

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Title	Strengthening the capacity of the SME sector for the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in business
Application Deadline	14 April, 2026, 8:00 a.m. CET
Reference	POLICY ANSWERS - "R&I POLICY making, implementation AND Support in the WEsteRn BalkanS"), Grant Agreement 101058873
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1 Introduction and Background

POLICY ANSWERS - R&I POLICY making, implementation AND Support in the WEsteRn BalkanS. is a project funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Programme, under grant agreement number 101058873.

The POLICY ANSWERS project supports policy coordination in the Western Balkans, as well as cooperation with the European Commission (EC) and the European Union (EU). Fourteen partner organizations, representing network nodes in the region and expert organizations from the EU, support policy dialogue through formal mechanisms, including ministerial and governance platforms, ad hoc political meetings, as well as monitoring, agenda-setting and capacity-building activities, in line with the EU Agenda for the Western Balkans.

The project implements regional pilot activities and provides an information hub based on the online platform westernbalkans-fohub.eu. Partners provide an analytical basis through monitoring and mapping activities of the stakeholder ecosystem, the implementation of the Western Balkans Agenda, as well as the process of integration of the region into the European Research Area (ERA), including the application of a strategic foresight approach. A particular focus is placed on alignment with the priorities of smart specialization (S3), digital transformation and the Green Agenda.

POLICY ANSWERS enables targeted capacity building activities aimed at strengthening the competencies of key actors in the innovation ecosystem. Pilot activities contribute to improving cooperation between academia and industry, researcher mobility, involving youth in policy-making processes, as well as strengthening innovation capacities in line with the priorities of the ERA and the WB Agenda.

In the context of rapid technological change, the digital transformation process, which has significantly intensified since 2022, has recently been increasingly focused on the integration of solutions based on artificial intelligence (AI). Although a series of training courses in the field of digital transformation were implemented in 2023, during that period AI technology was not yet significantly represented in the operations of the SME sector in Serbia.

Meanwhile, the rapid development of AI technologies has significantly changed the framework of digital transformation, placing new demands on the SME sector. Although the IT and software services market in the Republic of Serbia is experiencing continuous growth, the level of adoption of advanced digital solutions, including artificial intelligence, remains limited. SMEs face numerous challenges, including an insufficient level of digital and AI competencies, limited resources for the introduction of new technologies, as well as insufficient awareness of available solutions and their practical application.

As a result, there is a significant gap between technological capabilities and the ability of SMEs to identify, adapt and integrate AI solutions into their business processes, which can negatively affect their competitiveness.

This activity (Strengthening the capacity of the business sector for digital skills and the application of artificial intelligence) is implemented within the framework of Work Package 3 of the project in Serbia (Task 3.6), under the coordination of the Mihajlo Pupin Institute (IMP).

Based on the identified needs, a call for tenders has been drawn up for the procurement of training services aimed at strengthening practical knowledge and skills for the application of artificial intelligence in SME business processes. The aim of the activity is to contribute to a more efficient integration of AI solutions into business, improving innovation and strengthening the competitiveness of the SME sector, in accordance with the relevant national and European strategic frameworks.

The training program is expected to enable:

- understanding the potential of applying AI technologies in business;
- familiarisation with relevant AI tools and solutions;
- development of practical skills for their application;
- strengthening cooperation with the IT, startup and R&D sectors.

2 Description and purpose of the Service

This call aims to provide services for the development and implementation of a set of 4 training sessions, including educational materials that will help companies implement AI in their business.

The purpose of this service is to help small and medium-sized enterprises in Serbia better understand and start implementing artificial intelligence in their business.

The service should:

- explain the basics of AI in a simple, business-oriented way,
- introduce AI assistants and AI agents,
- use interactive and web-based learning tools as the main tool of the workshop,
- help participants connect their needs with available AI solutions,
- provide a practical set of recommendations for next steps.

The same programme should be implemented through up to 4 one-day workshops in up to 4 cities in Serbia, with each workshop structured into 2 sessions of 90 minutes each.

The team of experts is strongly encouraged to develop highly interactive activities, with practical outcomes within the framework of this service. The expected results of the engagement include an improved level of awareness and knowledge of the participants in the field of AI, as well as indications of the application of newly acquired knowledge for the development and implementation of AI tools in their businesses.

In order to achieve the expected results, the experts are encouraged to apply modern interactive methods of learning and application of AI in business based on the Internet.

Expected Results (Deliverables)

The expert/team will provide:

1. A draft agenda for the training workshops, which will clearly outline how the learning outcomes are planned to be achieved.
2. A final agreed agenda, together with supporting materials, which will be finalised after comments and approval from the client.
3. Implementation of up to 4 live workshops by 30 April 2026.
4. Creation and design of interactive learning tools, learning tools and materials.
5. A summary report that will describe the activities carried out, key observations from the workshops and recommendations for further capacity building activities related to the topic.

Please note that materials used under this contract will be published on the project website and, unless otherwise agreed in writing, available under the Creative Commons CC-BY license (see: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>).

3 Implementation period

The total duration of the engagement ends on 30 April, 2026.

4 Expected delivery deadlines and outline implementation plan:

Draft agenda	15.04.2026.
Final agenda	15.04.2026.
Workshop implementation	30.04.2026.
Learning tools and application of AI in work/presentation material	15.04.2026.
Final report 2-4 pages.	30.04.2026.

Language

Working language is Serbian.

Quality Assurance

The Service Provider will perform the Service with due care and skill, in accordance with the best commercial practices and industry standards for similar services.

5 Payment for the Service

The maximum budget for the tasks described above is up to 2.348.000 RSD. This maximum budget includes the service fee, travel expenses and per diems for travel to events to hold workshops, other costs for the production of tools and training materials, and all other related costs.

This service will be funded by the POLICY ANSWERS project. This project is funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme, under grant agreement number 101058873 for the project POLICY ANSWERS.

(The official monthly exchange rate of the European Commission, which is used for calculating costs in Horizon Europe and other EU projects, applies. 1 EUR = 117.37 RSD, see: InforEuro - Exchange rate (European Commission)).

6 Application, selection and contracting procedure

Required Qualifications/Skills/Experience of the Service Provider

The Mihajlo Pupin Institute is looking for a team of at least two certified experts with strong experience in conducting training in the field of digital transformation, with experience in conducting training in the field of artificial intelligence (AI), including knowledge and proven experience, communication skills, fluent in Serbian and English.

The bidder - team of experts should have the following profile:

- Education: University degree in fields relevant to the engagement.
- Experience:
 - o Minimum 3 years of experience in conducting training in the field of digital transformation:
 - 1) A list of references for relevant activities implemented in previous years that demonstrate relevant experience in the field (the list contains the name of the training client, the period of training, the name/subject of the training, the name and surname of the lecturer).
 - 2) At least one training that has been implemented in the relevant field - confirmation of the client about the successfully implemented training by the lecturer;
 - 3) At least one successfully implemented training in the field of AI - confirmation of the client about the successfully implemented training by the lecturer.
 - o Certificate for conducting training in the field of AI from a reputable organisation in that field, namely:

- 1) a certificate from the competent body - the Center for Digital Transformation of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce or another appropriate certificate; and
- 2) that the trainers - engaged persons have a Certified AI Manager / AI-manager certificate (Austrian Standards, P85:2024-10-23) or another appropriate certificate, which proves expertise in planning and managing artificial intelligence projects, identifying AI potential and understanding the legal, regulatory and ethical aspects of AI application.
 - o The bidder uses interactive and internet-based learning tools as the main tool of the workshop - for which it submits a presentation with a demonstration of the tools (powerpoint presentation or equivalent).

7 Application

The service provider's application should contain the following documents:

- Service fee - specification.
- Biographies (CV) of experts, with an overview of relevant knowledge and experience in accordance with the terms of reference, as well as contact details
- Concept note with a first draft of the training programme and a proposed timeframe
- List of references for relevant activities implemented in previous years that demonstrate relevant experience in the field, and other evidence listed above.

8 Submission of bids

The bidder should submit a bid in accordance with the public invitation published on the public procurement portal, <https://jnportal.ujn.gov.rs/tender-eo/361268> by 14 April 2026, by 12:00 p.m. (noon) CET.

9 Selection

The bidder - expert team will be selected from among the most qualified bidders based on the relevance of skills and expertise for this engagement.

In addition to the required quality conditions, the criterion of the most economically advantageous tender - the lowest price offered will be applied.

10 Contracting procedure for the service provider

The selected bidder / expert team will be notified of the procedure via the public procurement portal, after which the conclusion of the contract will be initiated.

The contract is concluded for a fixed period of time, until mutual fulfilment of obligations.