Terms of Reference for
Consultant for a Needs Assessment on the Integration of Water-Related Curriculum in Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Programme title:	Groundwater Management, Use and Protection Programme (GWP)
Position title:	Consultant
Budget line code:	T121.B Develop promotional campaigns among stakeholders on vocational and lifelong learning opportunities in (ground)water management.
Type of contract	Contract for Services
Duty Station:	Skopje, North Macedonia / Remote
Duration of assignment:	20 working days
Start date:	01 April 2026
Application deadline	24 March 2026

A. 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. Is an 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. 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.

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.

B. STRATEGIC APPROACH

Phase 1 is designed to establish the basis for a long-term transformation of groundwater (GW) management. 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) updating the draft Vardar River Basin Management Plan; and (d) implementing pilot projects with farmers, public utilities, the private sector and municipalities.

One of the main shortcomings of the existing system in North Macedonia is the lack of skilled water professionals which is rooted in an unattractive education and training offer, and low employment opportunities in the sector. The output aims to create a modern thematic education-internship-employment (EIE) ecosystem with smart opportunities for existing and new students and young professionals. The development of a sustainable EIE ecosystem will be one of the main objectives of the Ad-hoc Group on Education and Awareness, in which academic, VET and LLL institutions will work closely with public authorities, the private sector and industry to shape and implement attractive education and employment opportunities. The EIE system initially aims at already graduated students enrolling in postgraduate (specialised) degree programmes and already working professionals continuing/extending their education by enrolling in lifelong learning (LLL) courses on groundwater management. In a second stage, the EIE system will target prospective students enrolling in the specific BSc and MEng programmes. One of the major components of the EIE system are scholarship schemes for students and professionals supported by the government, agencies, and private companies, as well as internships in public and private organisations in the sector. The final element of the EIE system is attractive employment opportunities for young groundwater professionals in companies that have supported them in their studies and training. The intervention is envisaged to be implemented in close cooperation with the Education for Employment in North Macedonia (E4E@MK) project, building on its expertise in labour-market-oriented education reform and private sector engagement. This collaboration will ensure alignment of curriculum development, internship schemes and employment pathways with market needs, while maximising synergies and strengthening the sustainability of results across both initiatives.

The complex of problems described above requires a transformation of the North Macedonia's groundwater governance system with a series of long-term action steps to achieve the vision of the Programme. *The vision is that North Macedonia has taken appropriate and effective actions to sustainably manage its groundwater resources in order to reach its social and economic development goals while avoiding irreversible degradation of its priority aquifer systems*. One of many further specific ambitions of the vision is: To provide adequate capacity for all stakeholders involved in groundwater management to carry out the key tasks of resource and quality monitoring, implement appropriate protection measures and promote demand management.

To achieve this specific goal, the programme aims to:

- Develop 1 doctoral, 1 VET, 2 LLL and 1 Masters' courses, and
- Create a modern thematic education-internship-employment (EIE) ecosystem with smart opportunities for existing and new students and young professionals.

In order to operationalise the above objectives and lay the foundation for the EIE ecosystem, the GWP Programme is seeking an experienced consultant to conduct a Needs Assessment on the Integration of Water-Related Curriculum in Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training (VET).

C. SCOPE OF WORK

Under the overall guidance of the Groundwater Management, Use and Protection Programme (GWP), the consultant will conduct a comprehensive Needs Assessment to determine the relevance, feasibility, and most appropriate modality for introducing the proposed module or curriculum within Higher Education and the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system.

At the faculty level, the consultant will analyse the academic, institutional, and labour-market relevance of the proposed content. This will include clarifying the rationale for introducing the module, identifying key drivers such as alignment with national and European policy priorities, institutional strategies, student demand, and employability prospects. The consultant will assess whether the content is best introduced as a stand-alone module, integrated into an existing course, or structured through another academically appropriate format. In parallel, the consultant will map the formal procedures required for introducing new academic content, including internal approval bodies, documentation requirements, accreditation processes, and indicative timelines. Consultations will be conducted with faculty management, academic staff, and curriculum committees to ensure institutional alignment and ownership.

For the Vocational Education and Training (VET) component, the consultant will assess the relevance and appropriateness of the proposed competencies for secondary VET students, identifying the most suitable level and year of study. The analysis will examine alignment with existing VET qualifications and occupational standards and explore whether the content can be embedded into current qualifications, introduced as a new module, or developed as a new qualification where justified. The consultant will engage with the Centre for Development of Vocational Education and Training (CRSO) to ensure compliance with national qualification framework, standards, and accreditation requirements. Based on these consultations, the consultant will develop implementation scenarios outlining short- and long-term options.

Across both education pathways, the consultant will synthesize findings into practical recommendations and define clear procedural roadmaps for formal adoption and implementation. The results of the assessment will enable the stakeholders and partner institutions to make evidence-based decisions and, where appropriate, proceed immediately with curriculum integration.
Under the leadership of the Team Leader and Outcome Manager, and the overall guidance by the Groundwater Management, Use and Protection Programme (GWP), and in cooperation with the consortium, the entity will be responsible for carrying out the following tasks:

Task 1: Tertiary Level Qualification Needs Assessment.
The consultant shall:

- Clarify the rationale and need for introducing the proposed module or curriculum within the faculty's academic portfolio.
- Identify key drivers of relevance, including:
  - labour market needs,
  - alignment with national and EU policies,
  - institutional academic priorities,
  - student demand and employability prospects.
- Assess the most suitable academic format, determining whether the content should be:
  - introduced as a separate module,
  - integrated into an existing course, or
  - structured in another academically appropriate format.
- Map internal faculty procedures for formal introduction of new academic content, including:
  - approval bodies and committees,
  - documentation requirements,
  - accreditation pathways,
  - indicative timelines.
- Conduct consultations with faculty leadership, academic staff, and curriculum committees.
- Formulate recommendations for short-term and medium-term implementation.

2. Needs Assessment for Secondary Vocational Education and Training (VET)
The consultant shall:

- Assess the relevance and appropriateness of the proposed competencies and learning outcomes for Vocational Education and Training (VET) students.
- Determine:

  - the most suitable level and year of study within the VET system,
  - alignment with existing VET qualifications and occupational standards.
- Identify integration modalities, including whether the content should be:
  - embedded within existing VET qualifications,
  - introduced as a new elective or mandatory module, or
  - developed as a new VET qualification, if justified.
- Conduct consultations with the Centre for Development of Vocational Education and Training (VET Centre / CRSO) to ensure alignment with:
  - national VET frameworks,
  - qualification standards,
  - accreditation and approval procedures.
- Develop implementation scenarios outlining:
  - short-term and long-term options,
  - institutional roles and responsibilities,
  - regulatory and procedural steps.
- Formulate clear recommendations for next steps, including the formal procedures required for the stakeholders and relevant institutions to initiate curriculum adoption within the VET system.

D. METHODOLOGY

The consultant is expected to apply a mixed-methods approach, including:

- Desk review of relevant strategies, curricula, and policy documents
- Semi-structured interviews with faculty representatives and VET stakeholders
- Consultations with the VET Centre (CRSO)
- Focus groups or short surveys (if relevant)
- Comparative review of similar initiatives in the region and EU
- Analytical synthesis and formulation of recommendations

A brief methodology note and workplan shall be submitted for approval at the start of the assignment.

E. MAIN OUTPUTS/DELIVERABLES

Deliverables	Timeframe (months upon signing of contract)
1. Inception Report (max. 5 pages)	15 days
2. Draft Needs Assessment Report	2 months
2. Final Needs Assessment Report with validated conclusions and implementation roadmap	3 months

F. QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

The consultant shall meet the following minimum requirements:

- **Education:**
  Advanced university degree (Master's or equivalent) in a related discipline. A first-level university degree with additional years of relevant professional experience (5 years) may be considered as a substitute for an advanced degree in Education, Curriculum Development, Environmental Sciences, Social Sciences, Public Policy, or another closely related field from an accredited university.

- **Professional Experience:**
  At least **5 years of proven professional experience** in conducting needs assessments, education system analyses, curriculum development, or similar assignments.

- **Relevant Assignments:**
  Demonstrated experience in **at least three (3) similar assignments**, such as curriculum reviews, education sector assessments, qualification framework studies, or programme development projects, preferably involving higher education and/or VET systems.

- **Institutional Experience:**
  Proven experience working with **faculties, vocational schools, ministries, education agencies, and national regulatory bodies**.

- **Technical and Analytical Skills:**
  Strong analytical, research, and report-writing skills, with the ability to synthesize complex information into clear, practical recommendations.

- **Communication and Stakeholder Engagement:**
  Excellent communication skills and proven ability to work with diverse stakeholders, including academic institutions, government bodies, and development partners.

G. 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.

Minimum Criteria	**Fulfilled**
University degree	Yes/No
More than 5 years of professional experience	Yes/No
Record of at least three (3) similar assignments, such as curriculum reviews, education sector assessments, qualification framework studies, or programme development projects, preferably involving higher education and/or VET systems	Yes/No
Institutional Experience: Proven experience working with faculties, vocational schools, ministries, education agencies, and national regulatory bodies	Yes/No
Technical Criteria	**Maximum points**
Master = 8 PhD = 12	12
General Professional Experience Year of relevant professional experience • 5 - 10 years = 20 points • 11 - 15 years = 22 points • more than 16 years = 26 points	26
Specific Professional Experience	32

Number of relevant professional assignments • 3 assignments = 21 points • 4 - 5 assignments = 26 points • more than 5 assignments = 32 points	
Maximum total points:	**70**

G. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Language

Language of products/deliverables is listed in the Main Outputs/Deliverables section above. The quality of the documents is subject to review prior to approval. High quality proofreading is mandatory.

- Duration of the assignment

Maximum available time for completing the assignment is 6 months upon signing of the contract.

- Travel

Representatives of the Contractor are expected to travel for the needs of the required research, partaking in meetings and other needs. All travel related costs need to be included in entity's offers.

- Ownership and submission of data, reports and other material produced

All primary data, reports, visual elements and other products during this assignment shall be made available to Program in electronic format. The Program keeps the right to use all products without any restrictions (e.g., in various publications, websites, presentations).

- Payment schedule

Tentatively the full contract amount can be processed in line with the following instalments which can be adjusted prior to signing of contract and in line with company's methodology:

I. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

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

- Applicants must include a concise (1–2 page) description of their proposed methodology and approach for conducting the assessment, including key analytical steps and tools to be applied
- Offeror's letter pertaining the expert confirmation of availability.
- Financial proposal in the form of a lumpsum of all-inclusive cost in MKD/EUR[1].
- Most updated CV with focus on required qualification as well as the details of relevant professional experience.
- At least three favourable reference letters

to the following address:

- Skat Consulting Ltd. St. Gallen Switzerland - Branch Office Skopje
- address: Maksim Gorki no. 16, 1000 Skopje 5/11
- e-mail: northmacedonia@skat.ch
- web: www.skat.ch

Contact for more information

Agron Rustemi, GWP Programme, Outcome 1 Manager
address: Maksim Gorki no. 16, 1000 Skopje
email: agron.rustemi@pointpro.com.mk
phone: +389 72 547 557

[1] National experts shall submit the offer in MKD, international experts shall submit the offer in EUR

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 in North Macedonia - Phase 1";
B) I have also read, understood and hereby accept SKAT Consulting's General Conditions of Contract for Consultancy Services;
C) 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;
D) 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 my proposed approach/methodology which I have attached hereto as Annex 3 [delete this item if the TOR does not require submission of this document];
E) I hereby propose to complete the services based on the following payment rate: *[please check the box corresponding to the preferred option]:*

☐ An all-inclusive daily fee of [*state amount in words and in numbers indicating currency]*

☐ A total lump sum of [state amount in words and in numbers indicating currency*]*, payable in the manner described in the Terms of Reference.

F) For your evaluation, the breakdown of the abovementioned all-inclusive amount is attached hereto as Annex 2;
G) 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;
H) This offer shall remain valid for a total period of _____ days [*minimum of 90 days*] after the submission deadline;
I) If I am selected for this assignment, I shall sign a Contract for Consultancy Services with Skat Consulting Ltd. - Branch Office Skopje;
J) 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

K) 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.

L) ***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.

M) 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) Do you have any objections to our making enquiries of your present employer?
YES ☐ NO ☐

P) Are you now, or have you ever been a permanent civil servant in your government's employ?
YES ☐ NO ☐ If answer is "yes", WHEN? _____

Q) 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*

R) 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, Processional Certification, Employment Records /Experience
- ☐ Breakdown of Costs Supporting the Final All-Inclusive Price as per Template
- ☐ Brief Description of Approach to Work (if required by the TOR)

ANNEX 2: BREAKDOWN OF COSTS[2] SUPPORTING THE ALL-INCLUSIVE FINANCIAL PROPOSAL

A) **Breakdown of Cost by Components:**

Cost Components	Unit Cost	Quantity	Total Rate for the Contract Duration
I. Personnel Costs			
Professional Fees			
Life Insurance			
Medical Insurance			
Communications			
Land Transportation			
Others (pls. specify)			
II. Travel*			
Round Trip Airfares			
Living Allowance			
Travel Insurance			
Terminal Expenses			

B) **Breakdown of Cost by Deliverables****

Deliverables *[list them as referred to in the TOR]*	**Percentage of Total Price (Weight for payment)**	**Amount**
Deliverable 1		
Deliverable 2		
Total		

**If needed, costs for international travel and accommodation for such events will be organized and covered by the Programme. Those costs should not be included in the daily fee. Meetings can also be organised remotely/ home country*
***Basis for payment tranches*

[2] The costs should only cover the requirements identified in the Terms of Reference (TOR)