



Request for Offer (RFO)
NO: EEU002 Sept 2025
September 2025

Assignment	Consultancy Services for Strengthening EU Engagement and Strategic Positioning in Eastern Europe
Contract	Service Framework Contract – one year with possible extension
Starting date	Mid-October 2025
Duty Station	Hybrid (remote, with occasional duty travel to Balkan countries, including but not limited to Belgrade and Tirana)
Application Deadline	Tuesday, September 30, 2025 – 18:00 CET
Submission Email	procurement.easterneurope@helvetas.org

1. Background

Helvetas is a leading Swiss non-governmental organization dedicated to development cooperation and humanitarian response. With affiliated organizations in Germany and the United States, Helvetas operates in over 35 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. The organization is politically independent and denominationally neutral, committed to fostering a just world where all individuals can live self-determined lives in dignity and security, while using natural resources sustainably.

Helvetas supports disadvantaged communities in low-income and middle-income countries through partnership-based development cooperation. Its approach emphasizes self-help, equitable access to essential services, and the protection of human rights. The organization works across sectors such as water and sanitation, education, vocational training, governance, climate resilience, and economic development.

Helvetas Eastern Europe is active in 11 countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Ukraine. The regional office is based in Belgrade with network structures across Eastern Europe. The Eastern Europe team focuses on four strategic areas: Good Governance, Economic Perspectives, Green Transition, and Humanitarian Response.

The region faces complex challenges such as youth unemployment, migration pressures, and institutional fragility. Helvetas Eastern Europe addresses these through multi-stakeholder approaches that link civil society, government, and private sector actors. The organization promotes inclusive economic development, vocational education, and democratic accountability, with a growing emphasis on urban engagement and youth empowerment.

Helvetas Eastern Europe is increasingly seeking to align its strategic goals with European Union agenda and priorities in the region. This includes building internal capacities to understand and access EU instruments, fostering partnerships with EU-funded programs, and contributing to regional development agendas that resonate with EU priorities such as green transition,

digitalization, human rights and social inclusion, common regional market, growth plan for Western Balkans, etc.

2. Objectives of the consultancy

The objective is to enhance Helvetas' ability to co-finance and scale its initiatives and projects, particularly in areas like civil society strengthening, market systems development, governance reforms and humanitarian interventions. By becoming more familiar with EU funding structures, Helvetas Eastern Europe intends to deepen its impact and sustainability across the region, while contributing to broader European integration and development goals.

Helvetas Eastern Europe is seeking qualified consultant (or team of consultants) to support the organization in strengthening its strategic engagement with European Union funding mechanisms. The assignment involves designing and facilitating a structured learning process, building internal capacities, and developing a practical strategy for EU funding alignment. The selected consultant(s) will work closely with Helvetas staff in regional unit Eastern Europe to deliver tailored sessions, provide expert guidance, and produce actionable outputs that contribute to long-term institutional readiness and impact

3. Expected results

- Facilitate a structured learning process about EU funding mechanism for Helvetas Eastern Europe Regional Unit. Design and conduct the EU funding learning process with a tailored, cost-efficient kick-off session, followed by reflection and peer-learning sessions to consolidate insights and adapt the approach for positioning toward EU funding mechanism.
- Build internal expertise and technical capacity among staff in Helvetas Regional unit. Support thematic deep dives through individual research by topic holders and organize targeted coaching sessions/ individual training on EU compliance requirements in Finance, HR, MEL, Business development, Communications, and Procurement.
- Leverage internal and external experience in EU funding mechanism in Eastern Europe in current funding mechanism. Facilitate learning from Helvetas' own EU project submissions and organize knowledge-sharing sessions with external EU project implementers (INGOs and consulting companies) to gain practical insights, lessons learned and tips for project preparation.
- Development of EU Funding Opportunity Matrix/Prioritization tool of Helvetas Eastern Europe. This matrix acts as a strategic roadmap, identifying and ranking potential funding calls based on criteria like strategic alignment, project fit, and financial feasibility. Identify mentors to guide proposal development and lead the creation of a strategic plan outlining Helvetas Eastern Europe's approach to EU funding, with clear actions points for coming years 2026/2027.

4. Main Tasks and Activities of the consultant

Activity 1: Inception, Portfolio Understanding, and Capacity Assessment (5-7 days)

- **1.1. Portfolio and Strategic Understanding:** Conduct a review of Helvetas' key projects, strategic documents, and publications in Eastern Europe. Develop understanding of the

Helvetas work in the region and legal organization for implementation of EU funding Mechanism. This will be complemented by meetings with the Regional Director, Portfolio Managers, Helvetas Germany, Business Development Manager and key program staff to gain a deep understanding of the work, priorities, and internal structures of the Helvetas Eastern Europe Regional Unit. *(Estimated: 2-3 days)*

- **1.2. Learning Process Design & Kick-off:** Based on the insights from Activity 1.1, the consultant will design a tailored and cost-efficient learning process. This includes preparing for and facilitating a kick-off session to introduce the core concepts of EU funding and set the stage for the learning journey. *(Estimated: 2-4 days)*

Activity 2: Technical Deep-Dives & Coaching (8-10 days)

- **2.1. Topic Deep-Dive Preparation:** Identify key thematic areas and relevant EU programs: Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III), Neighborhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), Interreg Horizon Europe, Erasmus, Growth Plan *(Estimated: 2-4 days)*
- **2.2. Targeted Coaching Sessions:** Organize and deliver a series of targeted coaching sessions for staff, focusing on specific compliance requirements in key areas like:
 - Finance & Budgeting (eligibility of costs, financial management).
 - HR (staffing, timesheets).
 - Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL).
 - Business Development & Proposal Writing.
 - Procurement & Subcontracting.
 - Communications & Visibility. *(Estimated: 4-6 days, depending on the number of sessions)*

Activity 3: Knowledge Sharing & Peer Learning (4-6 days)

- **3.1. Internal Learning Synthesis:** Conduct a desk review and interviews to document lessons learned from Helvetas' past EU project submissions, both successful and unsuccessful. Prepare a summary document of key insights. *(Estimated: 2 days)*
- **3.2. Knowledge-Sharing Sessions:** Identify and engage 2-4 external guest speakers (from INGOs, Swiss INGO, private consulting companies) to share their experiences. Facilitate 2 sessions for Helvetas staff to gain practical tips and lessons learned. *(Estimated: 3-4 days, including preparation and follow-up)*

Activity 4: Strategic Planning & Matrix Development (8-11 days)

- **4.1. EU Funding Opportunity Mapping:** Systematically research and identify relevant EU funding programs and specific calls for proposals for the 2026/2027 period. *(Estimated: 2 days)*
- **4.2. EU Funding Opportunity Matrix/Prioritization tool:** Develop a comprehensive EU Funding Opportunity Matrix/Prioritization tool. This involves defining the specific scoring criteria and weighting, populating the tool with the identified opportunities, and providing clear instructions on its use. *(Estimated: 2-4 days)*
- **4.3 Development of EU funding Approach:** Draft a concise (5 pages) action plan for Helvetas Eastern Europe's approach to EU funding. The action plan will outline the prioritized sectors, target funding instruments, a capacity-building action plan, and clear next steps with assigned responsibilities for the coming years (2026/2027). *(Estimated: 3-*

5 days)

- **4.4. Mentorship Identification:** Based on the strategic plan, identify and recommend potential internal or external mentors to guide future proposal development. (*Estimated: 1 day*)

5. Time Frame of the assignment

It is expected that consultancy will start in Mid-October and finalize by end December 2025

6. Overall coordination

Consultant will work closely with Business Development Manager and Regional Knowledge Management and Learning Manager.

7. Required Expertise and Qualifications

The consultant (or team) will possess a strong combination of technical expertise in EU funding, a deep understanding of the Eastern Europe context, and proven experience in a consulting or advisory role.

Essential Qualifications:

- **Extensive Experience with EU Funding:** A minimum of 7-10 years of professional experience in developing and securing EU-funded projects for international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), private sector, or research institutions.
- **Proven Track Record:** A demonstrable history of writing and managing successful grant applications for major EU external instruments, particularly the **Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)** and the **Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)**. Experience with **Interreg**, **Horizon Europe**, or **Erasmus+** is a significant advantage.
- **Deep Technical Knowledge:** In-depth knowledge of EU project management and compliance requirements, including financial regulations, human resources rules, procurement procedures, and monitoring and evaluation (MEL) frameworks.
- **Consulting & Capacity Building Skills:** Proven experience in designing and delivering training, workshops, and coaching sessions for organizational staff, with a strong ability to transfer complex knowledge into practical skills.
- **Eastern Europe Expertise:** Direct professional experience working in the Eastern Europe region. A solid understanding of the political, economic, and civil society landscape in the Western Balkans and/or Eastern Partnership countries is crucial.
- **Excellent Communication and Analytical Skills:** Exceptional writing, editing, and communication skills in English, with the ability to synthesize complex information into clear, concise, and compelling documents.
- **Professionalism:** Demonstrated ability to work independently, manage a project schedule, and deliver high-quality outputs on time.

Desirable Qualifications (for a team of minimum two consultants):

- **Complementary Expertise:** If applying as a team, one consultant should have a primary focus on strategic business development and proposal writing, while the second should have a strong background in EU financial management, compliance, and reporting.
- **Local Knowledge:** Experience with the national funding ecosystems and civil society networks in Helvetas' target countries in Eastern Europe.

8. Submission of Application and Selection process

Interested consultants or teams of consultants are invited to submit their applications no later than **30 September 2025, 18:00 CET**, at procurement.easterneurope@helvetas.org. All applications must be submitted in **English** and compiled into **PDF document**.

Please use the following subject line in your email:
NO: EEU002 – Sept 2025 – Consultancy Services for Strengthening EU Engagement and Strategic Positioning in Eastern Europe.

The application package must include the following components:

- **Technical Proposal for Implementation:** A maximum of 5 pages outlining the consultant's proposed methodology and work plan for carrying out the tasks outlined in this ToR. This should include a proposed timeline and a brief explanation of how the consultant's approach will meet the project objectives.
- **CVs of Consultant(s):** The curriculum vitae of the lead consultant and any team members. These should clearly highlight previous experience with EU funding mechanisms and relevant projects in Eastern Europe. CV should not exceed 2 pages.
- **References:** A minimum of three professional references from clients for whom similar work has been conducted. Please include the client's name, organization, contact details (email and phone number), and a brief description of the services provided.
- **Financial Offer (to be submitted as a separate document):** Applicants are requested to provide a detailed financial proposal that includes:
 - The proposed **daily fee**.
 - A **breakdown of the estimated number of working days** allocated to each activity.
 - Confirmation that the proposed fee is **inclusive of all professional costs**, including applicable taxes.
 - Specification of any **additional costs** (e.g., travel or accommodation), if foreseen.
 - The proposed **daily fee for other services of a similar nature** that may be required during the year but are not explicitly included in the activities outlined above, for reference under the framework contract.

Helvetas will evaluate the applications based on the following criteria:

- **Technical Quality (40%):** The consultant's demonstrated understanding of the assignment and the quality of the proposed methodology



- **Relevant Experience and Expertise (35%):** The track record of the consultant(s) with EU funding and relevant regional experience.
- **Financial Proposal (25%):** The competitiveness and cost-effectiveness of the proposed fee.

9. Contracting Authority

**HELNETAS International
Eastern Europe Region**