



## Open Call for Consulting Services

**Title:** **Regional Online Matchmaking Platform for Research & Innovation Infrastructures**

**RCC Department:** Programme Department

**Duration:** September 2025 – June 2026

**Application Deadline:** 8 September 2025 by 12:00CET

**Reference Number** **061-025**

**Eligible:** Specialized technology firms, consortia or joint ventures, accredited academic institutions, and recognized academic technology infrastructures

## TERMS OF REFERENCE:

### I. BACKGROUND

The Common Regional Market Action Plan 2025-2028 (CRM 2.0) is a regionally-owned framework based on the EU rules and standards to consolidate and enhance competitiveness and dismantle barriers. It is a catalyst for deeper regional economic integration and a stepping stone towards the EU Single Market of the Western Balkans Six (WB6). CRM 2.0 seeks to further boost the socio-economic convergence between the WB6 and the EU and paves the way for closer integration with the Single Market.

The CRM 2.0's Human Capital Development pillar aims to enhance job opportunities and combat brain drain. It emphasises, inter alia, improving the region's innovation performance and competitiveness to create added value for various players including businesses and academia.

In previous years, the RCC has bolstered the regional innovation ecosystem by promoting collaboration across different economies, improving research and innovation infrastructures, and recognising innovative achievements. Research and innovation infrastructures across the region remain underutilised due to limited visibility and accessibility. To this end, the RCC brokered the regional Declaration on Research and Innovation Infrastructure Access and Collaboration which was adopted at the 10th Berlin Process Summit. The Declaration provides substantial advantages for regional researchers by promoting open access to research and innovation facilities, encouraging mobility, and fostering collaboration.

Recognising the untapped potential of the region's existing research and innovation infrastructures, a Regional Online Matchmaking Platform for Research & Innovation Infrastructures (Matchmaking Platform) will offer highly targeted support to enhance networking among research organisations, higher education institutions, individual researchers, businesses, governments, and civil society. By facilitating structured interactions and data-driven connections, it aims to accelerate knowledge transfer and collaboration across sectors and the wider Balkan region.

## **II. DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Objectives of the assignment**

The purpose of the assignment is to develop a user-friendly, online matchmaking platform that will facilitate collaboration and resource-sharing by connecting infrastructure providers with researchers, startups, businesses, and other stakeholders. Once operational, a publicly accessible Matchmaking Platform will (1) feature comprehensive profiles of infrastructures and entities, (2) help increase the utilisation and awareness of regional innovation assets, and (3) offer operational matchmaking functionality to facilitate cross-regional collaboration.

## **III. SCOPE OF WORK**

### **Specific Tasks**

More specific tasks include:

#### **Platform Development**

- Design, develop, test, and deploy a secure, web-based matchmaking platform
- Ensure mobile responsiveness and integrate robust search and filtering functions
- Implement security and privacy protocols to meet data protection requirements

#### **Database and Profile Management**

- Design a standardised infrastructure/entity profile template including:
  - Title
  - Institution/Organisation
  - Research/innovation infrastructure brief description
  - Geographic location
  - Contact details
- **Conduct data collection** through:
  - Surveys or structured outreach to infrastructure holders
  - Desk research and public databases
  - Collaboration with local or regional authorities

- **Verify and validate** submitted data for completeness and accuracy
- **Populate the database** with initial entries (minimum viable set) across geographic (primarily Western Balkans, though wider regional reach is also encouraged) and thematic categories (research infrastructures, innovation infrastructures, businesses, etc.)
- Implement features for **self-registration** and **profile updating** by infrastructure owners
- Provide administrative dashboard for monitoring, reviewing, and approving submissions

### **Matchmaking and Communication**

- Enable user registration and entity tagging based on interest/needs
- Create internal messaging or expression-of-interest tools between entities

### **Training & Documentation**

- Develop and deliver training sessions/webinars for key users and administrators
- Produce a comprehensive user guide and platform maintenance manual

### **Sustainability and Extension**

- Ensure scalability for future features such as AI-driven matchmaking
- Include options for API integration with other existing research and innovation infrastructure platforms

### **Methodology**

The experts are expected to propose a comprehensive work plan which, at a minimum, outlines a clear and coherent methodology addressing all specified tasks, and presents a detailed timeline for delivery.

## **IV. LOGISTICS AND TIMING**

### **Timeline**

The engagement is scheduled to commence in **September 2025** and conclude in **December 2026** (with the possibility of maintenance and data entry extension) structured in two key phases:

- **Final Matchmaking Platform launch (December 2025):** A fully functional live version of the platform will be delivered and launched with a **select number of initial entries** (minimum number per WB economy to be determined later) to demonstrate

core capabilities and user interface. This foundational dataset will serve as a proof of concept and early access resource.

- **Maintenance & sustainability phase (January–December 2026):** The remaining data population will be completed throughout 2026, alongside platform maintenance and delivery of a comprehensive sustainability and long-term operations plan.

#### **Lines of Communication**

- The task will be implemented in close consultation with the RCC Secretariat.
- The contracted bidder will report to and closely liaise with the RCC’s Senior Expert on Human Capital Development.

### **V. REQUIRED OUTPUTS/REPORTING**

	<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Due date</b>
<b>1.</b>	Work Plan agreed with the RCC	Mid-September 2025
<b>2.</b>	Platform blueprint and architecture document	End of October 2025
<b>3.</b>	Beta version for testing and feedback	End of November 2025
<b>4.</b>	Final platform launch (live version)	End of December 2025
<b>5.</b>	Training materials and user guide	End of December 2025
<b>6.</b>	Maintenance and sustainability plan	End of December 2026

### **VI. REQUIREMENTS**

#### **Expert Qualifications:**

<b>Education:</b>	Degree in sciences, engineering, economics, finance, business, public policy or other fields directly related to the assignment. Master’s or PhD degree is an advantage.
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<b>Experience:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minimum 5 years of experience designing and deploying user-friendly, data-rich online platforms, preferably for matchmaking or infrastructure mapping.</li> <li>- Proven ability to conduct stakeholder outreach and integrate large datasets into secure, well-designed relational databases with data validation workflows.</li> <li>- Demonstrated success in delivering solutions across varied geographic environments.</li> <li>- Track record of developing tailored training materials and conducting live or virtual capacity-building sessions for diverse user groups.</li> <li>- Robust team structure including relevant domain experts, supported by certifications in data protection, cybersecurity, or cloud services.</li> <li>- Prior work in the WB economies, including regional knowledge of institutional and market maturity levels is highly desirable.</li> </ul>
<b>Language requirements:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fluency in written and spoken English, as the official language of the RCC;</li> <li>• Knowledge of other RCC languages is desirable.</li> </ul>
<b>Other:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N.A.</li> </ul>

### **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.

### **Quality Control:**

The experts 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 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 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, they should clearly explain the reasons for their final decision in a comments table.

RCC employees and partners participating in any programme or activity conducted or funded by RCC are prohibited from discriminating based on race, religion, political beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, marital status or national origin.

## **VII. APPLICATION RULES**

### **Technical Offer:**

**The technical offer needs to contain the following:**

- Company profile including a brief description (up to 2 pages) of the company;
- Copy of Company's Registration Certificate;
- In case of a bidding consortia or joint ventures the lead partner should submit the profile of the consortium;
- Copy of Company's/Institution's Registration Certificate;
- In case of bidding consortia or joint ventures, participating in this Call, they must indicate the partners and show how the work is divided between them. Specifically, all

partners must name the lead partner and authorise the partner to represent the consortium and receive payments on behalf of the other partners. A corresponding written authorised 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 plan of a maximum of 5 pages;
- List of references for activities implemented over the past years demonstrating related experience;
- Signed Statements of Availability (Annex I).

#### Financial offer

The financial offer should reflect the following:

- All figures should be expressed in EUR;

When preparing the financial offer, the applicant should consider the following:

- Maximum budget should not exceed EUR 30,000. The offers above the threshold will not be considered.
- Use a free format for the budget offering 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.

#### **Note:**

**Applications need to be submitted by 8 September 2025 by 12:00 CET. The offers should be submitted through the web site link [Apply now](#).**

### **VIII. EVALUATION AND SELECTION**

The assignments will be awarded to the highest qualified applicant based on the skills, expertise, and the quality of the concept note(s) and the cost-effectiveness of the financial offer. Applications will be evaluated on the basis of the profile and competencies of the candidate and the responsiveness to the Terms of Reference for consulting services.

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

The applications are evaluated following these criteria:

<b>EVALUATION GRID</b>	<b>Maximum Score</b>	<b>Actual scoring</b>
<b>A. Technical Offer (A.1+A.2+A.3)</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>A.1. Competencies: Work experience, references list:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proven experience in designing and deploying user-friendly, data-rich online platforms, preferably for matchmaking or infrastructure mapping.</li> <li>• Proven ability to conduct stakeholder outreach and integrate large datasets into secure, well-designed relational databases with data validation workflows.</li> <li>• Track record of developing tailored training materials and conducting training sessions.</li> <li>• Robust team structure including relevant domain experts.</li> <li>• Proven communication and presentation skills and ability to work in an environment requiring liaison and collaboration with multiple actors including government representatives, businesses, civil society institutions, donors and other stakeholders.</li> </ul>	<b>15</b>          <b>10</b>          <b>5</b>          <b>5</b>          <b>5</b>	
<b>A.2. C.V Quality and professional capacity of the experts:</b> Degree in sciences, engineering, economics, business, or other fields directly related to the assignment. Master's or PhD degree is an advantage. Portfolio of successfully delivered platforms with high user engagement and data management capabilities.	<b>10</b>          <b>20</b>	



<b>A.3 Quality of the Work Plan</b> A work plan, up to a maximum of 5 pages, indicating the individual tasks to be undertaken against a timeframe.	<b>30</b>	
<b>B. Financial Proposal/ lowest price has maximum score</b>	<b>100</b>	

**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](mailto: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 appeal.

The appeal request may be sent to the e-mail address [ProcurementforRcc@rcc.int](mailto: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 III: STATEMENT OF AVAILABILITY**

REF: 061-025

Regional Online Matchmaking Platform for Research & Innovation Infrastructures

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