

## Request for Expressions of Interest

### Documenting RECONOMY Program Impact through Local Narratives in the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership Countries

#### 1. Background

RECONOMY is a program of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation in collaboration with partners, in two regions - Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia Ukraine, Moldova), and the Western Balkans (Kosovo, North Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina).

The main goal of RECONOMY is to enable women and youth, including the most disadvantaged and excluded, to benefit from economic opportunities by increasing their income and taking up decent and green jobs, inclusively and sustainably. To achieve the main goal, RECONOMY works along three workstreams:

- **Services:** When businesses embrace the new or better services facilitated by RECONOMY, it is expected that their investment and growth will increase as a result, making the private sector more competitive. These changes on the demand side, however, are insufficient.
- **Competencies:** Competencies of the labor force are required, as is the ability to join companies or launch one's own economic endeavors. These come from inclusive, affordable, and demand-driven skills and intermediation services and support systems, leading to the employability and mobility of women and youth.
- **Influences:** Further, businesses benefit from an enabling environment that is tailored to their industry or company, as it influences their productivity and spurs them to do business in a better way.

The program focuses on the aspirations and challenges of women and youth, as well as the strategic priorities of the countries in these regions. It was launched in 2020, with an inception phase that ended in December 2022 for the Eastern Partnership countries and in March 2023 for the Western Balkans. The main phase will last for four years, starting in January 2023 for the Eastern Partnership Region and April 2023 for the Western Balkans, and ending in December 2026.

In the ever-evolving socio-economic landscape of the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries, RECONOMY has been instrumental in creating systemic changes, bringing forth economic opportunities and access to decent and green jobs for women and young people, including the most disadvantaged and excluded. The quest to illuminate these changes through the lens of human experiences necessitates the authentic representation of local voices and narratives. **Therefore, RECONOMY is looking for a Pool of Local Journalists/Consultants who can chronicle the human-interest stories, write about the systemic changes and the challenges and opportunities experienced by the individuals in these regions.**

## 2. Scope of Work, Expertise Required and Deliverables

The purpose of engaging a pool of local journalists/consultants is to write stories by the end of 2026, focusing on the real-life experiences, struggles, opportunities, and challenges encountered by individuals in the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries due to RECONOMY's development work.

### 2.1 Scope of Work

The scope of work of local journalists/consultants will be focused on the following topics:

- Emphasize selecting diverse stories representing various demographics, geographies, and socio-economic backgrounds based on RECONOMY's target group. For the identification of stories, the journalist/consultant should communicate with the program's KMLC Manager.
- Ensure adherence to journalistic ethics, maintaining the authenticity and integrity of the narratives. If covering sensitive topics like gender-based violence or discrimination, the journalist/consultant must approach these subjects with care and offer resources for individuals who may need support.
- Maintain a balance between narrating individual experiences and contextualizing them within the broader socio-economic landscape relevant to RECONOMY. Additionally, look broader beyond one life impact only in terms of providing an introduction to the article about the economic empowerment conditions created by RECONOMY for people overall but also how businesses benefit from having diverse teams or how it is an essential part of their sustainable business model, etc.

### 2.2 Expertise required

The pool of journalists/consultants should possess a diverse range of skills and expertise relevant to writing about RECONOMY's outcomes and achievements through local narratives, as follows:

- Exemplary narrative skills in human-interest story development.
- Proficiency in photography, with a focus on capturing compelling images that complement and enhance storytelling.
- Strong communication and intercultural skills.
- Good understanding of the regional socio-political and economic contexts.
- Experience in writing human-interest stories and articles about economic development.

### 2.3 Deliverable

- Develop 1200-word articles, focusing on individual experiences related to RECONOMY's outcomes and achievements. The stories are a combination of struggles, opportunities, challenges, and transformations.
- Photos related to the human-interest stories.

### 3. Eligibility for participation

#### 3.1 Eligible Applicants

Participation is open to all individuals with proven experience in the field of expertise required.

Helvetas is committed to diversity and inclusion within its workforce and encourages qualified candidates of all genders, backgrounds, and abilities to apply. All engagement is decided on the basis of qualifications, competence, integrity, and organizational need.

#### 3.2 Exclusion Criteria from Participation

Applicants shall be excluded from taking part in the procurement procedure if they meet at least one of the Exclusion Criteria described in Annex 1.

***Applicants must certify on honor in their Expressions of Interest that they are not in any of the situations described in Annex 1 - Exclusion Criteria. Please use the template provided in Annex 2.***

### 4. Qualifications and Selection Criteria

To be considered for the Pool of Journalists/Consultants, applicants should meet the following criteria:

- Degree in a relevant field (journalism, communication studies, development studies, etc.).
- Minimum of three years of professional experience in journalism or communication-related fields.
- Proven expertise and track record in narrative skills and experience in human-interest story development.
- Good understanding of social and economic inclusion of women and youth, including the most disadvantaged and excluded groups.
- Strong analytical, communication, and intercultural skills.
- Profound knowledge of the regional socio-political and economic context.
- Fluency in English and proficiency in local languages.
- Profound understanding of the local culture and ethos.
- The journalists/consultants who can cover more than one country are preferred.

### 5. Application Procedure

#### 5.1 Language of the Expressions of Interest: ENGLISH

#### 5.2 Documents to be submitted:

Expressions of interest should include the following documents:

- Curriculum vitae of the journalist/consultant highlighting relevant qualifications and experiences,
- Cover letter outlining the journalist/consultant's expertise and how it aligns with the objectives of this request,
- Examples of similar work,
- Financial offer – article fee rate requested in CHF,
- Certification on Honour.

**Note:** All the above-listed documents are mandatory for submission. If any of these documents are not presented, the expressions of interest will not be qualified for the evaluation process.

*Upon request, the applicant will present documents* proving the qualifications and experience declared in the CV.

### 5.3 Submission of Expressions of Interest

Expressions of Interest should be delivered in **PDF format** to [reconomyprocurement@helvetas.org](mailto:reconomyprocurement@helvetas.org), with the subject line "Application for Local Journalist/Consultant - RECONOMY Program", by **25 March 2024**.

## 6. Evaluation

Expressions of Interest will be evaluated based on the qualifications and selection criteria outlined above. Shortlisted candidates may be invited for an interview to assess their suitability for the pool of journalists /consultants.

### 6.1 Awarding Criteria

Expressions of interest will be evaluated based on the **Best price – Quality ratio** criteria as follows:

- A. Quality of Qualification - 80%
- B: Financial offer (fee per article) – 20%

### 6.2 Evaluation Criteria

<b>A. Qualification Criteria</b>		<b>Max Points (80)</b>
<b>A1. General Qualification</b>		
A1.1	Strong background in the field of expertise	15
A1.2	Understanding of social and economic inclusion of women and youth, including the most disadvantaged and excluded groups	5
A1.3	Knowledge of the local socio-political and economic context, as well as familiarity with another country within the same region.	8
A1.4	Analytical, communication, and intercultural skills	5
A1.5	Fluency in English and proficiency in local languages	7
<b>A2. Professional Experience</b>		
A2.1	Relevance of the professional experience in the field of expertise	20
A2.2	Proven similar works/assignments of expertise carried out at the local level and an additional country in the region	20
<b>B. Financial Offer (Daily fee rate) Criteria</b>		<b>Max Points (20)</b>
B.1	Fee per article requested is well aligned with the local market rates	10
B.2	To what extent the quality of qualification corresponds to the article fee rate requested.	10

Shortlisted applicants will be selected based on the total score attained.

To be shortlisted the applicants should pass:

- a. the minimum score of 60% of the qualification score of 80 points, and
- b. the minimum score of 50% of the financial offer score of 20 points.

The expressions of interest that do not pass the minimum qualification score are not considered eligible for further consideration, and their financial offers will not be evaluated.

## 7. Conditions

- **The journalists/consultants shortlisted in the pool will be engaged on an on-call basis, with specific assignments and duration to be determined based on the program's needs.**
- Shortlisted journalists/consultants will be engaged as individual consultants on a contractual basis. The detailed terms and conditions of the contract will be negotiated based on the specific assignments and deliverables.
- The fee rates per article requested in the expressions of interest must include all taxes and remain unchangeable during the whole duration of the program.
- The **HELVETAS General Conditions of Business** shall be deemed accepted on submission of expressions of interest (Annex 3).
- Availability for travel within the regions may be required. Cost for travel, accommodation, and per diem are regulated in the contract based on internal rules of HELVETAS.

## 8. Confidentiality

RECONOMY acknowledges that the information received from Applicants under this Request for Expressions of Interest (REOI) 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 REOI shall be sent to the email address [reconomyprocurement@helvetas.org](mailto:reconomyprocurement@helvetas.org) no later than 3 working days before the REOI closing date.

The applicants can expect to receive information about the decision on their expressions of interest by the **end of April 2024**.