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**Call for Tender for subcontracting external expertise for the project**

*Strengthening the capacity of education employers within the European Semester process*

**Agreement number: VP/2020/001/0004**

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The European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE), are pleased to launch a call for a subcontractor to provide research expertise in the framework of the implementation of the project “*Strengthening the capacity of education employers within the European Semester process*”, supported by the European Commission under the Call VP/2020/001/0004.

## 1. Background

### 1.1 The organization

The European Federation of Education Employers represents education employers in all levels of education, from pre-school to higher education and research. As a growing network, we currently represent 50 diverse institutions from 26 countries. These include different national organisations, such as education councils and ministries of education, associations of VET colleges and universities and local and regional authority employers’ organisations.

Our mission is to improve the quality of teaching and school management through European cooperation and dialogue. On the basis of the European Pillar of Social Rights, we raise awareness on and increase commitment to the European policy agenda and influence European policy, making the voices of our members heard. As an officially recognised European social partner in education, we, thereby, are in constant dialogue with EU institutions as well as other European partners such as trade unions and various educational networks.

Against this background, one of our declared core tasks is project management. EFEE continuously runs a great number of projects throughout the year. The aim of these projects is to foster mutual learning and exchange on current challenges and opportunities in the education sector. There are two core features characterizing our projects: firstly, their transnational character and secondly, their strong evidence basis. Regarding the former, participants are provided with the opportunity to travel to other European countries and to have exchanges with our members from all over Europe. Regarding the latter, an external expert is hired for every project in order to ensure the high scientific quality of our project results (Please find a more detailed description of the expected tasks of an expert in section 2.1).

### 1.2 The project

#### 1.2.1 The purpose

In 2021, EFEE will kick-off five new projects complementary to four already running ones. One of these projects is entitled “*Strengthening the capacity of education employers within the European Semester process*”.

In the face of the number of newly arising challenges and opportunities in the education sector, the role as education employers has gained of even greater significance. Against the backdrop, this one-

year initiative aims at finding answers to the following key question: How can education employers as social partners in education strengthen their capacity in order to enable more meaningful, better-informed discussions on reforms and investments concerning education and training within the European Semester and related (EU) policy making initiatives?”.

## 1.2.2 The timeline

Finding answers to this question, we will organize three events: Two 1,5 days interactive peer learning & training seminars taking place in Greece (for southern countries) and the Netherlands (for northern countries) as well as a closing 1 day conference in Ljubljana (Slovenia). Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all activities scheduled are foreseen to take place online.

Please find the preliminary calendar of activities as follows:

Date /Month/Time	Activity	Location
24. February, 2 - 4 pm	1 <sup>st</sup> Advisory Group meeting	Brussels, Belgium (online)
April (TBD)	1st PLA	tbc, Netherlands (online)
June (TBD)	2nd PLA	tbc, Greece (online or on-site)
June (TBD)	2nd Advisory Group meeting	Brussels, Belgium (online or on-site)
October (1-day) (TBD)	Final conference	Ljubljana, Slovenia (on-site)
October (TBD)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Advisory Group meeting	Ljubljana, Slovenia (on-site)

### 1.2.2.1 Advisory Group meetings

The Advisory Group meetings will bring together representatives from both the European sectoral social partners in education to provide guidance and monitor the project developments and to promote active involvement in the project meetings and dissemination actions among their affiliates. The focal point of these meetings is to agree on basic concepts, setting concrete goals, selecting specific peer learning topics, and preparing groundwork for project meetings. In total, three meetings will take place during the course of the project.

### 1.2.2.2 Interactive peer learning activities (PLAs)

The objective of the two interactive peer learning & training seminars, taking in place in the Netherlands and Greece is twofold: Firstly, to train members (and future members) on the opportunities to become involved in the European Semester process, informing on related EU initiatives (such as the European Pillar of Social Rights, Education and Training monitor, follow-up ET2020 and Europe2020).

Secondly, the meetings will have a major focus on promoting peer learning among members (and potential members) discussing how education employers, as social partners in education, can contribute to tackling challenges related to education and training identified in Country Specific

Recommendations (CSRs). Envisaged participants are education employers from all education levels. The seminars will be hosted by EFEE members from the respective countries and all EFEE members will be invited to the two seminars based on their geographical location

### *1.2.2.3 Final conference*

In October, we will organise one larger dissemination congress in Ljubljana (Slovenia) devoted to sharing the results of the seminars and to present practical examples of how employers in education can contribute to tackling challenges in the education and training sector as identified in Country Specific Recommendations. The conference is foreseen to include among others a presentation of the main outcomes of the project and providing a concrete roadmap to education employers on how to step up their involvement in the European Semester, a panel session with EFEE members and potential members sharing their experiences, and an intervention by EU policymakers in the field of education and training to directly link their activities to our (potential) membership base of education employers.

## 2. The expert

In order to make sure that our project has a strong evidence-base, we deem it crucial to invite an external expert to assist us with developing a training targeted at strengthening the involvement of education employers, as social partners, in the European Semester and EU policy making related to education and training. Preparatory work for this training includes doing research into the current situation (who is already involved? what are the obstacles and opportunities?) and developing a concrete roadmap for enhanced involvement. Furthermore, the external expert is expected to produce a report summarizing the main findings of the project and providing herewith support with his/her expert knowledge, and acting as a critical friend to education employers in order to strengthen their ability for more meaningful, better- informed discussions on reforms and investments concerning education and training within the European Semester and related (EU) policy making initiatives.

Please find in the following an overview of the described tasks.

### 2.1 Tasks to be performed by the successful candidate

The expert is expected to perform the following tasks in the time framework from February 2021 to October 2021:

1. **Participate** in a pre-project meeting with EFEE, three meetings with the advisory group, two case study visits as well as a closing conference.
2. **Conduct** desk research, detecting obstacles and opportunities for education employers strengthen their involvement in the European Semester. On the basis of this research two background documents are drafted as preparatory work for the peer learning and training seminars, entailing a concrete roadmap for enhanced involvement.

3. **Develop**, with the input from the project advisory group, the online survey to be carried out amongst EFEE member organisations and analyse the thereout resulting outcome.
4. **Develop**, with the input from the project advisory group, interview questions for the case studies at local level to identify practical and concrete ways to enhance education employers' involvement in the European Semester.
5. **Prepare** training modules for the seminars on actions how to strengthen the involvement of education employers in the European Semester. On the basis of these developed modules, conduct trainings in the framework of the case study visits.
6. **Scientifically accompany** the case study visits in Greece and the Netherlands: After each seminar draft one report on the thereout gained results and insights regarding the question of how to foster the involvement of education employers in the European Semester.
7. **Draft** a final project report (including Executive Summary), summarizing the outcomes of the project activities and draw general conclusions on how the influence of education employers can be further deepened in the European Semester. The report is to be presented to the Project Advisory Group as well as in the framework of the final conference.

## 2.2 Requirements to be a successful candidate

EFEE requires the external expert (hereafter, Contractor) to provide an objective and scientific perspective with his expertise on the issue at stake, to carry out the case studies in the target countries for the need of the following skills:

1. Proven (research) experience and extensive knowledge of the European Semester (and preferably of social dialogue structures in education as well)
2. Experience in conducting surveys/interviews in the education sector.
3. Ability to communicate both in speaking and writing in English fluently (C1).  
Additional knowledge of European languages, such as Dutch and Greek, is warmly welcome.
4. Understanding of the role of employers and social partners in the education sector as well as an overall understanding of the education sector (both on the European and national level)

The Contractor contributes to the successful development of the project as a whole by actively participating in various project events. The Advisory group is the body entitled to guide the project/research implementation as concerns its organisation and evaluation (see section 1.2.2.1).

## 3. Payments and standard contract

The contract signed between EFEE and the Contractor is subject to the Grant Agreement signed between EFEE and the European Commission for this project initiative.

Payment of the fees defined in the contract will be made in two instalments dependent on the expert carrying out the relevant stages of work as listed above:

1. A first instalment amounting to 50 %, issued after signature of the contract during the second month of the action.
2. A second instalment for the remaining payment issued after completion, delivery and approval by EFEE of the final outcome.

Payments will be done by bank transfers to a bank account for which the Contractor will communicate the full details.

The contractual agreement is based upon and regulated by the European Commission's rules, provisions and requirements as set out in the project agreement with the European Commission, DG EMPL and applicable Belgian law. The Contractor is obliged to fulfil the described tasks and duties of work to receive the final payment according to the contract.

EFEE has the right, based on Belgian Law, to terminate the contract when the Contractor cannot perform the agreed tasks and duties accordingly.

Any conflicts of interests or disputes concerning the validity of this arrangement, the construction of its terms, and the interpretation of the rights and duties of the parties in the contract shall be governed by Belgian Law.

The contract may not be transferred without the parties' written agreement.

## 4. Prize

### 4.1 Agreed amount

Subject to the final Grant Agreement established between the European Commission and EFEE for the purpose of this project, the total amount available for the tasks described here above during the project lifetime (01/01/2021 – 31/12/2021) will be of maximum 20.000,00 € (about 40 working days at the rate €500 euros) of including all taxes (such as, e.g. VAT). The final salary amount will be paid depended on the previous experience of the contractor with regards to the above-mentioned tasks.

### 4.2 Other arrangements

**Expenses:** The expert is reimbursed, on receipt of full documentation according to European Commission requirements the travel – economy flight and train tickets - and accommodation expenses – and transfer to and from airport (by public transportation, taxis not reimbursed) for his/her participation in the preparatory meeting, Advisory Group meetings, case study visits, and the

final project conference as project expert. These tasks are those previously set up in the Description of the Action only subject to the changes that may be decided by the Advisory Group.

**Processing personal data:** The contracting party accepts that the contractor is free to use the data collected and the reports written in this project as part of their own academic reports and articles, as long as they include the relevant references to the project.

However, in order to fulfil or respect the modernized Convention 108 (the regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000) and EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data:

3. The Contractor must process personal data under the agreement in compliance with applicable EU and national law on data protection (including authorisations or notification requirements);
4. The Contractor may grant its personnel access only to data that is strictly necessary for implementing, managing and monitoring the agreement;
5. The Contractor must adopt appropriate technical and organisational security measures having regard to the risks inherent in the processing and to the nature of the personal data concerned.

## 5. Selection criteria

Aside from the above stated requirements, the selection process will be based 1) on acceptance of the tender offering the best price-quality ratio and 2) on the availability during the one-year project for the requested tasks. The Contractor is selected according to the standards of selection that have been developed by EFEE. Main selection criteria are the expertise and capacity to deliver the work tendered for, the price-quality relation, the methodological quality and the tenderer's work experience.

It should be noted that the contract will not be awarded to a tenderer who receives less than 70% on the award criteria.

### 5.1. Award criteria

The contract will be awarded to the tenderer whose offer represents the best value for money, taking into account the following criteria:

1. Evidence track record of proven scientific research experience and extensive knowledge of the European Semester (and preferably of social dialogue structures in education as well).
2. Proficient capacity of the English languages (additional European languages such as Dutch and Greek are an asset)
3. Understanding of the nature of the assignment
4. Capacity to work in a team project
5. Ability to meet deadlines

6. Ability to meet budget allowance
7. Availability to attend meetings

## 6. Content and presentation of the bids

### 6.1 Content of the bids

The bids should contain a detailed explanation of the qualifications and the expertise of the potential contractor, e.g. information on references from the contractor on similar projects already handled, to demonstrate his/her experience and capability to succeed in performing the tasks as set out in section 2 of this tender.

The bids should include a detailed description of the methodology and tools applied to implement the audio-visual service as well as a project plan with detailed time and cost planning.

The external expert is requested to send a budget listing the costs by task including a fair estimation of the number of working days and the number of people participating in the tasks.

### 6.2 Presentation of the bids

Replies have to be presented **by 23 February 2021 at the latest** to:

[samira.buhrer@educationemployers.eu](mailto:samira.buhrer@educationemployers.eu)

Subject: External Research Expertise for *“Strengthening the capacity of education employers within the European Semester process”*