

Employment and Social Affairs Platform 2 – ESAP 2

Open Call for Consultancy Services

Terms of Reference:	Senior Expert on Tackling Undeclared Work in the Western Balkans
Contracting Authority:	Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat
Reporting to:	RCC Secretariat
Duration:	February 2023 – 15 September 2023
Eligible	Individual Consultant
Application Deadline:	13 February 2023
Reference Number:	013-023

I. BACKGROUND

The Western Balkan economies continue to recognise informality as an impediment to economic growth and prioritise tackling it as well as undeclared employment in the national Economic Reform Programmes (ERP). Some economies have strategies, action plans and programmes in place to tackle informality.

The EU's 2021 assessment of the Economic Reform Programmes of Western Balkan economies reemphasises that informality remains an obstacle to improving labour market outcomes in the region. To overcome these challenges, the region's governments need to incentivise tax compliance and ensure stricter law enforcement in this area.

European Commission's 2022 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy also points out to the chronic issue of informality in the region. The labour markets in the Western Balkans continue to be characterised by overall low activity (especially among women and young people) as well as by high informality and unemployment. The same report stresses that the business environment continues to be held back by the large size of informal economy and by slow progress in streamlining para-fiscal charges.

The EU has invested a lot of effort in tackling undeclared work. The European Platform Tackling Undeclared Work has enhanced cooperation between Member States' authorities and other actors

involved with the aim to tackle undeclared work more effectively and efficiently while fully respecting national competences and procedures.

Drawing on the EU experience and in light of the importance of aligning the Western Balkan economies to the EU policy cooperation and practice, the [Employment and Social Affairs Platform 2 \(ESAP 2\)](#) currently supports the Western Balkan economies through a regional platform for the transformation of undeclared work into declared work, pursuing a holistic integrated strategic approach, akin to that of the EU. The platform has adopted a regional work plan of activities, currently under implementation, that includes regular high-level coordination and technical level meetings, seminars, workshops, study visits, and analyses on priority topics as well as the implementation of mutual assistance projects that will enable the exchange of experience, and provide advice and implementation support.

II. DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Objective of the assignment

The objective of this assignment is to provide guidance and expert support to ESAP 2 in the implementation of its activities regarding informal employment and undeclared work.

The service contract will support ESAP 2 to enhance cooperation in tackling undeclared work in the Western Balkans by building on the work previously done within the ESAP 2 framework in this domain. More specifically, the guidance and expert support to the Regional Network for Tackling Undeclared Work through thematic learning, information exchange, capacity building and analytical work, need to reflect the outcomes of the previous work and lead towards increased efficiency of the WB economies in tackling undeclared work and transforming it into the declared work.

Beneficiaries of this action will be enforcement authorities in the Western Balkans, including ministries of labour, labour inspectorates, tax and social security authorities as well as social partners (employers' and employees' organisations).

Specific Tasks

The tasks under this service contract require high-quality input by the expert in several domains and include the provision of guidance to ESAP 2 and members of the Network in identifying priority topics and areas of work for the Network, support in mutual learning, facilitation of information exchange, implementation of learning results and analytical work, and contribution to strengthening capacities of authorised institutions for tackling undeclared work in the Western Balkans.

The selected expert will assist ESAP 2 to closely monitor the situation in all Western Balkan economies, and adjust activities to the situation on the ground in a flexible manner, while aiming to deliver on the objectives of this consultancy.

This consultancy includes two specific tasks:

Task 1: Provide guidance and expert support to the Western Balkans Network Tackling Undeclared Work through follow-up seminars to mutual assistance programmes (MAP) in individual economies and thematic regional workshops on the results of MAPs

Mutual assistance programmes (MAPs) are practical, hands-on and tailored learning activities designed to support and transfer practices, help solve issues, provide advice and implementation support to improve institutional capacities and capabilities to tackle undeclared work.

The thematic review events are conceived as policy learning experiences through sharing of knowledge and allowing space for interactive discussions between participants to enable peer learning.

Based on the previous MAPs held within the ESAP 2 framework, under this task, the consultant will:

- Provide expert support in conceptualisation and execution of six follow-up seminars in individual Western Balkan economies on the results of the first series of MAPs held in 2021, relying on the original objective of MAPs, as stated above;
- Produce a synthesis reports on the follow-up seminars with operational guidance to beneficiaries as well as broader recommendations and reflection on the organisation of mutual assistance programmes;
- Provide expert support to the design and facilitation of two regional thematic workshops/seminars on topics identified by the beneficiaries, including a draft of a discussion paper based on inputs received from beneficiary organisations;
- Prepare drafts of: an analytical regional comparative paper summarising all the findings; joint follow-up toolkits; and up to four evidence-based good practice fiches.

Task 2: Expert contribution, guidance and support to organisation of three follow-up visits to the external assessment and one study visit/staff exchange to an EU member state for representatives of the Western Balkans Network Tackling Undeclared Work

Under this task, the consultant will:

- Provide expert support in conceptualisation and execution of three follow-up visits to external assessments, based on the feedback from the previous consultations between the beneficiaries' host institutions and members of the external assessment teams. Each follow-up visit is to reflect selected topics for the thematic workshops/seminars;
- Provide expert support in conceptualisation and execution of one staff exchange/study visit of the Western Balkans Network Tackling Undeclared Work to an EU member state, in consultations with the beneficiaries' institutions, on topic(s) as per their demands.

Methodology

The bidder is expected to suggest the most suitable methodology for the successful completion of the assignment. Note that a clear methodological overview should be an integral part of the concept note.

III. LOGISTICS AND TIMING

Timeline

The engagement is expected to start in **February 2023 and end in September 2023.**

The selected senior expert should submit a clear overview of planned activities.

Lines of Communication

The consultant will submit all reports and timesheets to the ESAP 2 Project Team Leader and RCC for review and approval of deliverables. The expert will work closely with the ESAP 2 Project Team from whom s/he will seek guidelines to efficiently conduct the work.

IV. REQUIRED OUTPUTS / REPORTING

The following deliverables will be produced and transferred to ESAP 2 and the RCC Secretariat during the course of the assignment, as per the timeframe specified below:

	Deliverables	Due date
1.	Follow-up to MAPs, six seminars on the results of initial MAPs in individual WB economies, and two regional thematic review workshops/ seminars, implemented in coordination with ESAP 2	By June 2023
2.	Assistance provided to ESAP 2 to organise three follow-up visits to the external assessment and one study visit/staff exchange to an EU member state for representatives of the Western Balkans Network Tackling Undeclared Work	By September 2023

V. REQUIREMENTS

Profile and Competencies of the Consultant

The consultant should have a thorough understanding of the labour markets in the EU and the Western Balkan economies, an excellent understanding of informal employment, excellent knowledge of recent developments in the field of the fight against undeclared work in the EU MS and the WB economies, and a record of projects and published articles on labour policies and informal economy. In addition, the consultant should be well-versed and experienced in data collection, mutual learning, statistical analyses and drafting high-quality reports.

Criteria related to the expert delivering the service:

Education:	Advanced degree in economics, statistics, social sciences or a related field
Experience:	Qualifications and Skills Required:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A minimum of 15 years of relevant experience in the fields of labour markets, labour policies and informal economy in the EU and the WB6 economies; ▪ At least 5 years of experience in quantitative and qualitative data analysis; ▪ Excellent knowledge of labour policies and informal employment issues in the EU and the WB6 economies; ▪ A record of projects and publications in the fields of labour economics and informal economy/informal employment; ▪ Excellent communication and report writing skills; ▪ Analytical skills and ability to conceptualise and write concisely and clearly; ▪ Able to interact with professionals of and representatives from the national administrations in the SEE region.
Language requirements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fluency in English, as the official language of the RCC. ▪ Knowledge of other languages of the region desirable.

Core Values

- Demonstrates integrity and fairness by modelling RCC values and ethical standards;
- 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.

Quality Control

The consultant should ensure an internal quality control during the implementing and reporting phase of the assignment. The quality control should ensure that the draft reports 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 views expressed in the report will be those of the expert and will not necessarily reflect those of the Regional Cooperation Council. Therefore, a standard disclaimer reflecting this will be included in the report. 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 the expert, he/she should clearly explain the reasons for his/her final decision in a comments table.

Quality Control by the Regional Cooperation Council

The consultant's outputs shall undergo external reviews by all relevant stakeholders, including the representatives of ESAP 2 Project Team and Regional Cooperation Council.

Application Rules

- Qualified consultants are invited to send an application via e-mail to ProcurementforRCC@rcc.int no later than 13 February 2023 by 24:00 Central European Time;
- The assignment will be awarded to the highest qualified applicant based on the skills, expertise, and the quality of the concept note and the cost-effectiveness of the financial offer;
- The best value for money is established by weighing technical quality against price on a 80/20 basis;
- Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted for a competency-based interview.

The application needs to contain the following:

- Letter of interest;
- CV including relevant knowledge and experience, as well as reference list including contact details (e-mail addresses) of referees;
- Concept note outlining the proposal of the methodology, timeline and the research and analytical tools to be used in carrying out the assignment;
- Application Submission Form, Annex I;
- Financial offer and budget breakdown, Annex II.

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

- The proposed budget should include daily fee rate for consulting services broken down by tasks as below; the fee rates should be broadly consistent with the EU framework rates for these types of professional services for international consultants.

Task	Maximum number of person days
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1	
2	
3	
4	
Total	

Evaluation and Selection

The application is evaluated on the basis of the profile and competencies of the candidate and the responsiveness to the Terms of Reference (ToR).

1. Profile and Competencies
2. Brief Concept Note
3. Financial evaluation based on Annex II

The best value for money is established by weighing technical quality against price on a 80/20 basis.

Technical Evaluation

EVALUATION GRID	Maximum score
Education	10
Qualifications and Skills Required	50
Brief Concept Note	30
Language Skills	10
TOTAL SCORE	100

In addition to the results of the application, a competency-based interview will be held with the selected candidates.

Financial Evaluation

Financial Proposal/ cheapest price has maximum score	100
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ANNEX I:

APPLICATION SUBMISSION FORM

REF: 013-023

Title: Senior Expert on Tackling Undeclared Work in the Western Balkans

One signed copy of this Call for Consultancy Submission Form must be supplied.

1 **SUBMITTED by:**

Name	
Surname	
Address	
Telephone	
Fax	
e-mail	

2 **DECLARATION**

[Name] _____ hereby declares that we have examined and accepted without reserve or restriction the entire contents of the Call for Consultancy 013-023

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 call for experts on the basis of supplied documentation subject of this call, which comprise our technical offer and our financial offer.

Name and Surname of the Consultant	
Signature	
Date	

ANNEX II: BUDGET BREAKDOWN

REF: 013-023

No	Cost categories	Daily fee rate	Total Cost
2	TOTAL COSTS		
3	VAT (if applicable):		
	GRAND TOTAL (2+3):		

Proposed daily fee rate for consulting services should be broadly consistent with the EU framework rates for these types of professional services.