



Call for tenders for subcontracting external expertise
EU Social Partners' Integrated Projects of the European Social Dialogue
"Improving skills matching in Europe 2024-2025"

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1. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The EU cross-sectoral social partners (BusinessEurope, SGI Europe, SMEUnited and ETUC) have been awarded a grant by the European Commission under the EU social dialogue budget line to promote and reinforce the link between social dialogue at national and European level, as well as to address emerging issues which are of joint relevance.

The upcoming project will focus on skills matching in the EU. The EU cross-sectoral social partners have decided to subcontract external expertise for this action.

The main project activity, focusing on skills matching in the EU, will be delivered through the organisation of a series of activities and meetings with the European social partners and dedicated research. The project is closely aligned with the European Commission's policy priorities, as it follows up on the context of the European Year of Skills and the emphasis that this initiative places on skills matching, as well as up-skilling and re-skilling, and the role of social partners and social dialogue.

The project will contribute to the implementation of the Action Plan on Labour and Skills Shortages, taking into account aspects related to skills matching, the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and other key Commission documents, such as the Communications "The European Green Deal" and "A stronger Social Europe for just transitions"; Communication on "Harnessing Talents the Communication on the New Skills Agenda, the adaptation of social dialogue, in particular collective bargaining, to changes in employment and work-related challenges.

The project will be built on and further develop the [Joint Recommendations - Promoting Social Partnership in Employee Training](#) and on skills, innovation and training.

The aim of the project will be to look at the role of social partners in fostering skills matching, thereby contributing to reducing labour and skills shortages through consideration of this multi-faceted issue, with a perspective towards achieving good outcomes for workers and employers. In particular:

- Explore the concept of skills matching and skills shortages and analyse factors that contribute to these phenomena, including aspects related to updating of occupational profiles and list of shortage professions, making professions and jobs attractive, job quality; recruitment process; careers advice and guidance, and quality and inclusive employee training by focusing on sectoral and regional examples.
- Analyse social partner involvement and social dialogue in national/sectoral approaches to reduce labour and skills shortages and to improve access to quality and inclusive employee training.
- Analyse the relationship between skills development, quality of jobs and competitiveness of the EU's companies, regions and countries.
- Reflect on how to reduce labour and skills shortages, including through improving the framework conditions for employee training.

One aspect that the project aims to explore is examples of how social partners contribute to the updating of occupational profiles and, in some cases, feeding into

curriculum design, to assess what works well and less well, including how timely and effective these processes are. This will be the starting point for exploring how quality, inclusive and effective employee training can reduce (structural) skills mismatches and skills shortages to improve the competitiveness of the EU and foster job matching. The project will also have a focus on improving apprenticeship provision to support the participation of adults. Particular attention will be paid to the regional and sectoral levels. In the context of employee training, it would also be relevant to consider the access, quality, inclusiveness, and role of guidance and advice when it comes to career orientation and identifying training needs with a view to skills matching. Consideration will also be given to the role of labour mobility and migration as one element of addressing labour and skills shortages.

In addition, the project will look at the role that social partners play in national approaches to labour market and skills intelligence gathering, including as concerns the development and updating the occupational profiles and the shortage occupation lists. Such lists are typically defined nationally or regionally, involving a mix of labour market data, such as job vacancy data and forecast models, as well as the views and evidence of social partners.

The external expert will furthermore be closely involved in all the project activities. Therefore, in addition to a proven track record in social dialogue research, the external contractor may potentially be involved in workshop organisation and facilitation, minute-taking etc. The exact tasks related to the project's events will be determined together with the Steering Committee.

2. TASKS TO BE PERFORMED BY THE SUBCONTRACTOR

The subcontractor will be responsible for supporting the work of the project by performing the following tasks:

- Developing a research paper that will provide the basis for further exchanges between European social partners and will focus on the following key areas:
 - Explore the concept of skills matching and skills shortages and analyse factors that contribute to these phenomena, including aspects related to updating of occupational profiles and list of shortage professions, making professions and jobs attractive, job quality; recruitment process; careers advice and guidance, and quality and inclusive employee training by focusing on sectoral and regional examples.
 - Analyse social partner involvement and social dialogue in national/sectoral approaches to reduce labour and skills shortages and to improve access to quality and inclusive employee training.
 - Analyse the relationship between skills development, quality of jobs and competitiveness of the EU's companies, regions and countries. Reflect on how to reduce labour and skills shortages, including through improving the framework conditions for employee training.
- Be closely involved in the following key elements:
 - Steering Committee: A steering Committee will be set up with representatives from trade unions and employers as well as the sub-

contracted expert. Consideration will also be given to the involvement of other relevant stakeholders on an ad-hoc basis.

- Opening conference: The opening conference will lay the basis for work. It is envisaged to draw on expert presentations from CEDEFOP and JRC in this conference. The conference will include workshops/break-out sessions to discuss various thematic issues identified in the initial research and to help frame the further gathering of information. In addition to national and sectoral social partners, the event will be open to experts from ministries of education, quality assurance agencies, and other relevant stakeholders, as applicable and to be identified by the social partners, in consultation with the sub-contracted expert (100 people).
- Final conference: A final event will be organised to present the research findings and to gather last input from members and stakeholders. In addition to national and sectoral social partners, the event will also be open for experts from ministries of education, quality assurance agencies, and other relevant stakeholders (100 people).

Target and beneficiaries:

The project will target social partners at EU, national and sectoral level. Indirectly, thanks to national members of the EU social partners and the dissemination activities foreseen, the project will reach workers and companies. It will be proposed to discuss the project outcomes with the representatives of ministries of employment and education in the tripartite Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT) , and jointly contribute as EU cross-industry social partners to EU policy-making in the relevant policy fields (skills training, labour markets,), including a possible joint call of the EU social cross-industry partners for a new EU initiative taking into account the project outcomes.

BusinessEurope has sole responsibility for the management of the subcontracted expert.

3. SPECIFIC DELIVERABLES TO BE PROVIDED BY THE SUBCONTRACTOR

The contractor will be asked to provide:

For the kick-off steering committee meeting, the tasks to be performed by the subcontractor are the following:

- to propose a methodology for the preparatory phase of the project leading to the opening conference and workshops, which will set the frame for further research.
- To propose a methodology to conduct the research based on consultation with European and national social partners.

For the preparation of the opening conference, the tasks to be performed by the subcontractor are the following:

- Initial desk research on the above-mentioned 4 main objectives of the project (namely: Explore the concept of skills matching and skills shortages and analyse factors that contribute to these phenomena, including aspects related to updating of occupational profiles and list of shortage professions, making professions and jobs attractive, job quality; recruitment process; careers advice and guidance, and quality and inclusive employee training by focusing on sectoral and regional examples; Analyse social partner involvement and social dialogue in national/sectoral approaches to reduce labour and skills shortages and to improve access to quality and inclusive employee training; Analyse the relationship between skills development, quality of jobs and competitiveness of the EU's companies, regions and countries; Reflect on how to reduce labour and skills shortages, including through improving the framework conditions for employee training) especially to get a picture of social partner involvement and social dialogue in national/sectoral approaches on these topics;.
- This initial research should take into account information from the national, sectoral, enterprise and regional levels on the above-mentioned 4 main objectives of the project.
- An overview of the findings from this initial research should be prepared and used as a background document, of not more than 10-15 pages, including references and annex, to inform the discussion during the opening conference and workshops/break-out sessions. This overview should include a bibliography of the literature and technical documents used in the initial research.
- The conference and workshops should be structured in a way so as to frame further analytical work on the topic, taking into account the issues outlined in the point above and with a view to conducting more detailed analysis. The subcontractor may be asked to facilitate the workshops/break-out session discussions based on the research they have provided, to take minutes of the discussions etc. The exact tasks related to the project's events will be agreed in conjunction with the Steering Committee.

For the preparation of the final conference, the tasks to be performed by the subcontractor are the following:

- A Final research report, of around 80-100 pages (exact length to be agreed with the Steering Committee) should be prepared for presentation during the final conference. The structure and content of this report will be further determined in consultation with the Steering Committee and based on the research conducted.

All documents must be drafted in English and will be finalised and proofread by the subcontractor.

The steering committee will be set up with representatives from the secretariats of the EU cross-industry trade union and employers' organisations as well as the sub-contracted expert. The Steering Committee will meet online approximately 5-8 times during the course of the project. The EU cross-industry social partners also intend to set up an advisory group composed of up to 10 employer and 10 trade union representatives from the national and sectoral level, plus the sub-contracted expert. This would be an ad-hoc advisory group to support the content-related parts of the project. The planning of when the members of the ad-hoc advisory group would meet will be discussed in conjunction with the sub-contracted expert.

Opening conference:

The opening conference will lay the basis for work. The conference plans to draw on expert presentations from CEDEFOP and JRC. Workshops/break-out sessions will be organised to discuss various thematic issues identified in the initial research and to help frame the further gathering of information. In addition to national and sectoral social partners, the event will be open for also experts from ministries of education, quality assurance agencies, and other relevant stakeholders.

Duration of event: 1 day

Number of participants: 100 people

Countries concerned: All EU countries (affiliates from EEA countries can attend the conference at their own cost)

Venue: Brussels

Date: first quarter 2024

Final conference:

A final event will be organised to present the research findings and to gather last input from members and stakeholders. In addition to national and sectoral social partners, the event will also be open for experts from ministries of education, quality assurance agencies, and other relevant stakeholders.

Duration of event: 1 day

Number of participants: 100 people

Countries concerned: All EU countries (affiliates from EEA countries can attend the conference at their own cost)

Venue: Brussels

Date: 1st quarter 2026

4. EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED FOR THE SUBCONTRACTOR

Sound experience is required in the following areas:

- In-depth knowledge and experience of European and national level labour market and social policies in relation to vocational education and training and employee training, including in relation to skills, qualifications, and job matching;
- Experience in working with social partners at European, sectoral and national levels and good understanding of social dialogue dynamics at EU, sectoral and national levels;
- Successful track record in delivering research-based or communication-oriented European level projects;
- Demonstrated experience and expertise in developing comparative analyses on education and training related issues and the role social dialogue and collective bargaining;
- The external expert will furthermore be closely involved in all the project activities. In addition to a proven track record in social dialogue research, the external contractor may be asked to facilitate the workshops/break-out session discussions based on the research they have provided, to take minutes of the discussions etc. The exact tasks relating to the project's events will be agreed in conjunction with the Steering Committee.

Following skills are also required:

- Result-orientation: Eagerness and capacity to show responsibility for delivering the agreed tasks, including the ability to work within specified deadlines and to respect budgetary limits;
- Analytical skills: Proven ability to carry out research and comparative analyses on social dialogue and collective bargaining and understanding links between European and national levels;
- Problem solving skills: Ability to understand and advise on how to address political sensitivities on the topics concerned;
- Linguistic skills: High proficiency in English: ability to draft documents and make presentations in English. Knowledge of other languages is a plus.

5. TIME SCHEDULE AND REPORTING

Indicatively, the subcontractor will be asked to work from the second half of September/early October when a first Steering Committee will be held (date to be determined with sub-contractor). The exact deadlines for the finalisation of the final report will be set in agreement with the subcontractor.

The subcontractor will be responsible for remitting the deliverables foreseen within the agreed deadlines.

Travel and subsistence costs as part of this project will be reimbursed to the subcontractor, in accordance with BusinessEurope internal rules on project management.

6. PAYMENT

The total maximum budget available for expertise is € 133,000.

The subcontractor will enter into a contract with BusinessEurope for a maximum total of € 133,000 (all taxes included).

The modalities of payment will be decided upon with the selected subcontractor, taking into account BusinessEurope's usual practice of payment in 3 instalments (advance, interim and final) and fully in line with the Commission's financial guidelines and the grant agreement.

7. FORM, STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE TENDER

Tenders must be written in **English**. They must be signed by the tenderer or his duly authorised representative and be perfectly legible so that there can be no doubt as to words and figures. Tenders must be clear and concise and assembled in a coherent fashion.

Since tenderers will be judged on the content of their written bids, they must make it clear that they are able to meet the requirements of the specifications.

All tenders must include at least two sections:

i) Technical proposal

The technical proposal must provide all the information needed for the purpose of awarding the contract, including:

- Specific information covering the technical and professional capacity, as required, in particular:
 - Description of relevant professional experience with emphasis on the specific fields covered by the invitation to tender;
 - Detailed curriculum vitae;
- Specific information concerning the proposed tasks and deliverables to be provided by the subcontractor (detailed in sections 2 and 3).

ii) Financial proposal

Prices of the financial proposal must be quoted in euros. The maximum amount available for this contract is EUR 133,000 (all taxes included).

Prices shall be fixed and not subject to revision during the performance of the contract.

8. SELECTION CRITERIA

The offers will be examined against the following criteria:

- Quality of the technical proposal including the methodology and the geographical coverage of the bid proposal;
- Verifiable expertise, experience and skills, as required and described above;
- Proven track record of ensuring the quality of communication and written materials in the subjects specified in this call for tenders;
- Proven understanding of the tasks to be performed – to be highlighted in the technical proposal;
- Price not exceeding the amount stated above;

9. AWARD CRITERIA

The contract will be awarded to the tender offering the best value for money, taking into account the specific objectives, requirements and selection criteria of the tender. The principles of transparency and equal treatment will be respected with a view to avoiding any conflicts of interest.

10. TRANSMISSION AND SELECTION OF THE BIDS

Offers must be received by **4 September 2024** Offers must be sent to BusinessEurope (see contact address below).

To ensure confidentiality, bidders must submit their offer in a sealed envelope and the inside envelope shall not only bear the name of the department for which it is intended

(see below), but also the words "Tender – not to be opened by the Mail Department" (Appel d'offre – à ne pas ouvrir par le service du courrier). If self-adhesive envelopes are used, they must be sealed with adhesive tape crossed by the signature of the sender.

A committee will be formed comprising representatives of the European cross-sectoral social partners (BusinessEurope, SGI Europe, SMEunited and ETUC). One or more members of this committee will initial the documents, confirming the date and time of each bid. The committee members will sign the report on the bids received, which will list the admissible bids and provide reasons for rejecting bids owing to their failure to comply with the stipulations of the tendering process.

This committee will also evaluate the tenders that have been deemed admissible. In case of multiple admissible bids, an evaluation report and classification of participation requests will be drawn up, dated and signed by all the members of the evaluation committee and kept for future reference.

This report will include:

- 1) The name and address of the contracting authority, the purpose and value of the contract or framework contract;
- 2) The names of any excluded candidates and the reasons for their rejection;
- 3) The names of candidates selected for consideration and the justification for their selection;
- 4) The names of candidates put forward and justification of their choice in terms of the selection or award criteria.

The contracting authorities will then make their decision.

All candidates must either deliver their bid by hand or submit them by registered letter to:

BusinessEurope Maxime Cerutti Director, Social Affairs Department Avenue de Cortenbergh 168 B – 1000 Brussels Belgium

For requests sent by registered mail, the postmark will serve as proof of the date of dispatch.