



Open Call for Consulting Services

Title: Support to the RCC Secretariat in preparing the 2024 Report on the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans Action Plan (GARI) and revising the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans Action Plan (GAWB AP) - 2021–2030 (Depollution and Circular Economy Pillar)

LOT 1- Preparation of 2024 GARI

LOT 2- Preparation of Revised GAWB AP- focusing on Depollution and Circular Economy Pillar

RCC Department: Programme Department

Eligible: Consulting companies/ consortia of individual consultants

Reporting to: RCC Secretariat

Duration: March – October 2025

Reference Number: 025-025

TERMS OF REFERENCE:

I. BACKGROUND

In October 2021, the leaders of the Western Balkans endorsed the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans 2021-2030 (GAWB), known as the GAWB Action Plan. The GAWB Action Plan outlines 58 actions structured in five pillars: 1) Decarbonisation (Climate action, Energy, Sustainable transport), 2) Circular Economy, 3) Depollution, 4) Sustainable Agriculture and 5) Protection of Nature and Biodiversity.

In line with the Sofia Declaration mandate, Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) leads the monitoring of GAWB Action Plan implementation through the Annual Report on the Implementation of the GAWB Action Plan (GARI). This monitoring process is a collaborative effort involving the WB6, regional partners (such as the EnCS, TCPS, SWG RRD, and IUCN), the European Commission, and other key stakeholders, using predefined qualitative and quantitative indicators.

Following the publication of the 2023 GARI, the RCC will develop the 2024 GARI to evaluate progress in implementing the GAWB Action Plan. Using the methodology established in the 2023 report, the 2024 GARI will provide an overview of progress across 58 actions per WB6.

II. DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Objectives of the assignment

1. **Draft the 2024 edition of GARI:** Develop the Annual Report on the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans Action Plan (GAWB AP) for 2024, by updating 2023 GARI with new quantitative and qualitative data, and assessing progress per WB6 across 58 actions. A consulting company/consortium of consultants will be engaged for this consultancy, hereinafter referred to as “the consultant”.

This assignment targets all Western Balkans Six (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo* , Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia).

III. SCOPE OF WORK

Specific Tasks

The scope of the work includes:

Preparation of 2024 GARI, which provides the update of 2023 GARI with new data on the progress of WB6 across 58 actions in five pillars of the GAWB Action Plan:

- 1. Decarbonization (Climate action, Energy, Sustainable Transport)**
- 2. Circular economy**
- 3. Depollution**
- 4. Sustainable agriculture**
- 5. Protection of nature and biodiversity**

The Report will reflect results vis-à-vis set objectives (58 actions). It will include the overview of quantitative data and its analytical interpretations, including but not limited to tables, graphs and statistics in line with the indicators defined in the Action Plan.

The consultant will assist in the revision of GAWB Action Plan by working closely with regional partners and WB6 to review existing indicators and propose measurable ones where necessary, ensuring a robust and reliable monitoring system. The consultant will liaise with WB6 focal points, regional partners and others to collect data from relevant institutions in the Western Balkans 6, as needed.

The consultant will cooperate with Western Balkans 6 to validate findings and recommendations, in addition to providing advice and support during the presentation of 2024 GARI.

Methodology

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

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCP 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

- Desk review/research and data collection, processing, validation, visualization, and interpretation;
- Communication/interviews/consultations with the representatives of regional organisations, WB6 administrations and other relevant stakeholders in the respective areas to collect qualitative and quantitative inputs;
- Any other method applicable.

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

II. LOGISTICS AND TIMING

Timeline

The engagement is expected to start in March and end in October 2025.

Lines of Communication

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

The consultant will submit all reports and timesheets to the RCC Secretariat for review and approval of deliverables.

The RCC will provide guidelines for efficient finalisation of the assignment.

The Team Leader will be responsible for coordination of the team, and communication with RCC staff.

The Team Leader should keep frequent communication with the RCC in order to discuss all open issues and guide the assignment towards its successful completion.

As appropriate, meetings with RCC will be organised to agree on expectations and deliverables.

III. REQUIRED OUTPUTS / REPORTING

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

	Deliverables	Due date
	1. Preparation of 2024 GARI	
1.	Gathering, analysing, and processing data—both quantitative (presented through tables and graphs) and qualitative—to form the foundation of a narrative report. This report will offer an overview of progress with suggested recommendations. Liaising with regional and international partners producing GAWB-related data such as Energy Community, Transport Community, IUCN, SWG RRD, Eurostat and European Environment Agency, etc.;	March- April 2025

	Liaising with WB6 to collect and validate data from relevant institutions and regional and international resources + Attendance at RWG GAWB meetings online and in person	
2.	Providing the first version of the 2024 Report on the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkan (GARI) with, but not limited to the following sections: Executive Summary; Key findings; Overview of progress across all 5 pillars (58 actions) by updating 2023 GARI with new data, along with brief recommendations; Graphs; Data Sources; Appendices.	7 May 2025
4.	Leading rounds of consultations with RCC, WB6, EC and regional partners on integrating/reflecting comments & providing feedback	May 2025
5.	Preparing the final version of 2024 GARI reflecting and integrating all relevant comments and ensuring quality assurance check NOTE: The team of experts is obliged to deliver the final draft as a proofread document in UK English. Each deliverable is subject to approval by the RCC, and the RCC reserves the right not to accept the document in case of a low scientific value, significant delays, poor academic quality and/or plagiarism.	June 2025

IV. REQUIREMENTS

The consultant should propose a team comprising **7 experts** with extensive knowledge and demonstrated experience across five pillars of the GAWB Action Plan: **Decarbonization (Climate Action, Energy, and Sustainable Transport), Circular Economy, Depollution, Biodiversity and Nature Protection, and Agriculture**. Additionally, the team leader will oversee the process, ensuring rigorous quality control and consistency throughout the assignment.

It is indispensable that the consultants possess experience in the WB region in these areas, are familiar with the most recent developments in the EU, particularly those related to the European Green Deal, have good analytical skills and experience in data collection and processing, as well as in drafting high-quality reports and policy recommendations. Potential bidders are encouraged to propose additional team members and auxiliary staff, as they deem appropriate.

The team leader should ensure an internal quality control during the implementing and reporting phase 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 findings reported are duly substantiated and that conclusions are supported by relevant judgment criteria.

The team of relevant experts should fulfil the following qualification requirements:

Qualifications:

Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advanced university degree (minimum Master’s Degree or equivalent) in engineering, biology/nature protection, climatology, chemistry, environmental sciences, economy, energy, physics, agriculture, sociology and/ or other relevant fields necessary to understand the main trends, challenges, and the situation in the WB relevant for GAWB AP; ▪ PhD is an advantage.
Experience and qualifications:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extensive theoretical knowledge in the relevant fields and a minimum of fifteen (15) and ten (10) years of practical work and/or research experience in the relevant areas for a team leader and team members respectively; ▪ At least three similar (in scope and complexity) projects completed in the last five years, particularly in the WB; ▪ Experience in data collection and processing, modelling, developing scenarios, scientific papers and reports in given areas; ▪ Ample and proven understanding of the existing strategic and policy frameworks and the situation in the given areas in the EU (related to the EGD) and the WB region; ▪ Analytical skills and ability to conceptualise and write concisely and clearly in English language; ▪ Experience in performing analytical studies, working with indicators, and drafting recommendations for policymakers. • Proven communication and presentation skills and ability to work in an environment requiring liaison and collaboration with multiple actors including government representatives, international organisations’ representatives, business community, civil society institutions, donors and other stakeholders.
Language requirements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fluency in English, as the official working language of the RCC; ▪ Knowledge of local languages in WB6 is considered as an asset.
Other:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Full ICT literacy and familiarity with MS Office (or alternative business applications) as a tool necessary for the implementation of the assignment; ▪ Ability to be flexible and respond to changes as part of the review and feedback process.

Core Values

- Demonstrates integrity and fairness by modelling RCC 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;
- Team work: 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.

The views expressed in the report 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 consultant 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 the consultant, they should clearly explain the reasons for their final decision in a comments table.

LOT 2- Preparation of Revised GAWB AP- focusing on Depollution and Circular Economy Pillar

BACKGROUND

The process of revision of the GAWB AP 2021-2030, including its principles as well as approach, is embedded in the GAWB AP and endorsed by the Western Balkan leaders:

*"This document (GAWB AP) covers the period from 2021 to 2030 and is designed to be **periodically revised** according to emerging needs and priorities, **without reducing its level of ambition**. Any extension of the indicative timeframes must be justified. The ten-year perspective of the Action Plan allows its alignment with key international and European policy objectives... **The Action Plan will be revised twice: by the end of 2024 and again by the end of 2027, following the same consultative process with Western Balkan authorities and partner regional organizations.** WB6 Environmental Ministers via **Hamburg Declaration in 2024 reaffirmed commitment** to initiating a revision of the GAWB Action Plan in collaboration with the RCC and regional partners in line with GAWB AP and its spirit and ultimate objectives, and through RWG GAWB. **RWG GAWB, as the key intergovernmental platform, will take an active role throughout the revision process, and will coordinate inputs from line ministries.***

II. DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Objectives of the assignment

ii) Prepare the proposal for the Revision of GAWB Action Plan – Provide expert support to the RCC to revise the GAWB Action Plan 2021–2030, aiming to improve the effectiveness of its ongoing implementation. The revision will specifically target the pillars and roadmaps where the RCC serves as the main coordinator—**Circular Economy and Depollution**—along with their respective indicators.

III. SCOPE OF WORK

Specific Tasks

The consultant will conduct a comprehensive analysis of the WB6 region, focusing on policy areas relevant to the Circular Economy and the Depollution of Air, Water, and Soil. This assessment will include an evaluation of international agreements and obligations, policy and legal framework, and recent developments since the adoption of the Sofia Declaration and the European Green Deal. Particular attention will be given to emerging EU policies, such as the Clean Industrial Deal and the Competitiveness Compass, ensuring their relevance and adaptability to the WB6 context and accession processes. Based on this analysis, the consultant is expected to develop a revision proposal in close contact with RWG GAWB through the RCC Secretariat but also with relevant stakeholders active in the policy areas relevant to the GAWB pillars, focusing on circular economy and depollution.

The consultant will refine objectives to reflect new realities, challenges, and opportunities, set deadlines for the implementation of proposed actions, and also identify potential funding sources.

The consultant will propose improvements to indicators and reporting processes to enhance transparency and accountability. This task shall take into account present and future data quality and availability, including geographical coverage of the whole WB6, especially for the Circular Economy and Depollution pillar. The consultant will present the draft revised Action Plan to key stakeholders for review and validation, address any feedback from the validation process and prepare the final version.

Methodology

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

- Desk review/research and data collection, processing, validation, visualization, and interpretation;
- Communication/interviews/consultations with the representatives of regional organisations, WB6 administrations and other relevant stakeholders in the respective areas to collect qualitative and quantitative inputs;
- Any other method applicable.

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

V. LOGISTICS AND TIMING

Timeline

The engagement is expected to start in March and end in October 2025.

Lines of Communication

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

The consultant will submit all reports and timesheets to the RCC Secretariat for review and approval of deliverables.

The RCC will provide guidelines for efficient finalisation of the assignment.

The Team Leader will be responsible for coordination of the team, and communication with RCC staff.

The Team Leader should keep frequent communication with the RCC in order to discuss all open issues and guide the assignment towards its successful completion.

As appropriate, meetings with RCC will be organised to agree on expectations and deliverables.

VI. REQUIRED OUTPUTS / REPORTING

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

	Deliverables	Due date
	Revision of GAWB AP 2021-2030- Depollution and Circular Economy Pillar	
1.	<p>Draft methodology and work plan for the revision of GAWB Action Plan - Depollution and Circular Economy Pillars</p> <p>Overview of current implementation status and alignment with regional and EU priorities Analysis of Existing Indicators and Actions from a Methodological Perspective as well as Implementation Status Identification of gaps in the 2021-2030 Action Plan and proposal of necessary updates</p> <p>Detailed timeline for the revision process, including consultation milestones</p>	Early April 2025
2.	First draft of the revised GAWB Action Plan	

	Provide proposals for new or updated actions, indicators, and reporting mechanisms Consultative meetings with EC, regional partners, IOs to collect inputs Incorporate stakeholder feedback and align with updated EU and regional policies	15 April 2025
3.	Preliminary stakeholder consultations to gather input for the revision process Engage with WB6, EC, regional partners, civil society, businesses, and other stakeholders Conduct online/in-person workshops to discuss proposal	6-7 May 2025
4.	Validation process with key stakeholders Present the draft to WB6 focal points, EC, and regional partners for review and consensus-building Address feedback from validation and finalise recommendations	May- September 2025
5.	Preparing the final version of GAWB AP - Depollution and Circular Economy Pillar reflecting and integrating all relevant comments and ensuring quality assurance check	Within all stages of drafting process with the final version completed by early September 2025
	NOTE: The team of experts is obliged to deliver the final draft as a proofread document in UK English. Each deliverable is subject to approval by the RCC, and the RCC reserves the right not to accept the document in case of a low scientific value, significant delays, poor academic quality and/or plagiarism.	

VII. REQUIREMENTS

The consultants should propose a team comprising of minimum **5 experts** with extensive knowledge and demonstrated experience on **Circular Economy and Depollution of Air, Water and Soil**. Additionally, the team leader will oversee the process, ensuring rigorous quality control and consistency throughout the assignment.

It is indispensable that the consultants possess experience in the WB6 region in these areas, are familiar with the most recent developments in the EU, particularly those related to the European Green Deal, have good analytical skills and experience in data collection and processing, as well as in drafting high-quality reports and policy recommendations. Potential bidders are encouraged to propose additional team members and auxiliary staff, as they deem appropriate.

The team leader should ensure an internal quality control during the implementing and reporting phase 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 findings reported are duly substantiated and that conclusions are supported by relevant judgment criteria.

The team of relevant experts should fulfil the following qualification requirements:

Qualifications:

Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advanced university degree (minimum Master’s Degree or equivalent) in engineering, biology/nature protection, chemistry, environmental sciences, economy and/ or other relevant fields necessary to understand the main trends, challenges, and the situation in the WB relevant for GAWB AP; ▪ PhD is an advantage.
Experience and qualifications:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extensive theoretical knowledge in the relevant fields and a minimum of fifteen (15) and ten (10) years of practical work and/or research experience in the relevant areas for a team leader and team members respectively; ▪ At least three similar (in scope and complexity) projects completed in the last five years, particularly in the WB; ▪ Experience in data collection and processing, modelling, developing scenarios, scientific papers and reports in given areas; ▪ Ample and proven understanding of the existing strategic and policy frameworks and the situation in the given areas in the EU (related to the EGD) and the WB region; ▪ Analytical skills and ability to conceptualise and write concisely and clearly in English language; ▪ Experience in performing analytical studies, working with indicators, and drafting recommendations for policymakers; • Proven communication and presentation skills and ability to work in an environment requiring liaison and collaboration with multiple actors including government representatives, international organisations’ representatives, business community, civil society institutions, donors and other stakeholders;
Language requirements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fluency in English, as the official working language of the RCC; ▪ Knowledge of local languages in WB6 is considered as an asset.

Other:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Full ICT literacy and familiarity with MS Office (or alternative business applications) as a tool necessary for the implementation of the assignment; ▪ Ability to be flexible and respond to changes as part of the review and feedback process.
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Core Values

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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;
- Team work: 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.

Quality Control:

The views expressed in the report 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 consultant 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 the consultant, they should clearly explain the reasons for their final decision in a comments table.

More information on the RCC work is available at:

<https://www.rcc.int/pubs/202/2023-report-on-the-implementation-of-the-green-agenda-for-the-western-balkans-action-plan-gari>

V. APPLICATION RULES

The Open Call has two LOTS. Bidders may submit proposals either only for LOT 1 or LOT 2 or for both LOTS.

The application needs to contain the following:

- Technical Offer;
- Financial Offer.

Technical Offer:

The technical offer needs to contain the following:

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/Institution's Registration Certificate;
- 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 authorised power of attorney must be attached to the bid;
- CVs of key members of the project team (maximum 2 pages per expert), outlining the most relevant knowledge and experience as described in the Terms of Reference;
- Financial records - company's balance sheet and profit-and-loss statement for the past 2 years (only in case of bidding of consulting companies);
- A concept note of up to 2 pages, concisely and clearly elaborating the proposed methodology for addressing and undertaking each activity, relevant documents to be taken into account and the concept for the successful finalisation of the assignment; an additional page can be included, where relevant, indicating key stakeholders to be included in the proposed approach;
- List of references for relevant activities implemented over the past 7 years demonstrating relevant experience in the subject matter;
- Signed Statements of Availability (Annex I).

Financial Offer (Annex II)

The financial offer should reflect the following:

- All figures should be expressed in EUR;

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

- Use a free format for the budget providing the global price for the work to be provided;
- 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.

Note: 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:

The Open Call has two LOTS. Bidders may submit proposals either only for LOT 1 or LOT 2 or for both LOTS.

Applications need to be submitted by 21 March 2025 by 14:00 CET (Central European Times) through the website link [Apply now](#).

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 with that of the tender; 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 concept note: 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 may 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

