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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1. Partner parties

The Signatory Parties of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) 2006 (“Agreement”) (“CEFTA Parties”).

1.2. Contracting Authority

The Secretariat of the Central European Free Trade Agreement 2006 on behalf of the CEFTA Parties (“the CEFTA Secretariat”).

1.3. Background

The Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) is a trade agreement established to facilitate free trade among its Parties. The original agreement dates back to 1992, while the new multilateral agreement was signed in Bucharest in 2006 (CEFTA, 2006). CEFTA free trade area today covers Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, and Kosovo¹.

On 10 November 2020, the leaders of the Western Balkans adopted a more ambitious framework for regional economic integration – **Common Regional Market Action Plan**² (hereinafter CRM AP) for the period 2021-2024. The Action Plan built on the results of the Multiannual Action Plan for Regional Economic Area (MAP REA) and contributed to the implementation of the European Commission’s Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans by building a common market of 18 million people in the Western Balkans. Its activities were divided in four major pillars: Regional Trade Area, Regional Investment Area, Regional Digital Area and Regional Industrial and Innovation Area.

Regional Trade Area is structured around the four freedoms (free movement of goods, services, capital and people). The CRM AP represented a stepping-stone to integrate the region more closely with the EU Single Market before accession. This was key for the region to leverage its privileged relation with the EU. Regional economic integration based on EU rules and closer association to the EU Single Market aimed to help the Western Balkans in the accession process. At the same time, the accession process and the gradual compliance with the EU *acquis* aimed to help strengthen intra-regional integration.

Building a common market of 18 million people – potential game changer for the region. The CRM AP aimed to address the current economic fragmentation of the region.

Building on the progress made in the past four years, the Western Balkans leaders adopted on 14 October 2024, a new **Common Regional Market Action Plan for 2025-2028**³ (hereinafter CRM2.0), which sets the direction for enhancing trade, mobility, and investment across the region and integration with the EU Single Market. The new four year plan is divided in six major pillars: Free Movement of Goods, Free Movement of Services, Horizontal Trade Measures, Human Capital Development, Business Enabling Environment and Competitiveness and Digital Transformation. With its scope and ambition of going beyond four freedoms provisions, it contributes to the long-term economic growth of the region, supporting its fair, green and digital transition, fostering regional cooperation and convergence with the EU.

CRM 2.0 is a regionally driven initiative grounded in EU rules and standards, aiming to boost competitiveness, deepen economic cooperation, and align the region more closely with the EU Single Market. Expanding on the previous Action Plan, CRM 2.0 goes beyond the four freedoms, promoting

¹This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

² <https://cefta.int/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Common-Regional-Market-2021-2024-Action-Plan.pdf>

³ <https://cefta.int/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Common-Regional-Market-Action-Plan-2025-2028.pdf>

long-term economic growth, supporting fair, green, and digital transitions, and fostering regional cooperation and EU convergence.

As an integral part of the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, CRM 2.0 operationalizes its second pillar: regional economic integration through the Common Regional Market. The Growth Plan promotes regional cooperation, a necessary stepping stone to access the EU Single Market (first pillar). Strengthening regional cooperation attracts investors, creates opportunities for businesses and workers, accelerates alignment with EU standards, and advances reforms.

CRM 2.0 holds untapped potential to unlock the Growth Plan's goal of doubling the Western Balkans' economic size within the next decade and thus foster stronger economic convergence with the EU. For example, deeper trade integration akin to the EU Single Market could boost annual trade growth by 10% which contributes to generating growth and jobs.

Notable achievements of CRM 2021-2024 include a doubling of intra-CEFTA trade volume over five years, a 3-percentage-point increase in GDP per capita relative to the EU average (2017-2022), and a 500% rise in roaming usage. Additionally, reduced waiting times at crossing points through Green and Blue Lanes saved over 20 years in queueing time in 2023, while 1,200 new companies engaged in intra-CEFTA trade.

CRM 2.0 recognizes that trade reforms and improved infrastructure would yield even greater benefits if the Western Balkan economies joined the EU, potentially boosting welfare by 6%.

The **Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA)** plays a key role in providing legal and institutional framework for the first three pillars of CRM 2.0:

- **Free movement of goods:** Streamlining procedures to make trade more efficient and cost-effective, fostering market integration and competitiveness.
- **Free movement of services:** Improving market access, reducing discrimination, and addressing regulatory challenges to support growth in service industries.
- **Horizontal trade measures:** Addressing trade underpinnings, such as Green Lanes, digitalization, paperless trade, intellectual property rights, dispute settlement, consumer protection, and environmental sustainability.

Key CEFTA CRM 2.0 Deliverables by 2028:

FREE MOVEMENT OF GOODS

- **Free movement of agri-food products:** simplified trade procedures for live animals and animal products, harmonization and acceptance of relevant documents, and reduction of official controls for fruit and vegetables at crossing points. Trade in products from EU-compliant establishments will be facilitated, organic product procedures expedited with electronic certification, and diagnostic protocols unified to ensure recognition.
- **Free movement of (non-food) industrial goods:** enhanced trade by recognizing conformity assessment results for selected sectors like machinery and construction products, harmonizing labelling rules, and harmonised legislation for sectors not subject to EU harmonized legislation. Improved cooperation in the quality infrastructure, particularly among market surveillance agencies.
- **Strengthening customs and tax cooperation:** aligned rules of origin with the EU, extended benefits for Authorized Economic Operator (AEO), and simplified customs clearance for e-commerce. Improvements in VAT refund processes, anti-fraud measures, and tax governance will complement innovations like Single Window systems, 24/7 online payments, and a customs laboratory network.
- **Other trade facilitation measures:** trade-related fees and charges harmonized and reduced, while non-tariff measures and trade-distorting practices identified and addressed.

FREE MOVEMENT OF SERVICES

- **Freedom to provide services:** establish freedom to provide services within CEFTA modelled after the EU Services Directive by removing obstacles like authorization or commercial presence requirements in some sectors; enabled freedom of establishment for service suppliers; establish Points of Single Contact to assist individuals and businesses.
- **Professional qualifications:** recognition expanded to new sectors, introduction of the experience-based recognition; developed database of regulated professions; introduction of a professional card to streamline mobility and professional recognition.
- **Financial and related services:** simplified provision of financial services through EU-based equivalence; enabled regional QR code-initiated payments; streamlined non-bank payment service licensing; recognition of Motor Third Party Liability Insurance to allow travel without green cards.
- **Audiovisual services:** Inclusion of audiovisual sector in the Additional Protocol 6 (AP6) Schedule of Commitments, and harmonized rules ensuring a level playing field between traditional television and online services.
- **Transport services:** The regional transport market will be liberalized by eliminating transport permits for Western Balkans partners, facilitating seamless movement of goods and people.
- **Electronic commerce and related information society services:** Expanded cooperation in digital services, enhancing fairness on online platforms, and improving parcel delivery and online content portability. Recognition of electronic signatures and trust services will be advanced, alongside updated telecommunications rules to harmonize authorisation procedures for electronic communications services.

HORIZONTAL TRADE MEASURES

- **Green Lanes and reduction of waiting times at crossing points:** Crossing points will see reduced waiting times through increased capacities, improved inter-agency cooperation, and risk-based clearance procedures. Customs controls will be recognized across CEFTA (e.g. scanner images, data on truck/cargo weight etc.), pre-arrival checks enabled through electronic document exchange, and specific agri-food products excluded from controls at crossing points.
- **Digitalisation and paperless trade through CEFTA System of Electronic Exchange of Data (SEED):** Trade processes will become paperless with electronic data and document exchanges, e-certificates, and system upgrades to SEED based on the Internal Market Information System. CEFTA Transparency Pack and Statistical Portal upgraded and expanded to widen the scope and quality of available information.
- **Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and quality schemes:** Legal frameworks further aligned with EU standards, supported by improved administrative capacities and the introduction of a single point for submission of applications for custom's action. Geographical Indications (GIs) recognized, and awareness of IPR's benefits for SMEs promoted.
- **Consumer Protection:** Consumers will benefit from better support mechanisms, improved enforcement cooperation, and alternative dispute resolution systems. Rules for the sale of goods and digital services harmonized across CEFTA.
- **Trade Statistics:** Harmonisation of the quality and scope of statistical data produced (e.g. e-commerce, tourism, etc.) and their timely exchange within the CEFTA Statistical Portal with increased scope of shared data.
- **Trade-related Environmental Issues:** Pre-empted possible barriers due to uncoordinated harmonisation with CBAM; Procedures for non-hazardous waste shipment will be aligned with EU best practices and fully digitalized.
- **Dispute Settlement:** Additional Protocol 7 on Dispute Settlement (AP7) fully implemented and supported by a CEFTA electronic communication system to streamline proceedings and enhance efficiency.

- **Promoting export in CEFTA and EU:** Efforts will focus on communicating regional market opportunities to businesses, empowering vulnerable groups, and providing training for EU-based rules. Export strategies will strengthen the region's competitiveness in entering the EU single market.

CEFTA has been tasked to deliver trade related activities which are namely part of the first three pillars: Free Movement of Goods, Free Movement of Services and Horizontal Trade Measures. CEFTA framework is composed of multiple bodies made of representatives of the CEFTA Parties, supported and coordinated by the CEFTA Secretariat.

- ***CEFTA Secretariat***

Implementation of CEFTA 2006 is supported by a permanent Secretariat located in Brussels established in accordance with the Article 40.2 of CEFTA 2006. The overall function of the Secretariat is to provide technical and administrative support to the Joint Committee and any Body established by it, as defined by its mandate set out in the Joint Committee (hereinafter JC) Decision 1/2018 as amended by JC Decision 10/2024. The functions of the Secretariat can be summarised as follows:

- Support the supervision of the implementation of the CEFTA 2006 by deploying implementation monitoring mechanisms and recommending to the Joint Committee how to enhance the effectiveness of implementation of the Agreement and
- Facilitate the administration of the implementation of the Agreement by: preparing the initial drafts of all documents discussed and adopted by the CEFTA Bodies; supporting the Chair in Office of CEFTA in organisation and follow-up of all meetings of the Joint Committee and of other CEFTA Bodies; preparing and presenting technical opinions to the corresponding agenda items of the meetings of CEFTA Bodies or the ones organised by CEFTA Parties and other Regional or International Organisations; negotiating, co-ordinating, and reporting on donor funded assistance for regional trade related activities; acting as contracting authority by implementing procurement rules in tendering procedures; maintaining the official archive of the Agreement in liaison with the Depositary/Acting Depositary; supporting the implementation of the trade related components of the SEE strategy and the Common Regional Market Action Plans, and all other Actions in the context of any other economic initiatives or in trade related international organisations related to CEFTA; liaising with the European Commission and other relevant partners and donors to secure and manage technical and financial assistance on behalf of the CEFTA Parties in the implementation of any regional strategy or plan which involves CEFTA Bodies and informing regularly the Joint Committee thereof.

In the context of CRM 2.0 governance system, CEFTA Secretariat is in charge of preparing and coordinating of the CEFTA led actions within the Action Plan, mainly grouped in three Areas (Free Movement of Goods, Free Movement of Services and Horizontal Trade measures) and together with the Secretariat of the Regional Cooperation Council it monitors and reports progress back to the Western Balkan leaders.

CEFTA Secretariat prepares input on CEFTA activities for regular reports on implementation of CRM 2.0. CEFTA Secretariat takes an active part in the coordination mechanism set for monitoring and governing of the Action Plan. This involves contribution to organisation and participation in the meetings of the Common Regional Market coordinators, which take place multiple times a year. Furthermore, it organises discussions of relevant CRM 2.0 Actions in the meetings of CEFTA Bodies or, when needed, contact points for different CRM activities or designates experts for particular activities. The CEFTA Secretariat may also participate in the meetings related to bilateral, plurilateral or global initiatives involving CEFTA Parties, where issues related to the implementation of CEFTA

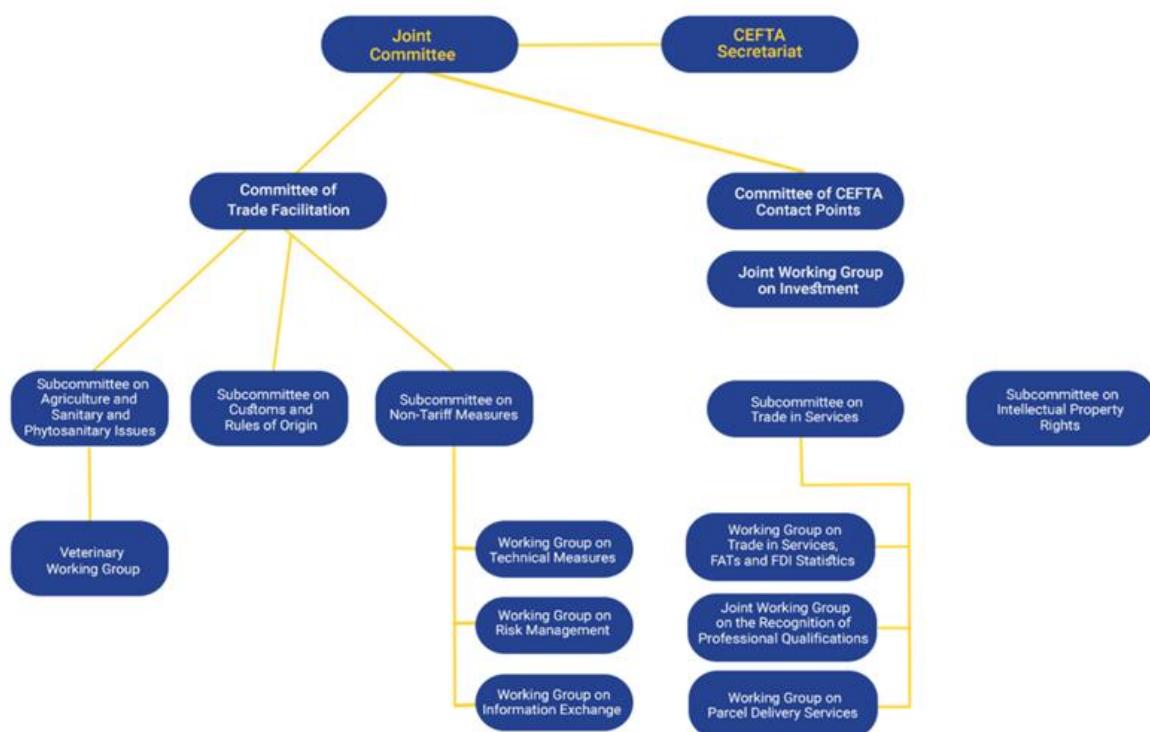
2006 or CRM 2.0 may arise. Finally, the CEFTA Secretariat reports to the WB leaders, through active participation in the WB leaders' summits.

- **CEFTA Bodies**

Joint Committee, hereinafter JC, (CEFTA 2006, Article 40) is the only decision-making body established in accordance with Article 40 of CEFTA 2006 which supervises and administers the implementation of the Agreement. It is composed of the ministers in charge of trade from each Party and it is entrusted to supervise and administer implementation of the agreement. The JC meets at least once a year and can adopt decisions and recommendations. The JC is chaired by one of the parties and this function revolves on an annual basis in order laid out in JC Decision 1/2007 as amended by JC Decision 1/2024.

Committee of Trade Facilitation (JC Decisions 7/2014 and 1/2015) is tasked to develop and broaden cooperation among CEFTA Parties and to address the issues which are related to facilitation of the trade in CEFTA with a view to reduce trade costs, while balancing trade facilitation with increasing requirements for safety and security measures in international and regional supply chain.

Committee of Contact Points (JC Decision No. 1/2015) is tasked to support the smooth functioning of the Agreement and the fulfilment of the decisions, conclusions and recommendations of the Joint Committee both within the Party concerned and with all CEFTA stakeholders.



Subcommittees

Subcommittee on Non-Tariff Measures is tasked to identify non-tariff measures that can potentially have an economic effect on international trade in goods, changing quantities traded, or process or both, review those identified measures and propose measures for their elimination.

Subcommittee on Agriculture including Sanitary and Phytosanitary Issues is tasked to contribute the promotion and facilitate trade in agricultural products and to discuss and coordinate to the maximum extent the policies on agriculture and protection of plant health, animal health and food safety and other relevant areas in accordance with articles 11 and 12 of CEFTA 2006.

Subcommittee on Customs and Rules of Origin is tasked to simplify and facilitate customs procedures and to coordinate implementation of common rules of origin in CEFTA; (in accordance with article 14.4 of CEFTA 2006).

Subcommittee on Trade in Services is tasked to strengthen and deepen the intra-CEFTA cooperation in the field of trade in services by facilitating the implementation of the commitments in Additional Protocol 6 on Trade in Services.

Subcommittee on Intellectual Property Rights is tasked to develop and broaden cooperation among the CEFTA Parties in relation to Intellectual Property Rights for the purpose of the elimination of trade-related barriers.

Working groups

Working Group on Technical Measures deals with non-tariff measures stemming technical measures with a view of eliminating the discriminatory measures constituting non-tariff barriers to trade.

Working Group on Risk Management deals with management of public authorities and agencies involved in clearance of goods seeking to facilitate while improving the overall quality and deterrence of customs, security, and safety controls and inspections.

Working Group on Electronic Exchange of Information covers issues related to IT capacities and to facilitate trade while improving the overall quality of customs, security and safety controls and inspections.

Veterinary Working Group contributes to the promotion and facilitation of trade in agri-food products within CEFTA, also discussing and coordinating the related policies on agriculture and the protection of animal health and food safety and other relevant areas in accordance with Articles 11 and 12 of the CEFTA 2006.

Working Group on Trade in Services Statistics, FATS and FDI Statistics is tasked to improve the quality of international trade in services statistics and harmonise statistics with those of the European Union.

Working Group on Parcel Delivery is in charge of activities aimed at facilitating parcel delivery within CEFTA, in particular through implementation of JC Decision 3/2024.

Joint Working Group on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications deals with mobility of professionals by facilitating and supervising the implementation and application of cooperation in the area of the recognition of professional qualifications.

Joint CEFTA-RCC Working Group on Investment Policy and Promotion is established with the aim to deepen trade and investment links, and support policies that are non-discriminatory, transparent and predictable and that enhance the flow of goods, investment, services and people.

SEED+ project

The purpose of this action is to develop and implement the system SEED+, which will enable electronic exchange of trade documents in the Western Balkans in line with the provisions and actions agreed in CEFTA Additional Protocol 5 (AP5). The Grant Contract was signed with the European

Commission in January 2024 for a duration of 3 years. Two SEED+ project staff are based in the CEFTA Secretariat in Brussels: Project Manager and Project Assistant.

1.4. Current situation in the sector

Implementation of CEFTA 2006 and the new Common Regional Market Action Plan (CRM AP) 2025-2028 requires taking decisions of legal nature, that already now comprise complex CEFTA Body of law. This body of law consists of CEFTA 2006 Agreement, its annexes and protocols, as well as decisions and recommendations of its decision-making body - the Joint Committee (hereinafter: CEFTA legal instruments).

The effectiveness of this cooperation relies on the choice of the proper format, good legal review and clarity of legal commitments undertaken in the given legal instruments.

CEFTA Secretariat is requiring external legal assistance to prepare the legal texts developed by the CEFTA Bodies, perform legal scrubbing, maintain coherence and efficiency of the existing CEFTA body of law and legal consultation on the implementation of the already existing provisions.

In the previous CRM AP 2021-2024 more than 16 CEFTA legal documents were prepared and agreed, while in the current CRM 2025-2028 it's envisaged that around 20 legal documents will be developed. Moreover, the previous legal documents, including the additional protocol (AP7) on dispute settlement, that have been agreed will need to be implemented where additional legal support will be required. Besides that, several administrative and project related documents such as contracts are also requiring precise legal language and consistency.

1.5. Related programmes and other donor activities

The work will be closely coordinated with other initiatives and EU funded actions in the region in relation to the implementation of the work programme of CEFTA Bodies, based on Chairmanship priorities and SEED+ Project.

2. OBJECTIVE & EXPECTED OUTPUTS

2.1. Overall objective

The overall objective of the Action Grant of which this contract will be a part is to support implementation of the CRM 2.0 based on CEFTA 2006 (specific objective), in order to (i) to contribute to socioeconomic growth in the region and convergence with the EU through deeper trade integration and improved market access; (ii) foster the implementation of the EU *acquis* pertaining to the EU Single Market in order to accelerate accession to the EU across the region; and (iii) enhance good neighbourly relations (overall objective).

2.2. Specific objective(s)

The purpose of this contract is to ensure smooth and reliable implementation of the Common Regional Market Action Plan 2025-2028 and CEFTA 2006 and body of law and policies based thereon, as well as effective and legally sound expanding of CEFTA 2006 and related body of law and policies.

2.3. Expected outputs to be achieved by the Contractor

Based on the request of the CEFTA Secretariat, the Contractor will provide legal services resulting in:

- Drafting of sound legal texts in the form of appropriate CEFTA legal instruments (e.g. decisions, recommendations, protocols, annexes) that are clear, precise and well-structured, applying a harmonised drafting style and consistent terminology and formulation;

- Legal input that ensures the systemic coherence and integrity of the CEFTA body of law, including verification that new instruments align with CEFTA 2006, its annexes and protocols and existing Joint Committee acts, as well as the identification of inconsistencies, overlaps or gaps;
- Provision of legal advisory services, including regulatory and technical expertise in specialized areas such as quality infrastructure and conformity assessment, agri-food trade and SPS measures, customs cooperation and trade facilitation, trade in services, intellectual property rights, tax cooperation, and dispute settlement mechanisms, and other relevant domains and their alignment with related EU regulations. This includes regulatory interpretations, analyses, best practice recommendations, proposed wordings, and alignment advice with EU standards;
- Delivery of expert input through presentations, participation in technical discussions, working groups, and official meetings of CEFTA bodies, as well as responding to ad hoc legal queries from the Secretariat and CEFTA Parties;
- Any other output requested by the Secretariat supporting the overall objective (2.1) in line with the capacities and skills of the service provider.

3. ASSUMPTIONS AND RISKS

3.1. Assumptions underlying the project

The main assumptions:

- Activities under CEFTA are performed without major delays and stalemates;
- CEFTA Secretariat has enough capacities to generate and absorb requests to the external service supplier.

3.2. Risks

The main risk is related to big disturbances in functioning of CEFTA institutional framework which would result in activities being blocked or significantly delayed, which would result in no need for rendering service. Risk probability: very low.

Insufficient institutional and administrative capacity to effectively participate in the development and implementation of the CEFTA legal acts may jeopardise the ongoing processes in CEFTA. Risk probability: low.

4. SCOPE OF THE WORK

4.1. General

4.1.1. Project description

Implementation of CEFTA 2006 and CRM AP requires taking decisions of legal nature, that already now comprise complex of a CEFTA body of law. This body of law is embedded in the CEFTA 2006 Agreement, its annexes and protocols, as well as decisions and recommendations of its decision-making body, the Joint Committee. The effectiveness of this cooperation depends on selecting the appropriate legal format, ensuring thorough legal review and securing clarity and precision in the obligations set out in the respective legal instruments.

To this end, the service provider will make available legal assistance to support the CEFTA Secretariat in preparing legal texts to be considered by the CEFTA bodies, conducting the legal scrubbing, and ensuring the overall coherence, consistency and functionality of the CEFTA body of law. The Contractor will also assist with legal consultations concerning the implementation of existing provisions of CEFTA 2006 and any other relevant sources of international law.

4.1.2. Geographical area to be covered

N/A

4.1.3. Target groups

The main beneficiary of this assignment is the CEFTA Joint Committee. The final beneficiaries are the CEFTA Parties.

4.2. Specific work

In order to achieve the contract objective, the experts need to provide:

- Review and development of CEFTA regulatory texts in any form and at any stage of their lifecycle (drafting, negotiation, adoption), including but not limited to Joint Committee decisions, recommendations, additional protocols, annexes, guidelines, operational instructions, memoranda, and other related instruments. This includes the drafting of sound regulatory texts in the form of appropriate CEFTA instruments (e.g., decisions, recommendations, protocols, annexes) to support implementation of CEFTA agreements, protocols and the CRM AP.
- Regulatory advisory services, including:
 - Consultations on the interpretation of the CEFTA 2006 Agreement and other instruments within its regulatory framework.
 - Expert advice on international trade regulation, EU and other regulatory frameworks that inform CEFTA decision-making and policy development.
 - Regulatory and technical expertise in specific areas such as quality infrastructure and conformity assessment, agri-food trade and SPS measures, customs cooperation, trade costs and trade facilitation, trade in services, intellectual property rights, consumer protection, trade-related environmental issues, tax cooperation, and dispute settlement mechanisms, as well as the alignment of CEFTA regulatory frameworks with relevant EU regulations. This includes the preparation of interpretations, regulatory analyses, draft wordings, and best practice recommendations.
- Legal coherence and systemic consistency, including:
 - Review of new instruments to ensure consistency and coherence with CEFTA 2006, its annexes and protocols, and existing Joint Committee decisions and recommendations.
 - Identification and resolution of inconsistencies, overlaps, or gaps within the CEFTA body of law.
 - Maintenance of harmonised drafting style, consistent terminology, and uniform formulation across all CEFTA legal instruments.
- Provision of expert input and representation, including:
 - Preparation and delivery of expert presentations,
 - Participation in formal CEFTA discussions, meetings, or workshops,
 - Timely responses to ad hoc or urgent requests from the CEFTA Secretariat or CEFTA structures.
- Identification of legal implications of proposed instruments, implementation requirements, interactions with the existing CEFTA legal framework, and possible legal risks.
- Other related deliverables, as requested and agreed by the CEFTA Secretariat, which support the achievement of the contract's overall objective (2.1), especially in supporting implementation of the CRM 2.0 based on CEFTA 2006.

4.3. Project management

4.3.1. Responsible body

The Secretariat of the Central European Free Trade Agreement 2006 will be responsible for the management of the contract.

4.3.2. Management structure

The Director of the CEFTA Secretariat will oversee the implementation of the contract.

The Project Manager in charge of the implementation of this contract is the Technical Expert – Cross-cutting measures.

4.3.3. Facilities to be provided by the Contracting Authority and/or other parties

No facilities will be provided by the Contracting Authority.

5. LOGISTICS AND TIMING

5.1. Location

The experts will perform their work from their own offices.

Where required, the experts will be invited to participate in meetings or other events organised under CEFTA structures to present their work, including but not limited to legal advice and consultations, in order to ensure proper understanding by the participants.

If such meetings do not take place in Brussels but in the CEFTA region, travel arrangements will be organised and related travel costs will be borne by the CEFTA Secretariat.

5.2. Start date & period of implementation of tasks

The intended start month is March 2026 and the period of implementation of the contract will be until 31 December 2026.

The Contracting Authority may, at its own discretion, extend the project in duration and/or scope subject to the availability of funding. Any extension of the contract would be subject to satisfactory performance by the Contractor.

6. REQUIREMENTS

6.1. Personnel

Note that civil servants and other staff of the public administration, of the partner country or of international/regional organisations based in the country, shall only be approved to work as experts if well justified. The justification should be submitted with the tender and shall include information on the added value the expert will bring as well as proof that the expert is seconded or on personal leave. All experts must be independent and free from conflicts of interest in the responsibilities they take on.

6.1.1. Key experts

Key expert has a crucial role in implementing the contract. These terms of reference contain the minimum requirements for the key experts. The tenderer shall submit a CV and Statement of Exclusivity and Availability for the following key expert:

Key expert 1: Team Leader/Regulatory Expert (minimum 25 working days)

Qualifications and skills

- University degree in law, post graduate is an advantage;
- Knowledge and practical experience of work with international trade issues, in particular Free Trade Agreements;
- Proficiency in English;
- Languages spoken in the CEFTA Region are an advantage;

- Strong interpersonal and multicultural relationship skills;
- Ability to manage priorities, work under pressure and meet tight deadlines.

Specific professional experience

- At least 10 years' experience in trade- related areas;
- Knowledge of implementation of international trade law (WTO) and EU law, standards and practices;
- Proven record of previous work in the CEFTA Region is an advantage.

6.1.2. Non-key experts

The profiles of the non-key experts for this contract are as follows:

Pool of non-key experts – minimum of 70 working days (30 working days for Senior non-key experts and 60 days for Junior non-key Experts) - It will have to be divided by results and between Senior and Junior experts, according to the Organization and Methodology submitted by the Contractor. The distribution of number of working days between the different categories of experts should be clearly laid out on the proposed budget and reflected on the proposed fee rates.

The non-key experts, who will be recruited to carry out those assignments, should have as a minimum the following profile:

- Have excellent communication and analytical skills,
- Have excellent team working abilities,
- Be fluent in both written and spoken English,
- Have proven specific professional experiences in the area relevant to their assignment,
- For Senior experts, a proven minimum of 5, but preferably 8 years of general professional experience in areas relevant to their assignment,
- For Junior experts, a proven minimum of 3, but preferably 5 years of general professional experience in areas relevant to their assignment.

The “Expert’s profile” (Annex IV) should not be submitted for non-key experts. However, the tenderer will have to demonstrate in their offer that they have access to experts with the required profiles and experience required to implement the contract. These may include, but are not limited to, experts in the following areas:

- Quality infrastructure and conformity assessment for industrial products, including technical barriers to trade, standardisation, accreditation, metrology, and recognition of conformity assessment results aligned with EU New Legislative Framework;
- Agri-food trade facilitation and SPS measures, including risk-based controls, recognition of contingency and monitoring plans, establishment of registers of professional operators, multi-annual control plans, veterinary and phytosanitary certification, and alignment with EU official controls regulation;
- Trade in services, including liberalisation frameworks, extension and revisions of AP6, regulatory cooperation, trust services, financial and insurance services;
- Intellectual property rights, including legal frameworks for IPR protection and enforcement, recognition of geographical indications, cooperation mechanisms for IPR enforcement among customs administrations and other relevant agencies, and alignment with EU acquis;
- Trade dispute settlement mechanisms, including legal frameworks for dispute resolution procedures, due process and procedural rules, institutional arrangements, implementation and enforcement of decisions, and electronic case management systems;
- Drafting of regulatory instruments in line with EU and international frameworks;
- Any other field of expertise that the Contractor may consider important for the success and sustainability of the project, within the areas covered by CEFTA 2006 and the CEFTA Bodies.

The contractor must select and hire other experts as required according to the profiles identified in the organisation & methodology and these terms of reference. It must clearly indicate the experts' profile so that the applicable daily fee rate in the budget breakdown is clear. All experts must be independent and free from conflicts of interest in the responsibilities they take on.

The selection procedures used by the contractor to select these other experts must be transparent, and must be based on pre-defined criteria, including professional qualifications, language skills and work experience. The findings of the selection panel must be recorded. The selected experts must be subject to approval by the contracting authority before the start of their implementation of tasks.

6.1.1. Support staff & backstopping

The contractor will provide support facilities to their team of experts (back-stopping) during the implementation of the contract.

Backstopping and support staff costs must be included in the fee rates.

6.2. Office accommodation

Office accommodation of a reasonable standard and of approximately 10 square metres for each expert working on the contract is to be provided by the contractor.

The costs of the office accommodation are to be covered by the fee rates.

6.3. Facilities to be provided by the Contractor

The contractor must ensure that experts are adequately supported and equipped. In particular it must ensure that there is sufficient administrative, secretarial and interpreting provision to enable experts to concentrate on their primary responsibilities. It must also transfer funds as necessary to support their work under the contract and to ensure that its employees are paid regularly and in a timely fashion.

The Contractor shall provide all required supplies, services, documentation, logistical support, etc. for the implementation of the contract, and all the costs should be included in the fee rates of its experts.

6.4. Equipment

No equipment is to be purchased on behalf of the contracting authority as part of this service contract or transferred to the contracting authority at the end of this contract.

6.5. Incidental expenditure

No provision for incidental expenditure, including the provision for expenditure verification, is foreseen under this service contract.

6.6. Lump sums

No lump sums are foreseen in this contract.

7. REPORTS

7.1. Reporting requirements

There must be a final report, a final invoice and the financial report at the end of the period of implementation of the tasks. The draft final report must be submitted at least one month before the end of the period of implementation of the tasks. Note that these interim and final reports are additional to any required in Section 4.2 of these Terms of Reference.

Each report must consist of a narrative section and a financial section. The financial section must contain details of the time inputs of the experts.

To summarise, in addition to any documents, reports and output specified under the duties and responsibilities of each key expert above, the Contractor shall provide the following reports:

Name of report	Content	Time of submission
Inception report	Analysis of existing situation and work plan for the project	No later than 1 month after the start of implementation
Draft final report	Short description of achievements including problems encountered and recommendations.	No later than 1 month before the end of the implementation period.
Final report	Short description of achievements including problems encountered and recommendations; a final invoice and the financial report; all legal opinions requested and provided; deliverables in annex.	Within 1 month of receiving comments on the draft final report from the project manager identified in the contract.

7.2. Submission & approval of reports

The reports referred to above must be submitted by electronic means to the Project Manager identified in the contract. The reports must be written in English. The Project Manager is responsible for approving the reports and the time-sheets of the experts.

8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

8.1. Definition of indicators

Not applicable.

8.2. Special requirements

Not applicable.

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