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TERMS OF REFERENCE

International River Basin Management Expert

Programme title:	Groundwater Management, Use and Protection Programme (GWP)
Position title:	International Consultant – River Basin Management Expert
Type of contract:	Individual Consultant Contract
Duty Station:	Skopje, North Macedonia / Home office
Duration of contract:	Maximum up to 150 working days in a period until December 2027
Start date:	20 December 2024
Application deadline:	By 03 December 2024

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Swiss-funded **Groundwater Management, Use and Protection Programme (GWP)** aims at supporting North Macedonia in establishing a sustainable long-term, multi-level, and systematic groundwater management that enables collaborative, effective, and more transparent use of the groundwater resources.

The GWP stakeholders/partners include institutions at central governmental level, research and academia as well as local institutions (e.g. municipalities, public utilities), civil society organisations and the private sector. The **consortium of Skat Consulting and PointPro Consulting** has been mandated by the **Swiss Embassy** in the Republic of North Macedonia to implement Phase 1 of the GWP from Jan 2024 – Dec 2027. Two additional subsequent phases may follow subject to successful implementation of the Programme’s first phase and fulfilment of the overall commitment of its main national partners.

[Skat Consulting Ltd.](http://www.skat.ch) Is a owner-operated leading Swiss company specialising in international cooperation and is dedicated to making available basic services and ensuring dignified living conditions and a healthy environment for all. Skat Consulting supports governments, the private sector and civil society around the globe in improving people’s lives by facilitating lasting solutions in water, building, energy and governance.

[PointPro Consulting d.o.o.](http://www.pointpro.com.mk) is a leading management consulting company based in Skopje since 2006 incorporating two business areas: (a) Infrastructure and Sustainable Development and (b) Management Consulting and Corporate Finance.

To facilitate the implementation of the Programme, on a day-to-day basis, a so-called **Programme Facilitation Unit (PFU)** will be hosted together by the Skat Consulting Branch in Skopje and PointPro Consulting. The PFU is responsible for direct implementation of activities.

Although groundwater in North Macedonia is of high strategic importance (e.g. as source of 77% of the drinking water supply), it has not been recognised as such and is therefore **not adequately used, managed and protected**. The responsible institutions **do not have sufficient and adequate capacity**; there is a lack of background information, knowledge and tools for the protection, planning and monitoring of groundwater resources and the legal framework is incomplete. In addition, **low awareness of the status of groundwater** is reflected in low

public pressure and weak mobilisation of the public and civil society on groundwater management issues.

The Swiss-funded Groundwater Management, Use and Protection Programme (GWP) aims to build long-lasting groundwater governance capacities at national and local levels so that North Macedonia can take appropriate and effective actions to sustainably manage its groundwater resources to achieve its social and economic development goals while avoiding irreversible degradation of its aquifer systems. The overall objective of the GWP is to strengthen relevant authorities and raise awareness among civil society to implement the provisions of an integrated framework coherent with the requirements of the EU environmental acquis for the sustainable management of ground-water resources in a changing climate.

Phase 1 is designed to establish the basis for a long-term transformation of groundwater (GW) management. The development of the Vardar River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) covering about 80% of the total GW bodies (68 out of 80 municipalities with around 86% of country population) will be used as the main tool for capacity development of national and local institutions and awareness raising. Phase 1 shall create the institutional and legal conditions and the knowledge base for managing groundwater in an integrated manner. The expected results of Phase 1 (2024- 2027) include (a) strengthening the competencies of key institutions and stakeholders for integrated and sustainable groundwater management; (b) harmonizing and consolidating the legal framework; (c) developing the Vardar RBMP; and (d) implementing pilot projects with farmers, public utilities, the private sector and municipalities.

ASSIGNMENT BACKGROUND

The river basin management plan is one of the most comprehensive and integrated documents developed by the public administration. It must not only assess the current state but also summarize recent developments and project conditions for the next six years. For the Vardar River Basin which spans approximately 80% of the country, the plan provides critical and site-specific data to support water management decisions. The planning process aims to protect and enhance the environment, promote efficient water use, and safeguard against floods and droughts. Achieving these objectives requires robust management, active stakeholder engagement, and rigorous data analysis, ensuring a cohesive, thorough process and high-quality documentation.

The current document referred to as the Vardar River Basin Management Plan is essentially a technical report developed in 2019 with support from the IPA Twinning Project aimed at enhancing the Ministry of Environment's capacity to effectively implement EU water quality standards.

A comprehensive technical review of the document, conducted by combining internal and external expertise from the GWP program and assessing it against EU water legislation (WFD and GWD) identified significant gaps and deficiencies. These issues hinder both a straightforward update—particularly regarding groundwater management, a key identified gap—and the adoption of the document as a means for the Ministry to meet EU acquis requirements and align national water legislation. To address these challenges, numerous activities have been proposed with most classified as short-term, priority actions essential for the development of the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). These interconnected activities require careful coordination to not only ensure the timely development of the Vardar RBMP but also to enable its effective implementation in water management. To organize these proposed activities into systematic, thematically aligned and actionable measures which will aim with development of comprehensive and aligned with WFD requirements river basin management plan, four categories of sub-projects have been compiled which will serve as the core components of the River Basin Management Plan:

- 1) Subproject “**River basin management**” (Focused primarily on the administrative aspects of the planning process, this subproject coordinates activities across other subprojects, manages stakeholder engagement, ensures process coherence and thoroughness, and oversees the drafting of key documents).

- 2) Subproject “**Development of classification system for surface and groundwater bodies**” (Development of an innovative WFD-based approach for assessing water quality in North Macedonia, involving an in-depth biological and chemical analysis of field data.)
- 3) Subproject “**Development of study on pressures and Impact to the surface and groundwater bodies**” (Development of tools, models, and foundational resources to support informed decision-making in water management.).
- 4) Subproject “**Development of water information system**” (Providing robust support for comprehensive data collection, management, and sharing to ensure an efficient planning process, while facilitating foundational integration and alignment across activities.)

The Programme envisages to provide technical support to the competent authority-Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning which is responsible for preparation, implementation and monitoring of the river basin management plans in the country including Vardar River basin in implementation of the activities. While the classification of the surface and groundwater bodies, study on pressures and impacts and development of the GIS based Water information system will be designed and implemented by diversity off programme (inhouse) and external expertise, the planning process of developing the plan would require technical support in coordination of various stages in e.g. managing stakeholder engagement, ensuring process coherence and thoroughness, etc.

In order to contribute to the planning development process and bring in the added value of international EU experience, the GWP Programme is looking for an international **River Basin Management Expert** to lead and technically support the preparation of the Vardar River Basin Management Plan.

B. SCOPE OF WORK

The objective of this assignment is to provide overall technical support in the process of development of the Vardar RBMP and to lead the drafting of the Vardar RBMP. The expert is expected to support coordination and lead the definition of processes in the preparation of the Vardar RBMP and additionally lead the drafting of the Vardar RBMP. The expert is expected to visit North Macedonia to participate in presentations of the work/reports/deliverables which will be agreed in prior with the Programme staff.

C. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Under the leadership of the Outcome Manager and the Team Leader and in close collaboration with the other expert team, assigned to implement activities of the sub-projects, the River Basin Management Expert is responsible for carrying out the following tasks:

Task 1: Support in the coordination and technical aspects of the planning process during the implementation of various activities for the development of the Vardar RBMP

An International River Basin Management Expert is sought to guide and provide advice in the planning process for the development of the Vardar RBMP and to ensure the compliance of the process with EU requirements, best practise, international standards and principles of integrated water resources management. The development of the plan will be carried out as a parallel multi-tasking process involving other national/international experts and companies who will be responsible for the development of the key documents, and which will be prepared in a highly participatory process with broad stakeholder involvement.

Specific activities and responsibilities under this task include:

- a) Leading technical activities:
 - o Reviewing and commenting of different reports in various stages of implementation of the subproject activities.

- Provide active revision, guidance and quality assurance on chapters/key reports in the implementation of the sub-projects activities.
 - Ensure that the supporting reports for the development of the Vardar RBMP are in line with international standards, guidelines and frameworks for integrated water resources management.
- b) Supporting technical activities:
- Support programme staff (outcome managers) in drafting the Terms of Reference for the engagement of experts/consultants (definition of deliverables, timeline) for the implementation of various activities.
 - Prepare an overview of key deliverables/results in the plan development process, ready for publication and commenting.
 - Participation in workshops and presentations of the key deliverables/results of the subproject activities.
- c) Supporting coordination activities:
- Support the overall coordination in the implementation of the sub-project activities, ensuring the linkages of deliverables at different stages between various reports.
 - Support the coordination of a pool of relevant stakeholders (government agencies, water authorities, inspectorate) to facilitate the plan development process.
 - Ensure that the results of the initial surveillance monitoring programme carried out by the national Hydrometeorological Service are integrated into the subproject on the development and classification of water bodies in the Vardar River Basin.

Task 2: Drafting of the Vardar River Basin Management Plan

The International River Basin Management Expert it is expected to play a central role in the development of the Vardar River Basin Management Plan by collecting all reports and products produced and developed within the sub-projects and compiling them into a draft plan for the Vardar River Basin.

Specific activities and responsibilities under this task include:

- a) Lead the compilation and drafting of the Vardar RBMP based on background information, finalized reports and results of sub-projects produced during the plan development process.
- b) Ensure consistency, coherence and compliance with EU best practises/models and experiences from other river basins in drafting the plan.

C. MAIN OUTPUTS/DELIVERABLES

The International River Basin Management Expert will be responsible for producing the following outputs (deliverables):

- Drafting of the Terms of References for hiring of experts/consultants for the implementation of sub-project activities.
- Active revision and compliance check of various deliverables/reports produced during the plan development process.
- Compilation and drafting of the Vardar RBMP based on background information, finalized reports and results of sub-projects produced during the development process.
- Prepare an overview of key deliverables/reports in the plan development process and participate in presentations of the deliverables/reports.

D. QUALIFICATIONS REQUIREMENTS AND SKILLS

The candidate should meet the following requirements:

- Minimum M.Sc. in relevant field (water management, civil engineering, urban/regional planning or similar) is required.
- At least 10 years of professional experience in the field of river basin management based on EU WFD requirements.
- A record of at least one professional assignment in the design of River Basin Management Plan according to the EU WFD.
- Excellent working knowledge of English.

Additionally, the candidate should possess the following competencies:

- Comprehensive understanding of the WFD and GWD, including their objectives, principles and requirements, with strong analytical skills.
- Clear and articulate communication skills, both oral and written, to convey complex concepts in a simple and understandable way, adapting style and content to different audiences.
- Proven ability to design and deliver effective training programmes tailored to different audiences, demonstrating excellent facilitation skills.
- Have strong organizational skills and be able to manage training projects effectively to ensure smooth running of sessions and timely delivery of materials and resources within deadlines.
- Ability to summarize research findings and draw conclusions on a given topic to provide participants with a comprehensive understanding.
- Experience of working with ministries and local self-governance structures, enabling effective collaboration and engagement with relevant stakeholders.

E. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- *Contract modality and duration*

The International River Basin Management Expert will be hired under IC (Individual Contract) modality until December 2027. A maximum of 150 expert-days is anticipated for the entire period of the assignment.

- *Reporting*

The expert will report to the Outcome Manager and the produced documentation needs to be submitted in English.

- *Travel and other associated costs*

The International River Basin Management Expert is expected to visit North Macedonia to participate in presentations of the work/reports/deliverables which will be agreed in prior with the Programme staff. Costs for the accommodation and travel costs for such events will be organized and covered by the Programme.

- *Payments schedule*

The payment for the services will be on a monthly basis, based on the number of used expert-days in line with previously assigned working packages and approved time sheets (to be certified by the Outcome Manager prior to the payments of the instalments).

- *Application procedure*

Interested offerors are invited to submit the following documents (in pdf format):

- Offeror's letter pertaining the expert confirmation of availability and containing Financial Proposal.
 - Financial proposal in the form of a lumpsum of all-inclusive cost in EUR.
 - Most updated CV with focus on required qualification as well as the details of relevant professional experience.
- *Evaluation Procedure*

The cumulative method will be applied in the evaluation of the applications. The contract will be awarded to the candidate achieving the highest cumulative score from the technical and financial parts of the proposal. The technical part accounts for 70% of the total score and the financial proposal will account for 30% of the total evaluation score. Only candidates obtaining a minimum of 49 points (70%) in the technical evaluation shall be considered for the financial evaluation. For the financial evaluation, the offer with the lowest price will be awarded the maximum of 30 points. The remaining offers will be scored proportionally based on their price relative to the lowest offer.

Technical Criteria	Maximum points 70
Minimum M.Sc. in relevant field (water management, civil engineering, urban/regional planning or similar) is required. MA = 9 PhD = 10	10
At least 10 years of professional experience in the field of river basin management based on EU WFD requirements. 10- 12 years = 20 points 13 - 16 years = 23 points 16 + = 25 points	25
Record of at least 1 (one) professional assignment in the design of River Basin Management Plan according to the EU WFD. 1 project = 20 points 2 - 4 projects = 22 points 5+ projects = 25 Points	25
Relevant international experience	10

to the following address:

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Contact for more information

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ANNEX 1: OFFEROR'S LETTER CONFIRMING INTEREST AND AVAILABILITY FOR THE ASSIGNMENT

Dear Sir/Madam,

I hereby declare that:

- A) I have read, understood and hereby accept the Terms of Reference describing the duties and responsibilities of [*indicate the purpose of the assignment as per TOR*] under the "Groundwater Management, Use and Protection Programme (GWP) in North Macedonia - Phase 1";
- B) I hereby propose my services and I confirm my interest in performing the assignment through the submission of my CV which I have duly signed and attached hereto as Annex 1;
- C) In compliance with the requirements of the Terms of Reference, I hereby confirm that I am available for the entire duration of the assignment, and I shall perform the services in the manner described in ToR;
- D) I hereby propose to complete the services based on the following payment rate: [*please check the box corresponding to the preferred option*]:
 - X - An all-inclusive daily fee of [*state amount in words and in numbers (in EUR)*].
- E) For your evaluation, the breakdown of the abovementioned all-inclusive amount is attached hereto as Annex 2;
- F) I recognize that the payment of the abovementioned amounts due to me shall be based on my delivery of outputs within the timeframe specified in the TOR, which shall be subject to SKAT Consulting's review, acceptance and payment certification procedures;
- G) This offer shall remain valid for a total period of _____ days [*minimum of 90 days*] after the submission deadline;
- H) If I am selected for this assignment, I shall sign a Contract for Consultancy Services with Skat Consulting Ltd. - Branch Office Skopje;
- I) I hereby confirm that [*check all that applies*]:

- At the time of this submission, I have no active Contract for Consultancy Services or any form of engagement with Skat Consulting Ltd. - Branch Office Skopje;
- I am currently engaged with Skat Consulting Ltd. - Branch Office Skopje or Skat Consulting Ltd. St. Gallen Switzerland and/or other entities for the following work:

Assignment	Contract Type	Name of Institution/Company	Contract Duration	Contract Amount

- I am also anticipating conclusion of the following work from Skat Consulting Ltd. - Branch Office Skopje or Skat Consulting Ltd. St. Gallen Switzerland and/or other entities for which I have submitted a proposal:

Assignment	Contract Type	Name of Institution/ Company	Contract Duration	Contract Amount

- J) I fully understand and recognize that Skat Consulting Ltd. - Branch Office Skopje is not bound to accept this proposal, and I also understand and accept that I shall bear all costs associated with its preparation and submission and that Skat Consulting Ltd. - Branch Office Skopje will in no case be responsible or liable for those costs, regardless of the conduct or outcome of the selection process.
- K) **If you are a former employee of the Skat Consulting Ltd. St. Gallen Switzerland recently separated, please add this section to your letter:** I hereby confirm that I have complied with the minimum break in service required before I can be eligible for an Individual Contract.
- L) I also fully understand that, if I am engaged as a Consultant, I have no expectations nor entitlements whatsoever to be re-instated or re-employed as an employee.
- O) REFERENCES: List three persons, not related to you, who are familiar with your character and qualifications.

Full Name	Full Address, including E-Mail Address and Telephone Number	Name of Organization Business or Occupation

- P) Have you been arrested, indicted, or summoned into court as a defendant in a criminal proceeding, or convicted, fined or imprisoned for the violation of any law (excluding minor traffic violations)?
 YES NO If "yes", give full particulars of each case in an attached statement.

I certify that the statements made by me in answer to the foregoing questions are true, complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that any misrepresentation or material omission made in the CV or other document requested by the Company may result in the termination of the contract without notice.

DATE: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

NB. You will be requested to supply documentary evidence which support the statements you have made above. Do not, however, send any documentary evidence until you have been asked to do so and, in any event, do not submit the original texts of references or testimonials unless they have been obtained for the sole use of Skat Consulting Ltd. - Branch Office Skopje.

Annexes *[please check all that applies]:*

- CV shall include Education/Qualification, Professional Certification, Employment Records /Experience
- Financial offer as daily fee