Request for Concept Notes

Market Access for Energy Efficiency (EE) Solutions Providers from the Western Balkans

1. Background

In partnership with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation is leading a regional inclusive economic development program, RECONOMY, in 11 countries in Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova), and the Western Balkans (Kosovo, North Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, and North Macedonia). While the program is considered one for the targeted countries, the thematic focus for Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries slightly differs based on the economic and political dynamics of the region. What unites the program is the vision for change aiming at inclusive and green economic opportunities that build on common problems and common opportunities for the target group – women and youth, including the most disadvantaged and excluded.

The main phase for the Western Balkans region started in April 2023 and will last till December 2026. The program implements 5 projects in the Western Balkans countries, namely: Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.

Energy efficiency is swiftly emerging as a cornerstone in the Western Balkans, receiving unanimous endorsement from governments, local entities, private stakeholders, and the general public. Its transformative role in bolstering economic momentum, reducing energy impoverishment, and championing environmental sustainability is increasingly evident. By aligning with the Western Balkan countries' Nationally Determined Contributions and the EU Accession trajectory, this project is poised to uplift regional competitiveness, generate employment, enhance quality of life, and inspire affordable investments in energy efficiency in construction and renovation.,

One of the projects in the frame of RECONOMY is the support for Energy Efficiency (EE) in Construction and Renovations, implemented by Helvetas in partnership by CeProSARD, with an aim to promote greener building practices, reduce energy consumption, and create inclusive job opportunities, particularly for youth and women, through skills development, green standards, and support for local enterprises and institutions engaged in the construction value chain.

2. The objective

CeProSARD on behalf of the RECONOMY program invites private sector actors *to submit Concept Notes proposing innovative, scalable, and sustainable solutions that can transform the Energy-Efficient Construction and Renovation (EECR) sector in the Western Balkans and contribute towards market growth and sustainability, through improved business readiness and market access of EE solution providers.*

The main objective is to improve the competitiveness and visibility of companies offering innovative energy-efficient solutions, helping them reach new markets, better communicate their value, and scale their operations. By unlocking this growth potential, the proposed initiatives should aim to contribute to reduced CO_2 emissions, energy savings, and increased adoption of green practices among SMEs and households across the region.

Through *these innovative initiatives,* we aim to achieve four specific objectives:

(i) Support companies (SMEs/solution providers) to refine, scale, or improve the quality of their energy-efficient construction and renovation solutions, ensuring alignment with market standards and

consumer needs.

(ii) Enhance organizational and operational capacities of EE solution providers so they are better equipped to access and serve new markets, including through improved skills of technical staff and field workers.

(iii) Demonstrate market viability and environmental benefits of EECR solutions (e.g., ROI, energy savings, emissions reduction), contributing to long-term sustainability and sector-wide adoption.

(iv) Support women and youth, including the most disadvantaged and excluded ones to get decent and green jobs in the sector.

To ensure market relevance and sustainability, ***CeProSARD*** encourages proposals that demonstrate how the solution integrates into the wider EECR market system, including linkages with suppliers, buyers, and support service providers and that clearly define the type of support required (technical, promotional, strategic, etc.). Special attention should be given to reflecting on the added value of RECONOMY's support and to illustrating how the proposed intervention could help in addressing systemic challenges that may be difficult to tackle independently.

Initiatives should ideally address core market challenges related to visibility, weak commercial linkages, limited internal capacities (e.g. business development, operations, certification), or product/service development bottlenecks. Strong concepts will show how their innovation contributes to energy efficiency in buildings, improves competitiveness, and benefits the broader ecosystem (e.g. consumers, partners, and environment) and contributes to job creation

3. Procurement Process

This solicitation is the first step of a competitive two-step process.

Step One: The applicants shall submit a Concept Note, where the proposed innovative initiative should comply with the goals outlined in section 2. Objective.

The applicants are allowed to submit **only 1 (one) Concept Note**. CeProSARD on behalf of the RECONOMY program shall review the Concept Notes submitted by applicants and will assess them based on evaluation criteria and the other provisions set out in this Request. The Concept Notes shall be short-listed, and up to a maximum of 3 concept notes will be selected.

Step Two: Selected applicants will be invited to elaborate further on their concept notes with the support of the project team.

4. Eligibility for Participation

4.1. Eligible Applicants

Participation is open to all companies with proven or demonstrable experience in the EECR sector, including solution providers, green technology developers, innovation-driven SMEs, green startups that are legal entities registered in at least one of the following countries: **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, or Serbia**.

4.2. Exclusion Criteria from Participation

Applicants shall be excluded from taking part in the procurement procedure if they and/or their individual owners meet at least one of the **Exclusion Criteria** described in Annex 1.

5. Instructions on Concept Notes

5.1. Content and Form of the Concept Notes:

Applicants should submit a Concept Note based on the form provided by ***CeProSARD*** . Please fill out the **Concept Note Form** enclosed in this Request. (Annex 2).Applicants must fill out all sections of the form.

5.2. Duration of the activities' implementation:

Applicants should submit Concept Notes with activities that do not exceed a 12-month time frame for their implementation.

5.3. Funding limits:

RECONOMY Program will provide financial support of up to max. 25,000.00 CHF per Concept Note, which should be used only for the implementation of activities. The rest of the other costs (rent, salaries, utilities, etc.) should be provided by the applicant's own resources. Participants are required to showcase cost-sharing contributions in the frame of the proposed activities.

5.4. Language of the Concept Notes:

Concept notes should be submitted in English language.

6. Application Procedure

6.1. Selection Criteria:

The eligible applicants meeting the following criteria are invited to submit a Concept Note:

- Experience of at least 5 years (exclusion for green startups) in providing solutions related to Energy-Efficient Construction and Renovation and/or in supporting business development and innovation in the green construction sector;
- Demonstrated organizational, financial, and technical capacities to implement and sustain the proposed initiative, including sufficient internal resources or partnerships to co-finance the initiative;
- Capacity to demonstrate market relevance of the proposed solution, its potential for scaling, and its alignment with green standards and sustainability goals;
- Clear articulation of the systemic constraint the solution aims to address, and a compelling justification for the added value of RECONOMY's support, necessary for successful implementation.

6.2. Submission of Concept Notes

Concept Notes should be delivered in **pdf format** to the email: tenders@ceprosard.org.mk with the subject line "Concept note EECR market actor", by **12.06.2025 by 17:00 CET.**

7. Evaluation

Concept Notes shall be evaluated on the basis of their completeness, compliance, and responsiveness to the objective and other provisions of this Request. Shortlisted applicants may be invited for a meeting, where certain aspects of their submitted Concept Notes may be discussed prior to confirmation of being selected for the second step of the procurement process.

7.1. Awarding Criteria

Concept Notes will be evaluated based on the ***Best price – Quality ratio*** criteria as follows:

A: Quality of Concept Note - 70%
B: Financial offer – 30%

7.2. Evaluation Criteria

A. Quality of Concept Note Criteria		**Max Points (70)**
A1. Relevance and innovation of the proposed initiative		
A1.1	Relevance to the EECR needs in the WB	10
A1.2	Innovation	10
A1.3	Sustainability and continuity vision	10
A2. Implementation of initiative		
A2.1	Clarity, planning approach, expected results	15
A2.2.	The impact on the industry sector (number of companies or people reached)	15
A3. Organizational and professional capacities to implement the initiative		
A3.1	Organizational capacities	5
A3.2	Demonstrated track record of successfully integrating gender and social inclusion principles	5
B. Financial Offer Criteria		**Max Points (30)**
B.1	Feasibility of the implementation cost of the initiative	10
B.2	The rates of implementation cost are well aligned with the regional/national market rates	10
B.3	Financial capacity of the applicant and matching funds provision	10

Shortlisted Concept Notes will be selected based on the total score attained.
To be shortlisted the Concept Notes should pass the minimum score of 50% of the quality score of 70 points.

8. Confidentiality

RECONOMY acknowledges that the information received from Applicants under this Request for Concept Notes may be of a confidential nature. RECONOMY shall use the same degree of care with Applicant's confidential information as it uses to protect its own confidential information.

9. Further Information

Any clarifications or questions regarding this Request for Concept Notes shall be sent to the email address tenders@ceprosard.org.mk no later than 7 working days before the closing date.

The applicants can expect to receive information about the decision on their expressions of interest by **17.06.2025**.

1. Exclusion criteria from participation in procurement procedures

Applicants will be excluded from taking part in a procurement procedure if:

1. it is bankrupt, subject to insolvency or winding-up procedures, where its assets are being administered by a liquidator or by a court, where it is in an arrangement with creditors, where its business activities are suspended, or where it is in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for under national laws or regulations.

2. it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the candidate/tenderer is guilty of grave professional misconduct by having violated applicable laws or regulations or ethical standards of the profession to which the applicant belongs, or by having engaged in any wrongful conduct which has an impact on its professional credibility where such conduct denotes a wrongful intent or gross negligence, including, in particular, any of the following:
   i. fraudulently or negligently misrepresenting information required for the verification of the absence of grounds for exclusion or the fulfilment of selection criteria or in the performance of a contract;
   ii. entering into agreement with other economic operators with the aim of distorting competition;
   iii. violating intellectual property rights;
   iv. attempting to influence the decision-making process of RECONOMY during the procurement procedure; or
   v. attempting to obtain confidential information that may confer upon it undue advantages in the procurement procedure.

3. it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the applicant is in breach of its obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions in accordance with the applicable law.

4. it has been established by a final judgment that they, or persons having powers of representation, decision making control over them, is guilty of any of the following fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorist financing, child labour (or any other forms of trafficking in human beings) or any other illegal activity detrimental to SIDA's or HELVETAS's interests.

5. the applicant has shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations in the performance of a contract financed by Sida or HELEVTAS, which has led to the early termination of a legal commitment or to the application of liquidated damages or other contractual penalties or which has been discovered following checks and audits or investigations.

6. they, their subsidiary, another company belonging to the same group of companies, a consortium partner or other affiliate is found on the list of EU restrictive measures. The lists of persons, groups, entities subject to the EU restrictive measures are published on the following website: www.sanctionsmap.eu.

Applicants must certify on honour in their applications that they are not in any of the situations listed above.

2. Exclusion from award of contracts are subject to a conflict of interests1

Contracts may not be awarded to applicants which, during the procurement procedure:

1. are subject to a conflict of interests (*RECONOMY may conclude that an applicant does not possess the required professional capacity to perform the contract to an appropriate quality standard where the RECONOMY has established that the applicant has conflicting interests which may negatively affect its performance*.);
2. are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by RECONOMY as a condition of participation in the contract procedure or a failure to supply this information, or
3. where the RECONOMY determines that there are grounds for exclusion according to Section 1.1.

Annex 2: Concept note template

CONCEPT FORM

Date:		Concept submitted to:	
Name of the initiative/idea:			
Legal name of applicant:			
Acronym:			
Legal status:			
Registration number:			
Address:			
Phone:			
E-mail:			
Webpage:			
Name of legal representative:			
Contact person:			
Position:			
Phone:			
E-mail:			

1) **Briefly describe who you are, about your organization/company**
What type of organization, when and where is established *Mission and vision* *Managing bodies, employees and volunteers* *What activities they have implemented* *What are the main services of the organization (trainings, certification etc)* *Annual budget* *Established partnership and collaboration*

2) **What is the problem that you want to solve?**
. Problems in the countries that should be addressed *Problems of the organization that should be addressed?*

3) **Please summarize the proposal to solve the problem**: (*business idea & vision*)
Examples: • *New markets* • *New consumer segments* • *Products improvement* • *Certified trainings* • *Career development* • …….

4) **Who are the end users and how will they benefit?**
Examples: - *women, youth, disadvantaged groups* - *private sector enterprises – EE in construction and renovation* - *public institutions* -

5) **Potential impact (jobs created, additional income for target groups included, investments in energy efficient solutions, etc.)**
In months

6) **Duration of the initiative**
In months

7) **Details of the investment needed**

PARTS	Unit	Quantity	Price/ Unit (in CHF)	TOTAL (in CHF)	Budget to be covered by Applicant	Budget to be covered by RECONOMY
PART 1 - STAFF						
list of the positions	months					
Total - Part 1						
PART 2 - OPERATION COSTS						
list of operation costs						
Total - Part 2						
PART 3 - ACTIVITIES						
list of activities						
Total - Part 3						
TOTAL BUDGET						

Please add in annex if you have more detailed costing

Submitted by: _____