressed in the reports will be those of the contractor and will not necessarily reflect those of the Regional Cooperation Council. Therefore, a standard disclaimer reflecting this will be included in the reports. In this regard, the expert may or may not accept comments and/or proposals for changes received during the above consultation process. However, when comments/proposals for changes are not agreed by upon the expert, they should clearly explain the reasons for their final decision in a comments table.

VI. APPLICATION RULES

The application needs to contain the following:

- Technical Offer;
- Financial Offer.

Technical Offer

For companies and consortia of individual consultants or individual professionals:

- Company profile including a brief description (up to 2 pages) of the company. In the 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 authorized 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 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 5 pages describing the main issues, sources of information to be used, timeline and methodology;
- List of references for relevant activities implemented over the past years demonstrating relevant experience in the subject matter;
- Signed Statement of Availability (Annex I).

For individual consultants:

- Letter of interest;
- CV(s) including relevant knowledge and experience, as well as reference list including contact details (e-mail addresses) of referees;
- An outline work programme of a maximum of 5 pages describing the main issues, sources of information to be used, timeline and methodology.

Financial Offer (Free format)

The financial offer should reflect the following:

- All figures should be expressed in EUR;
- VAT amount, if applicable, should be presented.

When preparing the financial offer, the applicant should take into account the following:

- Maximum budget should not exceed EUR 20,000. The offers above the threshold will not be considered.
- Use a free format for the budget providing the global price for the work to be provided.

NOTE:

When preparing the financial offer, the applicant should take into account that the fee rates should be broadly consistent with the EU framework rates for these types of professional services for international consultants.

Submission of applications:

Applications need to be submitted by 30 November 2024. The offers should be submitted through the web site link Apply now.

VII. 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 outlined Terms of Reference, education and experience demonstrate professional capacity and experience required.	35
A.3 Quality of the concept note: An outline of the work programme describing the main issues, information, data sources, research and analytical tools to be employed by consultant, as well as the timeline.	30
B. Financial Offer/ lowest price has a 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 will 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 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 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: STATEMENT OF AVAILABILITY

REF: 062-024

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 if 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