

# Call for subcontractor

## Expert researcher



*Enhancing the attractiveness of the teaching profession through strengthened Social Dialogue – capacity building in Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries*

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The European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE) and the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) are pleased to launch a call for a subcontractor to provide research expertise in the framework of the implementation of the project “*Enhancing the attractiveness of the teaching profession through strengthened Social Dialogue – capacity building in Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries*” co-funded by the European Union under the Social Prerogatives and Specific Competencies Lines (SocPL), Support for Social Dialogue.

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## **1. Background: the EastSD project**

### **1.1. Purpose and scope**

EFEE and ETUCE are about to kick-start their joint project *Enhancing the attractiveness of the teaching profession through strengthened Social Dialogue – capacity building in Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries*, in which research is going to play a key role.

Reviews on the ground have shown that a high number of countries in the European Union and in EU-neighbouring regions are facing shortages of teachers at different levels of education. In order to tackle teacher shortages, it is essential to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession, which successful Social Dialogue can contribute to by addressing relevant topics, such as teachers' working time, digitalisation and the right to disconnect, and work-related well-being. Therefore, EFEE and ETUCE believe that social dialogue in education could and should be strengthened in the EU, but also in several Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries. Supporting the development of capacities of trade unions and employers' organisations in these regions would be an undeniable added-value to facilitate social dialogue and to contribute to enhancing the attractiveness of the teaching profession. Based on these observations, EFEE and ETUCE are joining forces with national social partners in various EU and non-EU countries with the aim to investigate the situation when it comes to social dialogue in the European Union as well as in Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries and to strengthening Social Dialogue can contribute to the enhancement of the attractiveness of the teaching profession in these regions. In addition, this project aims to familiarise and attract social partners from the candidate countries to the European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education (ESSDE).

### **1.2 Research and expected outputs**

The project will entail targeted research, linked to and feeding into different outputs and activities:

1) A thorough research phase investigating relevant, effective, and innovative practices with the potential to strengthen social dialogue in education. – The research phase will ensure a deeper understanding of the current situation of social dialogue in the education sector, mapping good practices and analysing the current situation in Europe with a particular focus on Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries. Research will be carried out through desk research, an online survey questionnaire targeting social partners in education in Europe, and by gathering qualitative input during the Peer Learning Activities organised in different EU and non-EU countries throughout the project. This research phase will lead to the creation of a comprehensive but accessible research report presenting results along with relevant conclusions.

2) Four in-person activities: three peer learning activities (PLAs) and one final conference – The PLAs will take place in Poland, Moldova, and Montenegro. Each PLA will offer space and opportunities for sharing good practices, ideas, and

perspectives on strengthening social dialogue in Europe with a particular focus on Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries, while also encouraging joint work and transnational cooperation among the partners involved. Input from the participants and speakers will be gathered during each event and will directly feed into the research report. The final conference, which will take place in Belgium, will then be an opportunity to discuss and disseminate the project results, including the research report and the joint EFEE-ETUCE policy statement.

3) Three reflection reports – After each peer learning activity, a reflection report on how the activity’s programme contributed to the aim of strengthening social dialogue in Europe and allowed to gain insight into possible improvements for further follow-up actions. This should include relevant good practices presented by the host countries and insights from interactive sessions to identify and share challenges, experiences, and suggestions.

4) Guidelines for social partners – These guidelines will aim to facilitate the effective implementation of relevant initiatives enhancing the attractiveness of the teaching profession through strengthened social dialogue, with a particular focus on teachers’ working time, digitalisation and the right to disconnect, and work-related well-being. These guidelines will include good practices gathered throughout the project, useful information on frameworks for social dialogue, as well as possible ways forward to tackle challenges identified during the research phase and the Peer Learning Activities.

5) Joint policy statement – A joint policy statement on promoting social dialogue in education in Europe with a particular focus on Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries will subsequently be developed. This statement will consider both the research results and the input gathered during the Peer Learning Activities.

The research report will be prepared by the expert researcher and feedbacked by the project consortium. The other outputs will be prepared by the organisations part of the consortium with the support of the expert researcher, ensuring effective and relevant use of the research results.

## 1.2. Activities

In order to deliver on the project’s objectives, four events will be organised; three of them are peer learning activities (PLAs) to take place in Poland, Moldova, and Montenegro in the timeframe of 2025-2027. The project will then close with a final conference in Belgium devoted to the sharing of the results, including the research report and the joint policy statement. Preliminary timeline:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Location</b>
15-16 October 2025	1 <sup>st</sup> Peer Learning Activity	Warsaw, Poland

November 2025	PAG meeting	online
March 2026	2 <sup>nd</sup> Peer Learning Activity	Chişinău, Moldova
April 2026	PAG meeting	online
September 2026	3 <sup>rd</sup> Peer Learning Activity	Podgorica, Montenegro
October 2026	PAG meeting	online
February 2027	Final Conference	Brussels, Belgium

### *1.2.1. Project Advisory Group (PAG) meetings*

The project foresees the organisation of online Project Advisory Group meetings that will contribute to the planning of the in-person activities of the project (peer learning activities and a final conference) and to the development of outputs. The Project Advisory Group meetings will bring together representatives from the project consortium, which is composed of the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE), the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), as well as national members representing education employers and teachers' trade unions in various European countries. These PAG meetings will be dedicated to fostering dialogue between partners on a regular basis and to serve as a platform for exchanges and regular monitoring.

### *1.2.2. Peer Learning Activities*

EFEE and ETUCE member organisations will be given the chance to reinforce their capacity building with regard to strengthening social dialogue in education by taking part in peer learning activities in three different countries, namely Poland, Moldova, and Montenegro. PLA participants, as well as external stakeholders, will also be invited to present practices, ideas, and perspectives. The expert researcher will be expected to take active part in these activities, contributing with updates and gathering relevant input.

### *1.2.3. Final Conference*

The final conference will take place in Brussels, Belgium. The conference will be devoted to sharing the results of the project, including the research report, guidelines, and joint policy statement. The expert researcher will be expected to present the research report and key results.

## 2. The expert researcher

In order to ensure that the project has a strong evidence base, we wish to subcontract an experienced expert researcher to carry out the desk research, mapping and analysis of the current situation when it comes to social dialogue in education with a particular focus on Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries and when it comes to how social dialogue could be established and/or further strengthened in order to contribute to raising the attractiveness of the teaching profession in these regions. The expert researcher is expected to conduct a thorough desk research and to write a substantial and comprehensive research report, analysing and comparing results from the online survey questionnaire and the desk research with the practical knowledge gained through the Peer Learning Activities.

The research report aims to develop a concrete and well covered outline for all the relevant stakeholders, as well as to feed into the different outputs which will be developed through the following work packages of the project, specifically the creation of guidelines for Social Partners in education and the joint policy statement. Quality and relevance of the research report should be ensured by investigating the current situation regarding social dialogue in Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries, by researching practices and frameworks enabling and/or hindering stronger social dialogue and enhancing the attractiveness of the teaching profession, by identifying common challenges along with possible solutions to be upscaled, as well as by comparing the research results with the knowledge gained through hands-on experience in the host countries of the different activities.

For this purpose, we expect the external expert researcher to have proven experience and extensive knowledge when it comes to Social Dialogue in education, especially when it comes to the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries and the relation to enhancing attractiveness of the teaching profession. The expert researcher should also be able to identify pressing challenges in this area, as well as to identify opportunities for strengthened social dialogue and the attractiveness of the teaching profession. The total maximum budget for subcontracting these research tasks is €49.000 (about 70 working days at the rate of €700/day).

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

The selected expert researcher will be expected to perform the following tasks in the timeframe May 2025 - February 2027:

1. **Participate** in an introduction and preparatory meeting with EFEE and ETUCE (online), three online meetings with the Project Advisory Group, three in-person peer learning activities, as well as an in-person final conference.

2. **Conduct** desk research to map, examine, and analyse existing data and research on the current situation when it comes to enhancing the attractiveness of the teaching profession and the role of social dialogue in this context, also comparing the theoretical framework with the practical knowledge gained through the peer learning activities.
3. **Compile** information and address any possible gaps (where possible), covering European countries with a particular focus on Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries.
4. **Develop**, with the input from the project advisory group, an online survey questionnaire to be carried out amongst EFEE and ETUCE member organisations to get insight into current knowledge, practices and challenges when it comes to enhancing the attractiveness of the teaching profession through strengthened social dialogue, also addressing relevant topics such as teachers' working time, digitalisation and the right to disconnect, and work-related well-being.
5. **Scientifically accompany** the peer learning activities in Poland, Moldova, and Montenegro, and develop interview and/or focus group questions to be used during these PLAs with the aim to ensure effective gathering of input for research purposes.
6. After each PLA, **prepare** a reflection report based on the evaluation and analysis of the findings gained through these activities.
7. **Draft**, and subsequently **finalise**, a research report (including an executive summary), outlining the outcomes of all project activities (including survey, desk research, peer learning activities) and drawing conclusions on enhancing the attractiveness of the teaching profession through strengthened Social Dialogue with a particular focus on Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries.

## 2.2. Requirements

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

1. Proven (research) experience and extensive knowledge of social dialogue in the education sector in Europe, along with the ability to identify pressing challenges and opportunities accordingly.
2. Understanding of the role of social partners in the education sector, along with an overall understanding of the education sector (both at the European and national level).
3. Willingness to contribute to enhancing the attractiveness of the teaching profession through research and co-creation of outputs.
4. Experience in conducting (online) surveys, interviews/focus groups in the education sector.

5. Ability to communicate fluently verbally and in writing in English (at least C1 level). Additional European languages, in particular languages used in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries, will be considered an asset.
6. Availability to participate in the project's in-person activities and online PAG meetings as outlined above.

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

## 3. Contract

### 3.1. 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 will be of maximum €49.000 (about 70 working days at the rate of €700/day) of including all taxes (such as e.g. VAT).

### 3.2. Other arrangements

**Expenses:** For their participation in the peer learning activities and the final conference, the Subcontractor will be reimbursed, on receipt of full documentation according to the European Commission's requirements, with regards to travel – economy flight and train tickets – up to a previously agreed amount, while accommodation and subsistence will be directly covered.

**Processing personal data:** The subcontracting party accepts that the Subcontractor be 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:

- The Subcontractor must process personal data under the agreement in compliance with applicable EU and national law on data protection (including authorisations or notification requirements);
- The Subcontractor may grant its personnel access only to data that is strictly necessary for implementing, managing, and monitoring the agreement;



- The Subcontractor 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.

## 4. Payments

The contract to be signed between EFEE and the Subcontractor will be 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 Subcontractor carrying out the relevant stages of work as listed above.

1. A first instalment amounting to 50% (€24.500), issued after signature of the contract.
2. A second instalment for the remaining payment (€24.500) issued after completion, delivery, and approval by EFEE and ETUCE of the final research report, and presentation of this report during the final conference of the project.

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

The contractual agreement will be 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 Subcontractor will be 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 at any time if the Subcontractor 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.

## 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 of the Subcontractor during the duration of the project for the requested tasks. The Subcontractor is selected according to the standards of selection that have been developed by EFEE. The main selection criteria are the expertise and capacity to deliver the work tendered for, the price-quality relation, the methodological quality and the applicant's work experience. It should be

noted that the contract will not be awarded to an applicant who receives less than 70% on the award criteria.

## 5.1. Award criteria

The contract will be awarded to the applicant 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 of social dialogue in the education sector in Europe, and preferably of social dialogue in Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries in particular;
2. Proficient capacity in the English language (additional European languages will be considered an asset);
3. Understanding of the nature of the assignment;
4. Capacity to work in a team;
5. Ability to meet deadlines;
6. Ability to meet budget allowances;
7. Availability to attend in-person activities and online meetings.

## 6. Content and presentation on the bids

### 6.1. Content of the bids

The bids should contain a detailed explanation of the qualifications and the expertise of the potential subcontractor, e.g. information on references from the subcontractor on similar projects already handled, to demonstrate their experience and capability to succeed in performing the tasks as set out above.

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 subcontractor 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 (if more than one).

### 6.2. Presentation of the bids

Please provide us with the necessary documents by **13 April 2025 at 23:59 CEST** by sending an email to [marieceline.falisse@educationemployers.eu](mailto:marieceline.falisse@educationemployers.eu) and [monika.hoangthe@educationemployers.eu](mailto:monika.hoangthe@educationemployers.eu).

Subject: Expert Researcher for EastSD