

## CALL FOR EXTERNAL EXPERTISE

### For preparatory research on a new social dialogue for gender equality

#### Project 101145648: SD4EU Social Dialogue for a Union of Equality

##### 1. Background

The SD4EU (Social Dialogue for a Union of Equality) project has been awarded a grant by the European Commission under the Call for proposals “Support for Social Dialogue” (SOCPL-2023-SOC-DIALOG).

The primary goal of the project is to contribute to the promotion of social dialogue, which aligns with the key objective of the call for proposals. This will be achieved by strengthening the capacity of national social partners and reinvigorating social dialogue through a new, more gender-sensitive approach. By doing so, the project enhances the effectiveness of social dialogue initiatives in addressing specific and debatable labour issues (equal pay, social protection and work-life balance). The project recognises social dialogue as a powerful tool for innovation and change, in this case in the realm of gender equality. It firmly believes that social partners can significantly contribute to advancing this cause, given their pivotal role within the labour market.

In practical terms, in order to reach these objectives, the project outlines two core activities that are complementary and interconnected. On the one side, transnational seminars will enhance the skills of social partners, enabling them to engage more effectively in industrial relations processes. On the other, the consortium will lay the groundwork for and gather consensus on a gender-sensitive approach, which social partners should adopt across all aspects of their work.

Before embarking on these core activities, the project will conduct preparatory research. This research will serve as a solid foundation for subsequent tasks and pave the way for a new social dialogue on gender equality. The research objectives are: identifying the meaning and approach to gender equality as adopted in EU public policies and law; analysing the implications of EU law on gender equality and on approach to gender across three selected topics; strengthening the role of social partners in addressing gender inequalities.

The project’s choice to tackle the challenge of gender equality aligns with the Political Guidelines presented by Ursula von der Leyen in “A Union that strives for more - My agenda for Europe”, in the European Pillar of Social Rights and the follow-up European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, in the Porto Social Commitment and the Porto Declaration.

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

Union of Workers in Tourism, Trade, and Services (UILTuCS), a national trade union. Additionally, the following organisations participate in the project as associated entities: French Union of Liberal Professions (UNAPL), University of Rome Tor Vergata; Eurocadres, the Council of European Professional and Managerial Staff.

## 2. Purpose of the Call

In order to implement three action tasks within work package n° 2 (“Preparation for a new social dialogue for gender equality”), the project coordinator intends to award a subcontract to a team of researchers (3 available positions, each will be responsible of a specific task). The academic field – that the coordinator intends to address – will be able to provide individuals with the necessary skills. Importantly, the involvement of these researchers extends beyond WP2, as they will be invited to participate in meetings, face-to-face events and the final conference.

## 3. Deadline

The call for expression of interest remains open until 22.05.2024.

## 4. Description of Subcontracted Tasks

Action tasks to be subcontracted are the following:

### 1) Analytical review of the meaning and dimensions of “gender equality” in EU policies and law

- Focus on the core meaning of “gender” as adopted in EU documents;
- Consider the multifaceted definition of gender equality from philosophical, sociological and legal studies;
- Review the EU’s approach to gender by integrating project assumptions, which view gender as a social structure for equality;
- Utilise a multidisciplinary approach;
- Highlight the definition of the concept of gender as inferred from EU public policies and legal documents, and consequently of gender equality and inequalities;
- Deliverable: Report on the concept of gender equality in EU policies and law (D2.1)

### 2) Research on the enforcement of gender equality in working environments: challenges and opportunities

- Build upon the conclusions drawn from the previous task regarding the meaning of gender equality;
- Address specific challenges related to enforcing gender equality in the work place, considering it as both an environment shaped by legal and contractual aspects and a broader system of relations;
- Focus on three main aspects:
  - i. **gender pay gap;**
  - ii. **social protection;**
  - iii. **work-life balance;**
- In connection with the above-mentioned aspects, address the issues of: minimum wage; teleworking and right to disconnect;
- Taking into special account challenges and opportunities brought by the digital transition;

- Utilise a multidisciplinary approach to explore these critical topics;
- Deliverable: Report on the EU approach on gender politics in the selected topics (D2.2);

### **3) Research on the role of social dialogue to reduce gender inequalities**

- Investigate how social partners apply the concept of gender, how they address gender inequalities, and how they promote gender equality in their functions and in internal organisational practices;
- Assess whether the role of social partners in enforcing gender equality can be further supported through more appropriate legislation, and explore whether best practices can be identified and effectively implemented;
- Take into account the role of European social dialogue in enforcing gender equality;
- Objective analysis of the practices of social partners;
- Adopt a multidisciplinary approach;
- Deliverable: Report on the role of social dialogue for a Union of equality (D2.3).

Additionally, the researchers will be invited to both in-person and remote events organised in the framework of the project, also beyond the above-mentioned research tasks:

- Committee meetings (work package n° 3 “Capacity-building for social partners’ action”),
  - Researchers can deliver presentations, help moderate the meetings and/or contribute to the final documents
  - Three committees will be established;
  - Each committee will focus on a specific area of social partners’ action (gender pay gap; work-family balance; social protection);
  - Each committee will convene remotely three times;
  - The committees will serve as preparation for subsequent seminars on the same topics.
- Seminars and final conference
  - Researchers will present the outcomes of their work and help disseminate the project results.

During the execution of their assigned tasks, subcontractors are required to coordinate closely with each other, given the interconnected nature of the three research topics. Although their work won’t be directly supervised by the project coordinator, the scientific coordination will be facilitated by a research supervisor, appointed by the project coordinator. Additionally, subcontractors will participate in monthly coordination meetings with the project steering committee and are expected to provide regular progress updates.

Subcontractors will work remotely from their own premises and must use their own IT tools.

The working language is English.

## **5. Timeline**

Subcontractors will follow the project work plan’s specific timeline. Timely delivery of planned outputs is crucial.

Task breakdown:

Task 1) June to August 2024;

Task 2) August to October 2024;

Task 3) October to December 2024.

Subcontractors will be invited to following events:

- January-March 2025, Committees on selected social dialogue topics;
- March-August 2025, Capacity-building initiatives;
- March 2026, Final dissemination event.

Note: the project timeline may be subject to minor changes based on decisions made by the Project Steering Committee.

## **6. Expertise and award criteria**

Target: early-stage researchers or those with 1-4 years of post-graduate experience.

Given the multidisciplinary approach, tasks will be subcontracted to a team of researchers covering various competences relevant to gender equality and social dialogue, including economics, philosophy, history, sociology, labour law, political sciences and public law and policy.

### **6.1 Exclusion criteria**

Subcontractors must not be subject to EU administrative sanctions nor any exclusion situations barring them from receiving EU funds.

### **6.2 Selection criteria**

The project coordinator will award the subcontract based on best value for money and 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;
- Verifiable expertise and publications in fields relevant to the scope of the project;
- 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 7.500 and will be remunerated in various instalments. Payment arrangements will be detailed in the contract which will be established with each selected person.

Travel and subsistence expenses incurred to attend project meetings – if any – will be reimbursed according to EU rules and thresholds, upon 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 in English by email to the following address [sd4eu@confprofessioni.eu](mailto:sd4eu@confprofessioni.eu) indicating “SD4EU 101145648 - Application” on the subject line. Applicants should specify which task they apply for.

### **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 Process**

The selection process will be objective, adhering to the principles of non-discrimination and equal opportunities, with the aim of avoiding conflicts of interest. The coordinator will strive to achieve a balanced selection of researchers in terms of geographical diversity and gender.

The decision of awarding the subcontracts will be entrusted to an evaluation committee, consisting of representatives from both the coordinator and the University of Rome Tor Vergata. This committee will assess received applications and compile a report. Once selected, the researchers will be contacted by the coordinator prior to their formal 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 any conflict of interest or situation of exclusion barring him/her from receiving EU funds.

## **9. Other conditions**

### **9.1 Record keeping**

The subcontractors 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) can exercise their rights to carry out checks, reviews, audits and investigations also towards 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 of inquiries regarding the call, please address [sd4eu@confprofessioni.eu](mailto:sd4eu@confprofessioni.eu).