

TENDER FILE / TERMS OF REFERENCE

(Competitive bidding procedure / Framework Contract)

Purchase of national consultancy services in the field of multilevel governance in Ukraine

Contract N° 9316/2025/11



The Centre of Expertise for Multilevel Governance (CEMG) at the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe is implementing from 1 April 2025 to 31 December 2026 the project “Strengthening multilevel governance and local democracy to support Ukraine's recovery” (hereinafter, the Project). The CEMG is also planning its next project in Ukraine for 2027–2030, in the same thematic area, under the next Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine. To ensure the desired impact in Ukraine, the CEMG’s intervention counts on its in-house expertise along with local and international consultancy.

In that context, it is looking for Providers for the provision of national consultancy services in the field of multilevel governance to be requested by the Council of Europe on an as needed basis. Therefore, the CEMG issues the present Competitive bidding procedure for the provision of national consultancy services in the field of multilevel governance in Ukraine for the period 1 September 2025 – 31 December 2026 (with possible extension until 31 December 2027).

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 Europe,¹ the Organisation shall invite to tender at least three potential providers for any purchase between €6,000 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 or a legal person or consortium of natural and/or legal person.

Please note that **all bids must be submitted by email only** (with attachments) **to the email address indicated in the table below, with the following reference in subject: Tender - Application for the provision of national consultancy services, Contract No. 9316/2025/11.** 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 five (5) working days before the deadline for submission of the tenders and shall be exclusively addressed to the email address indicated below with the following reference in subject: Questions - Application for the provision of national consultancy services, Contract No. 9316/2025/11.**

Type of contract ►	Framework contract
Duration ►	Until 31 December 2026 , renewable until 31 December 2027
Deadline for submission of tenders/offers ►	19 September 2025 at 23h59 Kyiv time
Email for submission of tenders/offers ►	congress.ukraine@coe.int
Email for questions ►	congress.ukraine@coe.int
Expected starting date of execution ►	10 October 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

The Council of Europe is currently implementing the project "Strengthening multilevel governance and local democracy to support Ukraine's recovery" (1 April 2025 – 31 December 2026) within the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine "Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction" for 2023-2026. The project seeks to strengthen Ukraine's multilevel governance and local democracy during the war and post-war period by improving legal frameworks, enhancing the quality of local and regional governance, and promoting democratic innovations based on human rights, transparency, accountability, and inclusivity.

Among the Project's objectives are improving legal and institutional frameworks on multilevel governance and enhancing the quality of local and regional governance through strengthened institutional capacities and collaborative approaches adopted by local/regional authorities and their associations, as well as other public (state) authorities in line with the European Charter of Local Self-Government, European standards and good practices during the war and in a post-war context.

The Council of Europe is looking for a maximum of 40 Providers (provided enough tenders meet the criteria indicated below) in order to support the implementation of the project with specific expertise in the areas mentioned above.

This Contract is currently estimated to cover up to 120 activities, to be held by 31 December 2026. This estimate is for information purposes 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 of the project amounts to €2,577,000 and the total amount of the present tender **shall not exceed €171,000 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.

Lots

The present tendering procedure aims to select Provider(s) to support the implementation of the project and is divided into the following lots:

Lots	Maximum number of Providers to be selected
Lot 1: Legal expertise and policy advice in the field of multilevel governance reforms in Ukraine.	20
Lot 2: Capacity building of local/regional authorities and their associations, as well as other public (state) authorities in the field of multilevel governance reforms in Ukraine.	20

Lot 1 concerns the provision of legal expertise, overviews, and comparative studies based on relevant Council of Europe standards; offering expert support and policy advice to the Government, the Parliament, associations of local and regional authorities, and other national partners of all levels, as well as designing and organising relevant opinion polls and other surveys. The thematic focuses include, but are not limited to, decentralisation reform, division of competences, administrative and territorial organisation, regional policy, local public finance, legality supervision over local authorities' activities, status of local elected representatives, integrity, public ethics and prevention of corruption, local public service, human resources management, intermunicipal and cross-border co-operation, spatial planning, strategic municipal planning, and metropolitan governance in Ukraine. All activities are based on European standards and good practices to support the preparation and implementation of reforms that complement recovery and reconstruction processes and strengthen the resilience of Ukrainian public institutions during the war and in a post-war context.

Lot 2 concerns capacity building for local/regional authorities and their associations, as well as other public (state) authorities based on relevant Council of Europe standards and best practices, including designing and implementing activities based on the toolkits of the Centre of Expertise for Multilevel Governance (www.coe.int/Congress-CEMG) and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities overall, developing and delivering training courses and programmes, providing training needs analysis and assessing training programmes, supporting the development of project and grant proposals, etc. The thematic focuses include,

but are not limited to, good governance, decentralisation reform, division of competences, administrative and territorial organisation, regional policy, local public finance, legality supervision over local authorities' activities, status of local elected representatives, integrity, public ethics and prevention of corruption, local public service, human resources management, leadership, metropolitan governance, intermunicipal and cross-border co-operation, spatial planning, strategic municipal planning in Ukraine. All activities are based on European standards and good practices to support the preparation and implementation of reforms that complement recovery and reconstruction processes and strengthen the resilience of Ukrainian public institutions during the war and in a post-war context.

The Council of Europe will select the Providers per lot, provided enough tenders meet the criteria indicated below. Tenderers are invited to indicate which lots they are tendering for (see Section A of the Act of Engagement).

Only those Providers whose score, following the assessment of the Award Criteria (see Section E below), is **equivalent to or higher than 70 out of 100** will be selected under each Lot.

Scope of the Framework Contract

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

- Provide legal expertise and policy advice in the field of multilevel governance reforms in Ukraine: assess and comment on legal and policy documents in line with the Council of Europe's standards and good practice;
- Offer support in improving national legal and institutional frameworks in the field of multilevel governance reforms in Ukraine;
- Design and/or implement capacity-building activities in various fields of multilevel governance in Ukraine, including based on the toolkits of the CEMG (www.coe.int/Congress-CEMG);
- Support local/regional authorities in the implementation of intermunicipal, metropolitan, and cross-border co-operation, including through grant schemes;
- Undertake specific research, prepare analytical reports, comparative studies, overviews, background papers and recommendations;
- Draft manuals, guidelines and thematic brochures, clarification, analytical notes, infographics, informational and awareness raising materials;
- Develop and deliver training courses and programmes;
- Provide training needs analysis, assess training programmes;
- Participate and contribute to multistakeholder moderated negotiations and dialogue platforms offered and facilitated by the Council of Europe to address issues concerning multilevel governance reforms, and foster central–local co-operation as well as other relevant events (meetings, consultations, peer reviews, workshops, conferences, high level meetings, study/peer visits), prepare and make presentations;
- Facilitate and/or moderate discussions and capacity-building initiatives;
- Support the preparation of relevant questionnaires, opinion polls, and surveys;
- Co-ordinate with international and local experts and the Project team and communicate on a regular basis.

The above list is not considered exhaustive. The Council of Europe 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 for the lot concerned.

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 of Europe – whenever this is the case – are followed.

If contracted by the Council of Europe, the deliverables shall be provided personally by the persons identified in the offer of the Provider whose CVs have been presented to the Council of Europe (See section E. below), in accordance with the terms as provided in the present Tender File and Act of Engagement.

In addition to the orders requested on an as needed basis, the Provider shall keep regular communication with the Council of Europe to ensure continuing exchange of information relevant to the project implementation. This involves, among others, to inform the Council of Europe 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 of Europe, 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).

By submitting an offer in the framework of the present Call for Tenders, the Tenderer acknowledges that the persons involved in the implementation of the contract will be exposed to an increased risk of death and injury due to the ongoing war against Ukraine. The Tenderer also acknowledges that, if selected, it will carry out the implementation of the contract at its own risk.

The Tenderer confirms in addition that, if selected, it will perform systematic security assessments before implementing any activity related to the implementation of the contract. The Tenderer acknowledges that the Council of Europe does not assume any liability for the death, any injury or any damage that the Provider or persons involved in the implementation of the contract may sustain in Ukraine.

C. FEES

All tenderers are invited to fill in the table of fees as reproduced in Section A of the Act of Engagement. These fees are final and not subject to review.

The Council of Europe will indicate on each Order Form (see Section D below) the global fee corresponding to each deliverable, calculated on the basis of the unit 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 of Europe 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 of Europe).

Pooling

For each Order, the Council of Europe will choose from the pool of pre-selected tenderers for the relevant lot 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.

Each time an Order Form is sent, the selected Provider undertakes to take all the necessary measures to send it **signed** to the Council of Europe within two (2) 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 of Europe may call on another Provider using the same criteria, and so on until a suitable Provider is contracted.

Signature of orders

An Order Form is considered to be legally binding when the Order, signed by the Provider, is approved by the Council of Europe, by displaying a Council of Europe'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)²

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;
- 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;
- are subject to restrictive measures applied by the United Nations Security Council or the European Union. In the case of legal persons, the restrictive measures imposed on the tenderer's owner(s) or executives will also exclude the tenderer from participating in this tender procedure.

Eligibility criteria

The eligibility criteria determine the conditions for participating in a procurement procedure and define the essential requirements that each bidder must comply with. Bidders shall demonstrate that they fulfil the following criteria (to be assessed on the basis of all supporting documents listed in Section G):

Lot 1 – Legal expertise and policy advice in the field of multilevel governance reforms in Ukraine:

Eligibility criteria	
<u>Education</u> : Master's Degree (or equivalent) in law, public administration, public policy, political, social and urban science, sociology, economics, management, finance, local and international development.	CV
<u>Work experience</u> : Minimum five (5) years of demonstrated experience at national level in contributing to the policy development and decision-making process, providing legal advice, opinions, overviews and recommendations in the relevant field.	CV
<u>Specific thematic expertise</u> : confirmed expertise in the field of multilevel governance reforms as evidenced by the information included in the supporting documents.	CV Samples of previous work
<u>Language skills</u> : C2 level of knowledge of Ukrainian (under the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).	CV

² 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;
- For legal persons, an extract from the companies register or other official document proving ownership and control of the Tenderer;
- For natural persons (including owners and executive officers of legal persons), a scanned copy of a valid photographic proof of identity (e.g. passport).

Lot 2 – Capacity building of local/regional authorities and their associations, as well as other public (state) authorities in the field of multilevel governance reforms in Ukraine

Eligibility criteria	
<u>Education</u> : Master's Degree (or equivalent) in law, public administration, public policy, political, social and urban science, sociology, economics, management, finance, local and international development.	CV
<u>Work experience</u> : Minimum five (5) years of experience at national, regional and local levels in delivering capacity-building activities, undertaking specific research, consolidating data and expert support in the relevant field.	CV
<u>Specific thematic expertise</u> : confirmed expertise in the field of multilevel governance reforms as evidenced by the information included in the supporting documents.	CV Samples of previous work
<u>Language skills</u> : C2 level of knowledge of Ukrainian (under the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).	CV

For legal persons only: legal persons are requested to include in their bids the profiles of a maximum of five (5) natural persons proposed to be assigned to the contract. The status of *each* natural person included in the bid must be specified, and in particular whether they are employees or subcontractors. *Each* natural person included in the bid will be assessed against the above eligibility criteria. The Council of Europe reserves the right not to accept the inclusion in the contract of persons who do not meet the eligibility criteria or to reject a bid entirely if no profiles met the eligibility criteria.³

For consortia only: each consortium member **will be assessed against the eligibility criteria above**. Consortium members who are legal persons are requested to provide the profiles of a maximum of three (3) natural persons proposed to be assigned to the contract. The status of each natural person included in the bid must be specified, and in particular whether they are employees or subcontractors.

Each natural person included in the bid submitted by a consortium – whether as an individual consortium member or as a natural person attached to a legal person – will be assessed against the above eligibility criteria. The Council of Europe reserves the right not to accept the inclusion in the contract of persons who do not meet the eligibility criteria or to reject a bid entirely if no profiles meet the eligibility criteria.⁴

Award criteria

The award criteria aim at assessing the quality of a bid in order to **identify the bid/s offering the best value for money**. Eligible bids will be assessed against the following award criteria.

Lot 1 – Legal expertise and policy advice in the field of multilevel governance reforms in Ukraine

Criterion 1: Quality of the offer (75 points), including:

- Extent and depth of the bidder's knowledge, expertise and practical experience at the national level in the thematic areas mentioned above (30 points);
- Specific skills, capacities and quality of the samples of previous work submitted, including research, drafting, analysis and reporting skills in the thematic areas mentioned above (25 points);
- Knowledge on the Council of Europe standards and good practices in the thematic areas mentioned above (15 points);
- Experience in working with international organisations (5 points).

Criterion 2: Financial offer (25 points).

³ If awarded a contract, legal persons undertake to entrust the execution of order forms only to the persons approved by the Council of Europe for inclusion in the contract. If, during the period of validity of the contract, it becomes necessary to replace one or more of the persons included in the contract, the legal persons undertake to assign to the contract only persons who satisfy the eligibility criteria above and to inform the Council of Europe without delay.

⁴ If awarded a contract, consortium members who are legal persons undertake to entrust the execution of order forms only to the persons approved by the Council of Europe for inclusion in the contract. If, during the period of validity of the contract, it becomes necessary to replace one or more of the persons included in the contract, consortium members who are legal persons undertake to assign to the contract only persons who satisfy the eligibility criteria above and to inform the Council of Europe without delay.

Lot 2 – Capacity building of local/regional authorities and their associations, as well as other public (state) authorities in the field of multilevel governance reforms in Ukraine.

Criterion 1: Quality of the offer (75 points), including:

- Extent and depth of the bidder's knowledge, expertise and practical experience at national, regional and local levels in the thematic areas mentioned above (30 points);
- Specific skills, capacities and quality of the samples of previous work submitted, including drafting skills in the thematic areas mentioned above (25 points);
- Knowledge of the capacity-building toolkits developed by the Centre of Expertise for Multilevel Governance and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in the thematic areas mentioned above (15 points);
- Experience in working with international organisations (5 points).

Criterion 2: Financial offer (25 points).

The above award criteria will be assessed based on the bidder's capacity, as outlined in the supporting document, or on the basis of a consolidated assessment of the combined capacity of all eligible profiles or consortium members if the bid is submitted by a legal person or a consortium.

Additional rules applicable to the submission and assessment of the bids

The bidders' attention is drawn to the following additional rules governing the assessment of the bids:

- The Council of Europe reserves the right to hold interviews with prima facie eligible tenderers and/or request additional documents;
- Unless expressly provided otherwise in the tender documents, a bidder may not submit more than one bid for the same procurement procedure. Bidding for more than one lot – where a contract is divided into lots – is allowed;
- In the same procurement procedure, natural person may not submit a bid on his/her own behalf and, at the same time, be included in a bid submitted by a legal person or a consortium. In such cases, the Council of Europe reserves the right to exclude the bid submitted by the natural person from the procurement procedure;
- In the same procurement procedure, a legal person may not submit a bid and, at the same time, be a member of a consortium also bidding under the same procurement procedure. In such cases, the Council of Europe reserves the right to exclude the bid submitted by the legal person from the procurement procedure.

The Council of Europe reserves the right to hold interviews with tenderers.

Multiple tendering is not authorised.

F. NEGOTIATIONS

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

G. DOCUMENTS TO BE PROVIDED (AS EMAIL ATTACHMENTS)

- **A completed and signed copy of the Act of Engagement⁵** (See attached);
- A list of all owners and executive officers, for legal persons only;
- For natural persons, a detailed **CV in English**, demonstrating clearly that the tenderer fulfils the eligibility criteria. For legal persons, the detailed **CV(s) in English** of *each* natural person included in the bid with information whether they are employees or subcontractors of the consultant(s), demonstrating clearly that *each* natural person included in the bid fulfils the eligibility criteria;
- A **motivation letter in English**, which proves that the tenderer fulfils the eligibility criteria and has the experience that matches the areas mentioned in the relevant LOTs;
- At least three (3) **samples of the previous work (in English or in Ukrainian)** from each natural person allocated to the contract such as relevant written work, links to publications, etc.;
- **Registration documents**, for legal persons and private entrepreneurs only (a copy in Ukrainian language with a summary translation in English);

⁵ 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 uploaded page by page or as a compiled document, although a compiled document would be preferred. For all scanned documents, .pdf files are preferred.

- Three (3) **referees' contact details** (including phone number and e-mail address).

All the documents shall be submitted in English, except registration documents to be submitted in Ukrainian (or any other language, if it is the case) and samples of previous work to be submitted as specified above. 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 of Europe reserves the right to reject a tender if the scanned documents are of such a quality that the documents cannot be read.

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