



Call for Tender for Expert Researcher
HigherED 4 Industry

Sustainable competitiveness in the twin transition through higher education staff acquisition – academia-industry collaboration and hybrid careers supporting experienced professionals in accessing the teaching and research professions in HE in Europe

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Description

The European Federation of Education Employers is pleased to launch a call for a subcontractor to provide research expertise in the framework of the implementation of the 2-year project, *"Sustainable competitiveness in the twin transition through higher education staff acquisition – academia-industry collaboration and hybrid careers supporting experienced professionals in accessing the teaching and research professions in HE in Europe"* supported by the European Commission under the European Social Fund+ (ESF+) Social Prerogatives and Specific Competencies Lines (SocPL).

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Background

The organisation - EFEE

The European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE) is a recognised European social partner organisation for education employers. EFEE represents in total 61 education employers organisations of all sectors of education from pre-school to higher education, research, and VET, in 27 European countries. EFEE's membership includes ministries of education, local government associations, school boards' and school heads' associations, non-public and private school associations, conferences of university rectors, and networks of private universities.

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 of and increase commitment to the European policy agenda and influence European policy by 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 characterising our projects: firstly, their transnational character; and secondly, their strong evidence base. Regarding the former, participants are provided with the opportunity to travel to other European countries and exchange knowledge with our members from all over Europe. As for the latter, an external expert is hired for every project to ensure the high scientific quality of our project results (please find a more detailed description of the expected tasks of the expert in *section 2.1* of this document).

EFEE is responsible for the day-to-day management of the project. This includes the project coordination (organisation of activities), supervision related to the project objectives (producing outcomes), and the administrative and financial tasks that come with it. EFEE will also draft policy recommendations based on the outcomes of the project. EFEE's General Secretary Daniel Wisniewski will be the project coordinator and he will be assisted with the implementation of the project by EFEE Senior Project Manager Silvia Pesini Escartín.

The project - HigherED 4 Industry

Introduction to the project

HigherED 4 Industry aims to bridge the gap between academia and industry by supporting experienced professionals in transitioning to teaching and research roles within higher education institutions across Europe. The project's main objectives are to foster academia-industry collaboration and to enable hybrid careers for professionals seeking to contribute their expertise to higher education. In the context of post-COVID recovery and the twin green and digital transitions, this project aims to empower higher education institutions as they adapt to the shifts in the education and industry landscapes.

Through research, peer learning activities, workshops and the identification of good practices, HigherED 4 Industry will produce guidelines for higher education institutions and policy recommendations that will focus on tackling the barriers faced by experienced professionals willing to access the teaching and the research professions in HE, in order to reduce staff shortages and foster the development of relevant skills and programmes, contributing significantly to the overall advancement of higher education across Europe.

Main objectives of the project

- **Support experienced professionals to transition to the teaching and/or research professions in higher education in Europe.** This can be done either through:
 - **Hybrid teaching or research** (teachers and researchers working both in business and in higher education).
 - **Second-career teaching or research** (professionals fully transitioning to the teaching or research profession in higher education after a career in the industry).
- Ensure that **HE study programmes** are **in line with the evolving labour market** and the skills needed in the post-COVID era. These new hybrid teachers will contribute themselves to enabling updated study programmes.
- Propose a means to **ensure the relevance of skills taught in the EU**, supporting sustainable competitiveness, social fairness, and resilience building.
- By identifying **good practices**, prepare **guidelines for HE institutions**, and presenting **policy recommendations** addressing barriers faced by professionals willing to access the teaching and the research professions in HE, which is expected to increase inclusion and diversity in the profession. This will also empower universities to play their role as key actors of change in the green and digital transitions.
- Building and reinforcing the **capacity of national social partners** to engage in national social dialogue and to participate in and contribute to European social dialogue.

Expected outputs of the project

- **Quantitative and qualitative research:**
 - Focus on researching practices and frameworks enabling and/or hindering the possibility for hybrid careers, as well as identifying common challenges along with possible solutions to be upscaled at the European level.
 - Research will be carried out through an **online survey** targeting higher education institutions, professionals, employers' federations and SME federations, as well as by gathering **qualitative input during one Peer Learning Activity and two workshops** organised in different EU countries.
 - This research phase will lead to a **research report** (produced by the researcher recruited through this call) presenting results from the survey and input from the PLA and workshops along with relevant conclusions.
- **1 Peer Learning Activity (PLA) and 2 workshops:**
 - One day and a half each.
 - Workshops: will take place in Cyprus and Finland, in that order.
 - PLA: in Portugal, third event of the project.
 - Sharing good practices, ideas, and perspectives on the topic at stake and encouraging joint work and transnational cooperation among partners involved.
 - Input from participants and speakers will be gathered during each event and will directly feed into the research report.
- **Practical guidelines for higher education institutions:**
 - Focused on enabling hybrid careers for experienced professionals willing to access the teaching and research professions in higher education in Europe.
 - Include good practices, useful information on legal frameworks and possible ways forward to tackle challenges identified during the research.
- **Policy recommendations:**
 - Addressing higher education institutions, industry, and other relevant stakeholders.
 - Take into account both the research results and the input gathered during the PLA and workshops.
- **Final conference:**
 - Present best practices, final report and policy recommendations.

The timeline of the project

In order to deliver on the project's objectives, we will organise four events: two workshops taking place in Cyprus and Finland, one peer learning activity in

Portugal and one final conference in Belgium in the timeframe of 2024-2026. Please find the preliminary timeline below:

Date	Activity	Location
May 2024	Kick-off Advisory Group meeting	Online
October 2024	Advisory Group meeting	Online
November 2024	1st Workshop	Cyprus
February 2024	Advisory Group meeting	Online
April 2025	2nd Workshop	Finland
September 2025	Advisory Group meeting	Online
October 2025	Peer Learning Activity	Portugal
December 2025	Advisory Group meeting	Online
March 2026	Publication of the Final Research Report/Dissemination Period Final Conference	Online/Belgium

Advisory Group meetings

The Advisory Group meetings will bring together representatives from all the official consortium partners to provide guidance, monitor the project developments, and promote active involvement in the project meetings and dissemination actions among their affiliates; and the expert researcher. The focal point of these meetings is to agree on general concepts, set concrete goals, select specific peer learning topics, and prepare the groundwork for project events. In total, five advisory group meetings will take place during the course of the project, including the Kick-Off.

Workshops

The objective of the workshops, which will each last one day and a half, is to provide Advisory Group Members, other education employers representatives, and education stakeholders with a platform to exchange, peer learn, and discuss the topics identified during Advisory Group meetings in greater depth. The workshops will also include local school visits, allowing participants to gain in-depth practical on-site knowledge on effective management of educational centres in the context of AI in education, and therewith bound challenges and opportunities by engaging in a dialogue with school representatives.

The expert researcher

In order to ensure that the project has a strong evidence-base, an external expert researcher will assist with the mapping and analysis of relevant methods and legal frameworks throughout the EU. The expert researcher is expected to write a substantial research report, analysing and comparing results from the online survey questionnaire and literature study with the practical knowledge gained through the Peer Learning Activity and workshops with expert knowledge.

By investigating the current situation regarding academia-industry cooperation, researching practices and frameworks enabling and/or hindering the possibility for hybrid careers, by identifying common challenges along with possible solutions to be upscaled at the European level, as well as by comparing the research results with the knowledge gained through hands-on experience in the host countries of the different activities, the research report aims to develop a concrete and well-covered outline for all the relevant stakeholders. This research report will feed into the different outputs of the project, specifically the creation of practical guidelines for higher education institutions on enabling hybrid careers for experienced professionals willing to access the teaching and research professions in higher education in Europe, and policy recommendations for higher education institutions, industry, and other relevant stakeholders.

Therefore, EFEE expects the external research expert to have proven experience and extensive knowledge when it comes to academia-industry collaboration, especially in higher education and research. The expert researcher should also be able to identify pressing challenges in this area, as well as to identify opportunities for further transnational cooperation and upscaling of effective practices.

Tasks to be performed by the successful candidate

The expert is expected to perform the following tasks in the time framework from June 2024 to March 2026:

1. **Participate** in a pre-project meeting with EFEE (online), three meetings with the Project Advisory Group (online), and three in-person events(2 workshops and 1 peer learning activity).
2. **Develop**, in collaboration with the project advisory group, an online survey to gather insights from EFEE and consortium member organizations regarding academia-industry cooperation, challenges, and best practices in enabling hybrid careers in higher education and research.

3. **Conduct** desk research to map and analyse relevant methods and legal frameworks throughout the EU with regards to hybrid careers.
4. **Collaborate** with the project advisory group to develop interview questions for local/national activities, aiming to identify practical approaches and solutions for academia-industry collaboration and upscaling to the European level.
5. Provide **scientific oversight** of the workshops and peer learning activity in Cyprus, Finland and Portugal. Draft reflection reports based on the evaluation and analysis of findings gained after each activity. Present these reports to the Advisory Group for input and approval.
6. Draft a **final project research report** (including an Executive Summary) outlining the outcomes of all project activities, including survey results, desk research, workshops, and peer learning activities. Analyze and compare these findings with practical knowledge gained, drawing conclusions on academia-industry collaboration, hybrid careers, and best practices in higher education and research in Europe. Incorporate recommendations for stakeholders based on the research outcomes.

Requirements to be a successful candidate

EFEE requires the expert researcher (hereafter, Contractor) to provide an objective and scientific perspective along with expertise on the issue at stake while carrying out the tasks outlined above. Therefore, the Contractor is expected to display the following competences:

- Proven (research) experience and extensive **knowledge of academia-industry collaboration and hybrid careers.**
- Significant **understanding of social dialogue structures** in education is preferable in order to identify the most pressing challenges and opportunities accordingly.
- Experience in **conducting surveys/interviews** in the **education sector.**
- **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).
- Ability to communicate fluently verbally and in writing in **English (at least C1 level)**. Additional European languages such as French and Dutch will be considered an asset.

The Contractor contributes to the successful development of the project as a whole by actively participating in various project activities and meetings. The Advisory Group is the body entitled to guide the project/research implementation as concerns its organisation and evaluation.

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 Contractor 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.

Price

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 (01/04/2024 – 31/03/2026) will be of maximum €30.000 (about 60 working days at the rate of €500/day) of including all taxes (such as, e.g. VAT). The final salary amount will be paid depending on the previous experience of the contractor with regards to the above-mentioned tasks.

Other arrangements

Expenses: The Contractor is reimbursed, on receipt of full documentation according to the European Commission's requirements with regards to travel – economy flight and train tickets –, accommodation expenses, and transfer to and from the airport (by public transportation; taxis not reimbursed) for their participation in the in-person events (3 workshops).

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 modernised 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:

1. 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);
2. The Contractor may grant its personnel access only to data that is strictly necessary for implementing, managing and monitoring the agreement;
3. 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.

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 duration of the 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.

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 research experience and extensive knowledge academia-industry collaboration and hybrid careers in the education sector (and preferably of social dialogue structures in education as well).
2. Proficient capacity in the English language (additional European languages such as French and Dutch will be considered 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 allowances.
7. Availability to attend activities and meetings.

Content and presentation of the bids

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 their 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 a project plan with detailed time and cost planning. The potential contractor is also 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.

Presentation of the bids

Replies have to be presented by **15 May 2024 at the latest** to valentina.lacasa@educationemployers.eu and silvia.pesini@educationemployers.eu

Subject: Expert Researcher for HigherED for Industry