

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

Purchase of Thematic Consultancy Services on Key Issues of Metropolitan Governance and Inter-Municipal Cooperation in Ukraine *Contract N° 9316/2026/221*



The Centre of Expertise for Multilevel Governance (CEMG) at the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe is implementing the project “Strengthening multilevel governance and local democracy to support Ukraine's recovery” from 1 April 2025 to 31 December 2026 (hereinafter, the Project). The CEMG is also planning its next project for 2027–2030 in the same thematic area, under the next Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine. To ensure the desired impact, 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 thematic consultancy services on key issues of metropolitan governance and inter-municipal cooperation Ukraine 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 thematic consultancy services on key issues of metropolitan governance in Ukraine for the period of 15 October 2026 – 31 December 2026 (with possible extension until 31 December 2028).

A. TENDER RULES

This tender procedure is a competitive bidding procedure. **In accordance with Rule 1/2019 of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on procurement¹, the Organisation shall invite to tender at least three potential providers for any purchase between €2,000 (or €6,000 for intellectual services) and €184,000 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 - Thematic Consultancy Services_Metropolitan Governance and IMC. 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 CoE Contact details indicated below for any question you may have. All questions shall be submitted, in English, at least two (2) 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 – Thematic Consultancy Services_Metropolitan Governance and IMC.

Type of contract ▶	Framework Contract
Duration ▶	Until 31 December 2026
Deadline for submission of tenders/offers ▶	20 October 2026 16h00
Email for submission of tenders/offers ▶	congress.ukraine@coe.int
Email for questions ▶	congress.ukraine@coe.int
Expected starting date of execution ▶	29 October 2026

B. EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

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 1/2019 on procurement](#).

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.

At the initiative of the project's key partners, thematic consultancy support is planned on key issues of metropolitan governance and inter-municipal cooperation in Ukraine, as well as support in preparing analytical materials on key issues related to agglomeration development and inter-municipal cooperation.

The Council of Europe is looking for a maximum of *20 (twenty)* Provider(s) (provided enough tenders meet the criteria indicated below) in order to support the implementation of the project with a particular thematic expertise in key issues of metropolitan governance and inter-municipal cooperation in Ukraine as well as in preparing thematic analytical materials. Consultants will address key sectors of public services including spatial planning, transport and mobility, solid waste management, water supply and wastewater management, distributed energy generation, environmental protection, social services, veterans' policies, education, culture and tourism, investment stimulation and local economy, project management, macro-financial guarantees for inter-municipal co-operation, municipal project financing, local budgeting, stock-taking of municipal property, accounting and auditing, local finance and public investment management at the local level.

This Contract is currently estimated to cover up to ten activities to be held by 31 December 2026. 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 of the project amounts to €2,577,000 Euros and the total amount of the object of present tender **shall not exceed 55,000 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:

- Review and analyse the national legal and regulatory framework for selected public functions, identifying relevant provisions and responsible authorities, in the key areas listed above.
- Identify legal and institutional barriers for implementing these functions through inter-municipal co-operation, specifically in metropolitan areas.
- Elaborate proposals to improve institutional framework for effective inter-municipal co-operation, specifically in metropolitan areas, in the key areas listed above with evidence from international best practices and stakeholder consultations.
- Draft methodological recommendations, manuals, guidelines, awareness materials, infographics, and analytical notes.
- Facilitate multistakeholder negotiations, dialogue platforms, trainings and related events; moderate discussions and make presentations, as required.
- Develop and deliver capacity-building activities for relevant national and local stakeholders, including training sessions, workshops, peer-learning and knowledge-sharing activities, to strengthen their understanding and practical application of legal, institutional and co-operation mechanisms in metropolitan areas.
- Prepare questionnaires and surveys as required by the Project team.

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 fees, by completing and sending the table of fees, as attached in Section A to 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 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 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.

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.

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.

Delivery

Each deliverable has to be accompanied by the filled-out [AI tool questionnaire](#).

E. ASSESSMENT

Exclusion criteria and absence of conflict of interests

(by submitting a tender, 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 an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest; a conflict of interests arises where any person has a personal interest which is such as to influence, or appear to influence, the impartial and objective exercise of their responsibilities under this procedure. A personal interest includes any advantage to themselves, their relatives or personal relationships (including based on political or national affinity), business or financial interests or any other interest shared with another party. If tenderers have any personal interests that are relevant to this tender procedure, **they must fully disclose these in a separate document submitted with the tender;**
- 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:

Eligibility criteria	Document/s to be submitted
<u>Education</u> : Master's Degree (or equivalent) in political science, public administration, law, engineering, social and urban science, economics, management, finance, accounting, or a related field relevant to public services management.	CV
Minimum five (5) years of relevant professional experience at either the regional, local or national level contributing to local self-government and public service provision, specifically in one or more of the following sectors: spatial planning, transport and mobility, solid waste management, water supply and wastewater management, distributed energy generation, environmental protection, social services, veterans' policies, education, culture and tourism, investment stimulation and local economy, project management, macro-financial guarantees for inter-municipal co-operation, municipal project financing, local budgeting, stock-taking of municipal property, accounting and auditing, local finance and public investment management at the local level.	CV
<u>Specific thematic expertise</u> : confirmed practical expertise in key sectors of public services and local governance, including spatial planning, transport and	CV Samples of previous work

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).

mobility, solid waste management, water supply and wastewater management, distributed energy generation, environmental protection, social services, veterans' policies, education, culture and tourism, investment stimulation and local economy, project management, macro-financial guarantees for inter-municipal co-operation, municipal project financing, local budgeting, stock-taking of municipal property, accounting and auditing, local finance and public investment management at the local level. Communication, facilitation and moderation: proven experience in facilitating multistakeholder consultations, dialogue platforms, trainings and related capacity development activities; moderating discussions and delivering presentations. Such expertise should be demonstrated through relevant activities and evidenced by the information provided in the supporting documents.	
<u>Language skills:</u> At least B2 level of English according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and fluency in Ukrainian (at least C2 CEFR) are required	CV

The above eligibility criteria will be assessed **on the basis of the documents listed in the table and, where relevant, on the basis of other supporting documents** listed in Section **G**.

For legal persons only: legal persons are requested to include in their bids the profiles of **a maximum of 5 (five)** 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 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 **5 (five)** 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 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 For a consortium to be validly constituted, at least two consortium members must satisfy the eligibility criteria.

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:

Award criteria	Document/s to be submitted
Quality of the offer (75 points), including: - Extent and depth of the bidder's knowledge, expertise and practical experience at either the regional, local or national level in one of the thematic areas mentioned above (40 points); - Specific skills, capacities and quality of the samples of previous work submitted (methodologies, training materials, recommendations for national, regional, local and other sub-national authorities) (35 points).	CV
Financial offer (25 points).	Completed and signed Act of Engagement

³ If awarded a contract, legal persons undertake to entrust the execution of order forms only to the persons approved by the Council 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 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 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 without delay.

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 reserves the right to hold interviews with prima facie eligible tenderers;
- 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 reserves the right to reject any bid if, in its sole judgment, the financial offer is abnormally low or high. The Council may request clarification from the bidder before making its determination.

F. NEGOTIATIONS

The Council reserves the right to hold negotiations with the bidders in accordance with Article 20 of Rule 1/2019.

G. DOCUMENTS TO BE PROVIDED

- **One** completed and signed copy of the Act of Engagement;⁵
- 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;
- 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);
- All the documents listed above, under Section E, necessary for the assessment of the bid under the eligibility and award criteria;
- When relevant, a document disclosing the provider's personal interests that are relevant for this procedure, in compliance with the instructions laid down above under the 'Exclusion Criteria' above (Section 'Assessment').

All 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.

Documents may be submitted via file sharing services such as WeTransfer, Dropbox, OneDrive, etc.). In this case, the link must mandatorily remain active for at least 30 days after the deadline for the submission of the bids. Failure to ensure this may lead to the bid being excluded from the procurement procedure.

The Council 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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