

TENDER FILE / TERMS OF REFERENCE (Competitive bidding procedure / Framework Contract)

Purchase of consultancy services on ethics, transparency and integrity in education in the framework of activities of the Council of Europe Education Department



The Council of Europe is currently implementing activities in the field of ethics, transparency, and integrity in education under the scope of the Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency, and Integrity in Education (ETINED). In that context, it is looking for Provider(s) for the provision of consultancy services to be requested by the Council on an as needed basis.

A. TENDER RULES

This tender procedure is a competitive bidding procedure. **In accordance with Rule 1395 of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on the procurement procedures of the Council of Europe¹, the Organisation shall invite to tender at least three potential providers for any purchase between €2,000 (or €6,000 for intellectual services) and €171,000 tax exclusive.**

This specific tender procedure aims at concluding a **framework contract** for the provision of deliverables described in the Act of Engagement (See attached). A tender is considered valid for 180 calendar days as from the closing date for submission. The selection of tenderers will be made in the light of the criteria indicated below. All tenderers will be informed in writing of the outcome of the procedure.

The tenderer must be either a natural person, a legal person or consortia of legal and/or natural persons.

Tenders shall be submitted **by email only** (with attachments) **to the email address indicated in the table below, with the following reference in subject: Tender – ETINED**. Tenders addressed to another email address **will be rejected**.

The general information and contact details for this procedure are indicated on this page. You are invited to use the Council of Europe Contact details indicated below for any question you may have. **All questions shall be submitted at least 6 (six) working days before the deadline for submission of the tenders (i.e., by 12 January 2025, 23:59 CET) and shall be exclusively addressed to the email address indicated below with the following reference in subject: Questions – Tender – ETINED**

Type of contract ▶	Framework contract
Duration ▶	Until 31 December 2027
Deadline for submission of tenders/offers ▶	20 January 2025, 23:59 CET
Email for submission of tenders/offers ▶	etined@coe.int
Email for questions ▶	etined@coe.int
Expected starting date of execution ▶	03 February 2025

¹ The activities of the Council of Europe are governed by its [Statute](#) and its internal Regulations. Procurement is governed by the Financial Regulations of the Organisation and by [Rule 1395 of 20 June 2019 on the procurement procedures of the Council of Europe](#).

B. EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

Background of the Project

In July 2022, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)18](#) aimed at supporting its 46 member States in promoting ethics, transparency, and integrity in education. This Recommendation follows four years of dedicated work by the Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED), a collaborative network of specialists appointed by member States of the Council of Europe and States Parties to the European Cultural Convention. The ETINED Platform's primary goal is to foster ethical practices, transparency, and integrity across education systems throughout Europe by facilitating dialogue and cooperation among experts, policymakers, and educational stakeholders. This collaborative approach enables the sharing of best practices and the development of common standards that address a wide range of ethical issues in education (for more information, please visit: <https://www.coe.int/etined>).

The Committee of Ministers Recommendation introduces a new legal standard structured around four key pillars: prevention, prosecution, international cooperation, and monitoring. It emphasises the necessity for a unified European approach to address various challenges related to ethics and integrity in education. Among its six main recommendations, the text calls for:

- The promotion of quality education through ethical practices and the elimination of fraudulent activities.
- Protection for pupils, students, researchers, and staff at all educational levels from unethical practices and organisations.
- Support for the implementation of preventative measures that cultivate a culture of equality of opportunity across all sectors of education and training.
- Monitoring technological developments that could impact ethical standards and integrity in education.
- Facilitation of international cooperation in addressing ethical challenges.
- Encouragement of widespread dissemination of the Recommendation to raise awareness and promote adherence to these principles.

Building on these initiatives, the Council of Europe's Education Ministers adopted the Education Strategy 2024–2030 and accompanying Resolutions at their 26th Session in September 2023. This Strategy, titled ["Learners first: Education for today's and tomorrow's democratic societies"](#), focuses on three core areas: renewing education's democratic mission, enhancing its social responsibility, and pursuing a human rights-based digital transformation. Within the second pillar of this Strategy, several key actions are outlined:

- Encouraging ethical approaches, integrity, and transparency within education systems, particularly in higher education institutions.
- Ensuring equal and meaningful access to all levels of education for all learners, recognising ethics, transparency, and integrity as fundamental conditions for quality education and effective quality assurance processes.
- Promoting greater transparency and accountability within educational establishments by introducing control mechanisms and enhancing quality measures.

In alignment with these overarching priorities, this tender call seeks expert consultants to contribute to initiatives aimed at promoting ethical practices, transparency, and integrity across Europe's educational landscape.

The Council of Europe is looking for a maximum of **25 Providers** (provided enough tenders meet the criteria indicated below) in order to support the implementation of the activities with a particular expertise on ethics, transparency and integrity in education.

This Contract is currently estimated to cover up to **15 activities**, to be held by the end of **2027**. This estimate is for information only and shall not constitute any sort of contractual commitment on the part of the Council of Europe. The Contract may potentially represent a higher or lower number of activities, depending on the evolving needs of the Organisation.

For information purposes only, the total budget for activities on ethics, transparency and integrity in education of the Education Department amounts to approximately 300.000 Euros and the total amount of the object of present tender **shall not exceed 171,000 Euros tax exclusive** for the whole duration of

the Framework Contract. This information does not constitute any sort of contractual commitment or obligation on the part of the Council of Europe.

Scope of the Framework Contract

Throughout the duration of the Framework Contract, pre-selected Providers may be asked to:

- Draft tools and resources to support initiatives related to ethics, transparency, and integrity in education, including but not limited to recommendations, guidelines, opinions, case studies, and supporting documents such as explanatory memoranda, briefings and background/discussion papers.
- Develop strategies and contribute to initiatives that promote ethical practices, transparency, and integrity in education, while raising awareness on these topics.
- Review and provide insights on existing frameworks and practices, offering expert perspectives and guidance.
- Conduct research activities such as desk studies, consultations, surveys, and interviews, and produce detailed reports based on the findings.
- Support the organisation and delivery of in-person and online meetings and events (e.g. working groups/expert/network meetings, conferences, workshops, EduTalks@CoE), including preparing materials, delivering presentations, facilitating discussions, and summarising outcomes.
- Identify and highlight effective approaches and practices in the field of ethics, transparency, and integrity in education.
- Contribute to capacity-building and cooperative initiatives.
- Provide expert advice to the Council of Europe Steering Committee for Education (CDEDU), the ETINED Platform and the Council of Europe Secretariat on topics related to this consultancy.

The above list is not considered exhaustive. The Council reserves the right to request deliverables not explicitly mentioned in the above list of expected services, but related to the field of expertise object of the present Framework Contract.

In terms of **quality requirements**, the pre-selected Service Providers must ensure, *inter alia*, that:

- The services are provided to the highest professional/academic standard;
- Any specific instructions given by the Council – whenever this is the case – are followed.

In addition to the orders requested on an as needed basis, the Provider shall keep regular communication with the Council to ensure continuing exchange of information relevant to the project implementation. This involves, among others, to inform the Council as soon as it becomes aware, during the execution of the Contract, of any initiatives and/or adopted laws and regulations, policies, strategies or action plans or any other development related to the object of the Contract (see more on general obligations of the Provider in Article 3.1.2 of the Legal Conditions in the Act of Engagement).

Unless otherwise agreed with the Council, written documents produced by the Provider shall be in English (see more on requirements for written documents in Articles 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 of the Legal Conditions in the Act of Engagement).

C. FEES

Tenderers are invited to indicate their unit fees, by completing the table of fees, as attached in Section A of the Act of Engagement. These fees are final and not subject to review.

The Council will indicate on each Order Form (see Section D below) the global fee corresponding to each deliverable, calculated on the basis of the daily fees, as agreed by this Contract.

D. HOW WILL THIS FRAMEWORK CONTRACT WORK? (ORDERING PROCEDURE)

Once the selection procedure is completed, you will be informed accordingly. Deliverables will then be delivered on the basis of Order Forms submitted by the Council to the selected Provider (s), by post or electronically, on **an as needed basis** (there is therefore no obligation to order on the part of the Council).

Pooling

For each Order, the Council will choose from the pool of pre-selected tenderers the Provider who demonstrably offers best value for money for its requirement when assessed – for the Order concerned – against the criteria of:

- quality (including as appropriate: capability, expertise, past performance, availability of resources and proposed methods of undertaking the work);
- availability (including, without limitation, capacity to meet required deadlines and, where relevant, geographical location); and
- price.

Only those Providers whose score, following the assessment of the Award Criteria (see Section E below), is equivalent to or higher than 2.5 out of 5 will be selected.

Each time an Order Form is sent, the selected Provider undertakes to take all the necessary measures to send it **signed** to the Council within 2 (two) working days after its reception. If a Provider is unable to take an Order or if no reply is given on his behalf within that deadline, the Council may call on another Provider using the same criteria, and so on until a suitable Provider is contracted.

Providers subject to VAT

The Provider, **if subject to VAT**, shall also send, together with each signed Form, a quote² (Pro Forma invoice) in line with the indications specified on each Order Form, and including:

- the Service Provider's name and address;
- its VAT number;
- the full list of services;
- the fee per type of deliverables (in the currency indicated on the Act of Engagement, tax exclusive);
- the total amount per type of deliverables (in the currency indicated on the Act of Engagement, tax exclusive);
- the total amount (in the currency indicated on the Act of Engagement), tax exclusive, the applicable VAT rate, the amount of VAT and the amount VAT inclusive.

Signature of orders

An Order Form is considered to be legally binding when the Order, signed by the Provider, is approved by the Council, by displaying a Council's Purchase Order number on the Order, as well as by signing and stamping the Order concerned. Copy of each approved Order Form shall be sent to the Provider, to the extent possible on the day of its signature.

E. ASSESSMENT

Exclusion criteria and absence of conflict of interests

(by signing the Act of Engagement, you declare on your honour not being in any of the below situations)³

Tenderers shall be excluded from participating in the tender procedure if they:

- have been sentenced by final judgment on one or more of the following charges: participation in a criminal organisation, corruption, fraud, money laundering, terrorist financing, terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities, child labour or trafficking in human beings;
- are in a situation of bankruptcy, liquidation, termination of activity, insolvency or arrangement with creditors or any like situation arising from a procedure of the same kind, or are subject to a procedure of the same kind;
- have received a judgment with res judicata force, finding an offence that affects their professional integrity or serious professional misconduct;
- do not comply with their obligations as regards payment of social security contributions, taxes and dues, according to the statutory provisions of their country of incorporation, establishment or residence;

² It must strictly respect the fees indicated in the Act of Engagement. In case of non-compliance with these fees, the Council of Europe reserves the right to terminate the Contract with the Provider, in all or in part.

³ The Council of Europe reserves the right to ask tenderers, at a later stage, to supply the following supporting documents:

- An extract from the record of convictions or failing that an equivalent document issued by the competent judicial or administrative authority of the country of incorporation, indicating that the first three and sixth above listed exclusion criteria are met;
- A certificate issued by the competent authority of the country of incorporation indicating that the fourth criterion is met.

- are an entity created to circumvent tax, social or other legal obligations (empty shell company), have ever created or are in the process of creation of such an entity;
- have been involved in mismanagement of the Council of Europe funds or public funds;
- are or appear to be in a situation of conflict of interest;
- are retired Council of Europe staff members or are staff members having benefitted from an early departure scheme;
- are currently employed by the Council of Europe or were employed by the Council of Europe on the date of the launch of the procurement procedure;
- have not fulfilled, in the previous three years, their contractual obligations in the performance of a contract concluded with the Council of Europe leading to a total or partial refusal of payment and/or termination of the contract by the Council of Europe.

Eligibility criteria

- Higher Education degree (first cycle-degree or second-cycle degree) in Education, Social Sciences, Humanities, Law, Public Policy, Political Science, International Relations, or related fields, or equivalent work experience demonstrating a strong interest in these topics.
- At least five years of demonstrated relevant professional experience in drafting and developing intellectual work, such as guidelines, reports, recommendations, opinions, research, strategic tools, or frameworks focused on ethics, transparency, and integrity in education, as well as promoting ethical practices in education, including experience with international exchanges or data collection/analysis on these topics.
- Excellent command of written and spoken English (at least C1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

Award criteria

- Criterion 1: Quality of the offer (**80%**), including:
 - Demonstrated expertise in the areas covered by this call (70%);
 - Experience working as a consultant, or in an advisory capacity, with national, regional, or international institutions, in the field of ethics, transparency and integrity in education (20%);
 - Knowledge of Council of Europe instruments in the education field, and in particular of activities related to the ETINED platform, would be an asset (10%).
- Criterion 2: Financial offer (**20%**).

The Council reserves the right to hold interviews with tenderers.

Multiple tendering is not authorised.

F. NEGOTIATIONS

The Council reserves the right to hold negotiations with the bidders in accordance with Article 20 of Rule 1395.

G. DOCUMENTS TO BE PROVIDED

- **A completed and signed copy of the Act of Engagement⁴** (See attached);
- A detailed CV, preferably in Europass Format, demonstrating clearly that the tenderer fulfils the eligibility criteria;
- Motivation letter demonstrating the relevance of the tenderer's experience and interest in the subject of the tender;

⁴ The Act of Engagement must be completed, signed and scanned in its entirety (i.e. including all the pages). The scanned Act of Engagement may be sent page by page (attached to a single email) or as a compiled document, although a compiled document would be preferred. For all scanned documents, .pdf files are preferred.

- For legal persons only:
 - Registration documents;
 - CVs of the persons proposed to be assigned to this contract showing that they meet the eligibility criteria.

All documents shall be submitted in English, failure to do so will result in the exclusion of the tender.

If any of the documents listed above are missing, the Council of Europe reserves the right to reject the tender.

The Council reserves the right to reject a tender if the scanned documents are of such a quality that the documents cannot be read once printed.

* * *