

Project: 101102415 - SP4SE

CALL FOR TENDERS FOR SUBCONTRACTING EXTERNAL EXPERTISE

addressed to researchers for the comparative research on national social protection schemes for professional self-employed

1. Background

The SP4SE (Social Protection for the Self-Employed) project has been awarded a grant by the European Commission under call for proposals “Support for social dialogue” (SOCPL-2022-SOC-DIALOG).

The call for proposals aims at contributing to the promotion of social dialogue at cross-industry and sectoral level, while the project aims at strengthening social dialogue at sectoral level by building the capacity of national social partners, in order to tackle the need of self-employed professionals to be covered by an adequate social protection. It aims at giving social partners the tools to contribute to the design of social protection reforms, and to autonomously set up and manage social protection schemes, in line with Council Recommendation 2019/387.

The project will first investigate existing social protection schemes for the professional self-employed and especially the changes introduced since the pandemic. The aim is to better understand which are the actors engaged in each scheme, which are the beneficiaries, which are the governance models and where the funding comes from.

With a view to defining a social protection model to mainstream, best practices will be identified, approved by the consortium, analysed and validated by the working groups and finally channelled into a modelling proposal. Along this process, social partners and all other stakeholders identified by the research will be targeted by an awareness raising campaign and engaged in the working groups, which will serve as a forum for discussing and exchanging ideas. Once the modelling proposal is developed, the capacity building phase begins. The purpose is to strengthen the capacity of national sectoral social partners and promote their role in ensuring an adequate social protection for the professional self-employed.

Given its nature, agreeing on a common definition of self-employment is a demanding task. At the same time, social protection includes different profiles of social assistance and social security, with extensive variations among countries.

In brief, the project entails a real understanding of both demand and supply of social protection for the self-employed. But also, more concretely, wishes to give the right tools to close existing social protection gaps.

The project consortium is led by Confprofessioni, Italian Confederation of Liberal professions (a second-level employers’ association representing liberal professionals, recognised by the Italian government) and composed by the following entities: European Council of the Liberal Professions (CEPLIS), from Belgium; Malta Federation of Professional Associations (MFPA); EQUAL Ireland Education Research and Related Services Co. Ltd.

2. Purpose of the call

In order to carry out the research under work package n° 2 (“Comparative research on national social protection schemes for the professional self-employed”) as well as further ancillary tasks under the following work packages n° 3 (“Engaging social partners”) and n° 4 (“Capacity building for national social partners”), the coordinator intends to award a subcontract to a team of researchers (n° 4 available positions). A classificatory approach would be needed and the academic field – to whom the coordinator intends to address – would be able to provide persons with the right skills.

3. Deadline

The call for expression of interest is open until 03.09.2023.

4. Description of the tasks to be performed

Tasks to be accomplished by the subcontractors consist in the following:

- a) carrying out an overview on social protection schemes for the self-employed
 - based on the MISSOC research and on previous project results;
 - addressing existing social protections schemes for professional self-employed with a specific focus on the special measures introduced by Member States during and following the pandemic;
 - covering the six branches of social protection, as recalled in the Council Recommendation 2019/387 (unemployment benefits, sickness and healthcare benefits, maternity and equivalent paternity benefits, invalidity benefits, old-age benefits and survivors’ benefits, benefits in respect of accidents at work and occupational disease), plus the ones mentioned in the Missoc study (sickness cash benefits, family benefits, guaranteed minimum resources, long-term care);
 - output: report on social protection systems;
- b) carrying out a survey on social protection via a consultation of social partners and other stakeholders
 - covering the same social protection branches as the previous overview;
 - looking at the changes made to the parameters of the social protection schemes during the pandemic, identifying their scope, target and timing;
 - considering all the 27 Member States and providing brief information on social protection measures in a comparative manner;
 - setting up questionnaires and interview surveys (which may be personal, telephone, and focus group interviews);
 - targeting the stakeholders in the field of social protection, including social partners, with the aim of identifying existing issues;
 - output: mapping report on best practices and problems of social protection schemes in the 27 MS;
- c) attending regular coordination meetings within the team, under the lead of a chief investigator, and with the project steering committee (estimated number of meetings n° 6);
- d) participating in the working groups under work package n° 3 (“Engaging social actors”), making presentations and moderating the meetings
 - one working group per social protection issue, as identified in the mapping report;
 - the exact number of WGs will depend on the outcome of the research (max. n° 5);
 - meetings will be virtual and will be organised indicatively every 5 weeks;

- e) supporting the chief researcher in elaborating the work of the working groups and developing a modelling proposal.

The subcontractors may be invited to join seminars and conferences organised in the framework of the project, also beyond the above-mentioned tasks.

The subcontractors will work together in a single team. They will coordinate the work among themselves, under the guidance of a chief researcher, and, in parallel, they will be guided by the PSC.

The work is to be done remotely by the subcontractor at her/his own premises. Subcontractors have to use their own IT tools.

Working language is English.

5. Time schedule

The subcontractors will be asked to perform the above-mentioned tasks following the specific timeline of the project work plan:

Task a) to be performed from October to December 2023;

Task b) to be performed from January to April 2024;

Task c) to be performed from October 2023 to April 2024;

Task d) to be performed from June to September 2024;

Task e) to be performed in February 2024.

The timeline may be subject to slight changes upon decisions of the Project Steering Committee.

6. Required expertise and award criteria

Target group of the call: early-stage researchers or 1-4 years (post-graduate).

The tasks will be subcontracted to a team of researchers who will cover various competences and profiles relevant to social protection, including economists, experts in comparative systems, and researchers in comparative public law.

6.1 Exclusion criteria

Subcontractors must not be subject to EU administrative sanctions nor in any of the exclusion situations that bar them from receiving EU funds (described in the Declaration of honour).

6.2 Selection criteria

The project coordinator will select the most suitable profiles, in terms of quality and relevance to the scope of the project, against the selection criteria specified below:

- Holding university degrees in fields relevant to the scope of the assignment (University education minimum at the Master's degree level);
- Having excellent analytical and judgement skills;
- Being computer literate;
- Publications in fields relevant to the scope of the project;
- Verifiable expertise in comparative organisation of models;

- Previous experience in research and report writing for international research projects;
- Proven experience in collecting and analysing data.

Being fluent in speaking, reading and writing in English is mandatory.

The call is aimed at natural persons with European citizenship.

7. Payment

The subcontractors are entitled to a maximum gross amount of EUR 10.000 and will be remunerated in various instalments, upon submission of an invoice.

Travel and subsistence costs incurred to attend meetings – if any – will be reimbursed according to EU rules, upon inclusion in the subcontractor's invoice and submission of all the necessary supporting documents (e.g., scanned tickets for travels, scanned invoices for other expenses etc.).

8. Procedure

8.1 Application

Applications should be submitted by email to the address sp4se@confprofessioni.eu indicating "SP4SE 101102415 - Call for researchers - Application" on the subject line.

8.2 Content of the applications

The application must include the following documents:

- curriculum vitae;
- a description of relevant experience with emphasis on the specific fields covered by the call;
- a selection of the main works produced, in relation to the subjects specified in the call.

Only applications provided in English will be considered for selection.

8.3 Selection

The procedure will be objective and follow the principles of non-discrimination and equal opportunities, with a view to avoiding any conflict of interest. The coordinator will to the possible extent seek a gender balanced selection of researchers in terms of geographical diversity and gender.

The decision of awarding the subcontracts will be entrusted to an evaluation committee, composed by representatives of the coordinator, who will assess received applications and draw up a report. The selected researchers will be contacted by the coordinator prior to their actual appointment.

8.4 Contracting

The coordinator will establish a contract with each selected researcher, laying down the details regarding the assignment (e.g., tasks and working arrangements, payment arrangements).

Researchers with whom the coordinator concludes a contract under this call will be requested to confirm the absence of conflict of interest and to submit a declaration on honour, duly dated and signed, stating the researcher is not in one of the situations of exclusion.

9. Other conditions

9.1 Record keeping

The appointed researchers must keep records and other supporting documents to prove the proper implementation of the action in line with the accepted standards for at least five years.

In case of on-going checks, audits, investigations, litigation or other pursuits of claims, the records and other supporting documentation must be kept until the end of these procedures.

9.2 Access rights and rights of use

The results produced will belong to the project coordinator. The rights will be obtained for the full term of intellectual property protection, from the moment the results are delivered and approved. Delivery and approval are considered to constitute an effective assignment of rights. This transfer of rights is free of charge.

Please note that the European Commission, as granting authority, has the right to use materials, documents and information received from the coordinator for policy, information, communication, dissemination and publicity purposes.

9.3 Protection of personal data

Any personal data that may be included in the applications received during the present procedure will be processed in accordance with the applicable rules on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data.

Appropriate technical and organisational security measures are in place to address data processing risks.

9.4 Audits, checks, reviews and investigations

Please note that the European Commission, the European Court of Auditors (ECA), the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) have the right to carry out checks, reviews, audits and investigations on the subcontractors, and in particular to audit the payments received, during and after the end of the contract.

9.5 Independence and confidentiality

Subcontractors will be required to comply with the rules regarding confidentiality and conflict of interest.

10. Contact

In case of questions or inquiries regarding the call, please address sp4se@confprofessioni.eu.