

Call for tenders for subcontracting experts for the project ETUC SociAll

This is a call for subcontractor to provide expertise in the framework of the implementation of the project ETUC SociAll.

The ETUC will publish the call on its website on 18th December 2019. The deadline for submission of bids is Monday, 27th January 2020 at noon (12:00).

1. Summary of the project and description of the objectives

1.1 Context

Over the last decades, changes in the labour market and in the demographic situation have put social protection systems across Europe under pressure.

As the world of work evolves, with growing numbers of people in self-employment, in jobs not governed by standard contracts, or going through transitions between and combinations of dependent employment and self-employment, an increasingly large part of the workforce (some 40%) risks to be left without sufficient access to social protection due to its labour market status or the type of employment relationship¹.

“These gaps increase risks to the welfare of the affected individuals and their families who endure greater economic uncertainty but also for the economy and society, in terms of domestic demand, investment in human capital and social cohesion. Disparities in access to social protection over time are likely to increase inequalities between those who have or manage to gain employment on contracts with full social rights and those who do not”². Such phenomena can exacerbate segregation of those who are more likely to be hired on non-standard contracts: young people, women, the foreign-born and the low-skilled.

Formal access to social protection is not guaranteed to people in different forms of self-employment and non-standard employment in many Member States (MS). Even when formal access is granted, many are, in practice, frequently under-insured against social and health risks and struggle to effectively accrue entitlements.

Issues of formal and effective coverage and adequacy of social protection are also accompanied by a lack of transparency of social protection rights, further hampering the accrual of adequate benefits. Moreover, the increased institutional complexity of pension systems (articulated in different pillars and schemes that seldom rely on efficient risk-pooling and sharing) adds further complexity to old age protection.

Gaps in access to social protection for growing groups of the workforce will lead them to take recourse to tax-funded safety nets of last resort in case of social risk, while the number of people contributing to social protection will be proportionately smaller. These gaps may also result in

¹ COM(2018) 132 final, Spasova S., Bouget D., Ghailani, D. and Vanhercke B. (2017). *Access to social protection for people working on non-standard contracts and as self-employed in Europe. A study of national policies. European Social Policy Network (ESPN), Brussels: European Commission.*

² COM(2018) 132 final

abuse of employment statuses, unfair competition between companies, and a raise in moral hazard and free riding. In the long run, it is the social and economic sustainability of national social protection systems that is at stake, especially given the current demographic trends.

In such a scenario, the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) proposes principles for upward convergence of social rights, including equal opportunities in access to the labour market, fair working conditions and quality jobs, and adequate social protection. In particular, the Council Recommendation on Access to social protection for workers and the self-employed³ (the Recommendation) aims at supporting all self-employed and non-standard workers who, due to their contract type or labour market status, are not sufficiently protected. The Recommendation encourages MS to:

- Allow all working people to adhere to social protection systems (closing formal coverage gaps);
- Allow all individuals in employment and self-employment to accrue and take up adequate entitlements (adequate and effective coverage);
- Increase transparency regarding social protection systems and rights.

However, unequal access to social protection can only be addressed in the framework of the European Economic Governance (EEG). The sustainability of public expenditure results as the priority when facing increasing costs of ageing and a deteriorating economic dependency ratio. The need to build mutual trust and convergence at fiscal level has impacted the margin of manouver for national budgets to ensure universal coverage and adequacy of social protection. Many MS have reduced the budget for social assistance. Systems have been reformed, shifting towards defined contribution and fully-funded logics, whereas redistributive systems are not sustainable. However, as for the AGS 2018, it is part of a strategy for inclusive growth and economic upward convergence that “social protection and labour market policies also adapt to evolving forms of employment and increased labour mobility”.

The EPSR highlights the challenge to rebalance the social and the economic priorities in the EEG framework. It does so by proposing an integrated approach to equal opportunities, quality jobs, employment conditions and social protection rights. The Recommendation, with its innovative features, can be the right tool to achieve this rebalancing.

Indeed, the ETUC sees the Recommendation as an opportunity to promote its proposals for pension fiscal sustainability as tools *at the service of* pension inclusiveness, effectiveness and adequacy, and thus of the implementation of the rights enshrined in the EPSR. While DG ECFIN refers to pensions, health and long-term care as “costs of ageing”, the ETUC would like the Recommendation to be an opportunity to deliver in terms of “dignity of ageing” and possible ways, so far neglected in the EEG, to make this concept sustainable.

1.2 Aims and description of the project

The project aims at contributing to the implementation of the EPSR's Principles 12 and 15 - respectively on access to social protection and on old-age income and pensions for people in all forms of employment - by targeting the Recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed.

The project will empower Trade Unions (TUs) to actively participate in the implementation of the Recommendation's objectives (formal and effective coverage, adequacy, transparency) in the field of social protection and, more particularly, old age benefits and pensions.

It targets both the national and the EU level, allowing the research-based “lessons” at national level to feed the EU-level debate on pension policy, in particular on the relation between the EPSR's ambitions and EEG constraints.

³ Council Recommendation of 8 November 2019 on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed 2019/C 387/01. From the adoption of the Recommendation, MS have 18 months to submit plans with measures to be taken at national level.

Thus, the project will:

- Provide TUs with knowledge-based and strategic tools to contribute with original and relevant inputs to the national action plans implementing the Recommendation.

- Improve knowledge and expertise of TUs and increase their capacity to be influential in policy making including in the framework of the EEG.

- conduct a research action resulting in TUs proposals, in the form of *policy recommendations* to MS and EU institutions and of *guidelines* addressed to social partners both at national and European level to support them, where possible, in playing a coordinated role in influencing pension policy design. Areas for capacity building and further enabling actions will also emerge. Analysed challenges and elaborated proposals will also feed consistent TUs' inputs in the European Semester.

In the end, the project will detect paths for the implementation of EPSR's objectives and convergence of national systems, while taking into account the different national backgrounds. It will explore the paths that TUs consider suitable to achieve the Recommendation's objectives to make social protection systems highly inclusive, fair, solidarity-based, adequate, effective and sustainable.

1.3 Short summary of the project

The project is articulated around three main phases:

The **first** one is already completed. It allowed for the identification of common challenges at EU level and it involved:

- The drafting of a background paper outlining the general context and the main challenges to access to adequate social protection (*completed*);
- The organisation of a kick-off conference on the main challenges to access to adequate social protection and pensions; the Recommendation; and the design of social protection policies at EU level (*completed*).

A **second** one, representing the core of the project, during which the main research activities will take place. It will mainly focus on the national realities through in-depth research in 12 representative countries: AT, BE, BG, DE, ES, HR, IT, LV, NL, PL, RO and SE. This country-based research will allow to identify specific challenges at national level to access to adequate social protection and the policy drivers to tackle them. Data collection in the MS targeted by the national research will support the design of the trade union policy inputs at national level. This phase includes:

- The drafting of the methodology and of a survey (*draft versions available*);
- Desk research, surveys, country visits if necessary;
- Thematic workshops organised by the ETUC (2, to take place in conjunction with the ETUC Social Protection Committee meetings) and addressing formal coverage, effective coverage, adequacy, transferability and transparency;
- The drafting of 12 country reports integrating recommendations and guidelines at national level (in English, max. 30 pages each).

The **third** and **final phase**, focused on the elaboration of the final reports and on the dissemination of the results of the research. It includes:

- The drafting of a final paper on pension policy at EU level, integrating the "lessons learnt" from national research outcomes and including EU-level recommendations for social partners and institutions (in English, max. 30 pages);
- Final conference.

1.4 Research fields

As mentioned above, the research carried out at national level will inform a final paper that will deal with pension policy at European level and will also provide recommendations and guidelines for EU-level institutions and social partners.

The ETUC's affiliates have identified priority topics for the research which can be streamlined around four main points related to the key aspects of pension systems:

1. Pension adequacy-sustainability and performances of the labour market (economic dependency ratio, labour market integration, "quality and quantity of work");
2. Inequalities, poverty, well-being and solidarity among groups (women, self-employed workers...) and in the whole national systems;
3. Pension reforms and legislation and their adequacy with respect to pension purchasing power and other old-age related costs (health care and long-term care);
4. Financial and sustainability features (systems' shape, solidarity/ risk-sharing/ risk-pooling potential, fair allocation of contributory obligations).

The self-employed/ employee dimensions and the gender perspective are considered as cross-cutting priorities for the research.

The ETUC considers that the greatest added value can be provided by focusing, for example, on some of the following points:

- In each country, bringing to light the problems posed by the pension system in relation to the objectives of the TU movement: the maintenance of a satisfactory standard of living for retirees compared to the working population, a minimum pension, a fair retirement age in good health avoiding precarious situations between employment and the right to retirement, taking into account differences in the arduousness of employment, the capacity of seniors to remain in employment depending on their profession and the effectiveness of work-life balance measures;
- Analysing possible inequalities and fragilities (poverty, precariousness, gender inequality, lack of integration into the labour market, poor economic dependency ratio) that can be found in the targeted countries and in a comparative perspective, by category of workers and gender;
- Analysing to what extent recent reforms have been concerned with fiscal sustainability, deviating from objectives of high formal and effective coverage and adequacy of pensions; reviewing the strategies for developing funded pension systems, whether professional or individual;
- Linking the problems with micro and macro indicators;
- Critically analysing the fiscal sustainability projections of the EC services and the MS;
- Figuring indicators of inequality and fragility – or also indicators of well-being at the sub-national level (e.g. by sector or even occupational group) - that allow to evaluate and compare the experiences of different countries and the situation with the intent of each one;
- Studying some possible actions to reduce inequalities and fragility, also using the experiences found in the different countries;
- Making hypotheses on alternative projections that do not include sharp declines in the relative standard of living of retirees, or the use of funding;
- Within the framework of a theoretical approach, elaborating on adequacy of pensions while maintaining sustainability, and on possible indicators (micro and macro) contributing to rebalance the approach between Semester and Pillar approach.

Interesting outputs for the strategic action of the ETUC could be:

- The identification of relevant indicators that TUs could use to monitor the trends in priority areas (and maybe conceive their own benchmarking);
- A reflection around the definition of adequacy of pensions based on the evidence provided by meaningful indicators;

- Projections integrating the sustainability and the adequacy dimensions, including a wider range of indicators, for example pertaining to the economic dependency ratio, wage levels, quality of work, etc.
- Highlighting the importance of the design of pension systems, the link between their sustainability and “quality of work”, and their capacity to ensure minimum dignified standards to all.

2. Tasks to be performed by the subcontractor

In order to achieve the project’s objectives, the subcontractor will work under the supervision and guidance of the ETUC Social Protection Committee and the project’s Steering Committee to perform the following tasks:

1. With the support of the ETUC, **coordinating** the research activity at national level;
2. **Drafting 12 national reports, including recommendations and guidelines** for national institutions and social partners to implement the Recommendation (in English, max. 30 pages each);
3. **Drafting 1 paper on pension policy at European level** including **EU level recommendations and guidelines** for European social partners and institutions. The paper will refer to the EU relevant frameworks in light of the outcomes of national research on the implementation of the Recommendation (in English, max. 30 pages).

The activities listed below will be instrumental for the realisation of these tasks. The ETUC and its national affiliates have already developed part of the preparatory work for the activities and they are ready to provide the subcontractor with their support. Where preparatory work is available, it is mentioned under the pertinent bullet points.

Activities

- a) **Validating the structure of the 12 national reports** on the implementation of the pension-related objectives of the Recommendation.

The proposed structure of the national reports is the following: 1. A short description of the country context with relevant information; 2. Main challenge(s) identified by TUs in the social, labour market and economic context; 3. The elaboration on possible policy reforms/interventions that could address the challenges identified and contribute to the Recommendation objectives; 4. Guidelines and recommendations to national actors - institutions and also social partners.

On point 1, see “Existing material” listed at the end of this paragraph on *Activities*. On point 2, the Steering group of the project has already identified areas to focus on (see the four points at the end of the paragraph on *Aims and description of the project*. The proposed structure can be revised.

- b) **Revising and finalising a methodological proposal for the country-based research** and identifying a series of relevant indicators.

The methodology for the national research has already been partially developed by the ETUC and its affiliates, but not yet finalised, and is still open to modifications.

- c) **Carrying out a survey**, to be filled in by TUs in each target country, to gather relevant information on the state of play, main challenges and policy proposals.

The survey involves various national TU departments. A draft survey is available, but the experts and the ETUC may wish to revise it together (for example, restricting the scope of the questions);

- d) If necessary, **carrying out up to 12 country visits to interview national stakeholders** (belonging mainly to TUs, but also to institutional and employers' organisations). If necessary, travel and interpretation costs will be covered by the project - in addition to the budget foreseen for the expertise.
- e) **Participating in meetings** (including the two thematic workshops organised by the ETUC) with the ETUC project team and affiliates' representatives to validate the project's progress and prepare the following steps;
- f) Participating in and contributing to the **final Conference** and presenting the findings of the research.

The trade unions both at national and at European level are well equipped and keen to contribute with their expertise, data and policy inputs. Thus, for the national research in preparation of the papers, experts can rely on:

- **Existing material:** besides the existing EC impact assessment, ENSP reports, Semester country reports, Eurostat/OECD data... National trade unions have also developed significant inputs, through the ETUC Semester toolkit and their own elaboration in the framework of the national debate on pension policy.
- **Trade union active participation in providing specific information as well as policy inputs.** Beside the survey, direct contact with national contact persons from the ETUC affiliates in the targeted countries is possible and will be facilitated by the ETUC.

3. Expertise, experience and skills required

The project development requires a composite **expertise**, including a sound and proven one in the following fields:

- EU pension policies, both in a national and comparative perspective;
- EU micro/macro-economic policies/public finance;
- Atypical work and self-employment and access to social protection in Europe
- Knowledge of the fiscal mechanisms of the Semester and the EPSR and the social scoreboard (DG ECFIN policy, Age Group, etc.).

Sound **experience** in the following fields:

- Formulating and carrying out a tailored methodology in order to undertake comparative EU research;
- Writing research reports containing sound scientific analysis, original elaboration of data, and meaningful policy recommendations;
- Successful track record of delivering in similar projects run over a 12+ month period, with EU institutions and/or European stakeholders (social partners, NGOs, etc.)

Skills required:

- Ability to adopt a cross-disciplinary approach, capable of including the EPSR, the Recommendation and the EEG;
- Ability to coordinate research inputs and contributions from the 12 TUs' national contact persons and to take input in due consideration;
- Ability to work in a multinational and multicultural environment, understanding different culture & traditions in matter of pension systems and social policies in general;
- Ability to work with and respect tight deadlines and budgetary limits;
- Proven research and presentation skills (in English);
- Proven skills in drafting study reports (in English);
- Good administration and excellent time management skills.

4. Time schedule and reporting

The subcontractor will be asked to be available to start performing the tasks as of February 2020. It will have to perform the above-mentioned tasks by December 2020, with the final Conference to take place in January 2021 [the project ends on 31 January 2021].

Please note that the exact deadlines for the above-mentioned tasks and events may be subject to slight changes and will be decided upon in agreement with the project team.

5. Payment

The total maximum budget available for the fees of the subcontractor is as follows:

Contract with ETUC	
Main activities and Meetings	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• With the support of the ETUC, coordinating the research activity at national level;• Drafting 12 national reports including recommendations and guidelines;• Drafting the final paper on pension policy including recommendations and guidelines at EU level;• Ensuring active participation in project meetings and the final Conference.	
Total budget for the Expertise	53 000 € (VAT and all taxes included)

The subcontractor will be remunerated in various instalments (advance and final payment). This amount covers the fees but does not include the travel and subsistence costs incurred for attending project meetings (such as Pilot group or Steering Committee meetings and Final Conference) and for conducting the country visits for the national reports. These will be covered by the ETUC on the basis of EU rules & thresholds (see the EC table of maximum amounts per EU member state).

6. Evaluation criteria

Bids will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- Quality of the technical proposal submitted by the bidder;
- Verifiable expertise, experience and skills (including CVs of the proposed team) as required and described in part 3 of this call;
- Proven track record of ensuring the quality of written materials produced, both in terms of content and format (i.e. previous publications) and in the relevant subjects specified in this call for tenders;
- Financial proposal within the prescribed budget.

7. Form, structure and content of the tender

Tenders must be written in English. They must be signed by the tenderer or his duly authorised representative and be perfectly legible so that there can be no doubt as to words and figures. Tenders must be clear and concise and assembled in a coherent fashion.

Since tenderers will be judged on the content of their written bids, they must make it clear that they are able to meet the requirements of the specifications.

All tenders must include at least two sections:

i) Technical proposal

The technical proposal must provide all the information needed for the purpose of awarding the contract, including:

- Specific information covering the technical and professional capacity, as required, in particular:
 - Description of relevant professional experience with emphasis on the specific fields covered by the invitation to tender;
 - Detailed curriculum vitae of the key coordinator and other team members;
 - A selection of the main works and/or articles published by all the experts involved, in relation to the relevant subjects specified in this tender.
- Specific information concerning the proposed methodology for delivering the tasks listed in part 2 of this call.

ii) Financial proposal

Prices of the financial proposal must be quoted in euros, including if the sub-contractor is based in a country which is not in the euro-area. As far as the tenderers of those countries are concerned, they cannot change the amount of the bid because of the evolution of the exchange rate. The tenderers choose the exchange rate and assume all risks or opportunities relating to the rate fluctuation.

Prices must be fixed amounts and shall not include travel expenses and daily allowances for the attendance to the Steering Committee meetings and other project events which will be covered by ETUC on the basis of EU rules & thresholds.

The maximum amount available for this contract is EUR 53 000 (VAT and all taxes included).

Prices shall be fixed and not subject to revision during the performance of the contract.

8. Award criteria

The contract will be awarded to the tender offering the best value for money, taking into account the specific objectives, requirements and evaluation criteria of the tender. The principles of transparency and equal treatment will be respected with a view to avoiding any conflicts of interest.

9. Content and selection of the bids

This call for tenders will be published on the ETUC website on 18th December 2019, and will be kept online until the deadline. Offers must be sent at the latest on 27th January 2020

at noon (12:00). Offers must be sent to ETUC, in both formats: electronic (by e-mail to amartin@etuc.org) and as a paper copy (see contact details below).

Concerning the paper copy, to ensure confidentiality, bidders must submit their offer in a double envelope. Both envelopes must be sealed and the inside envelope shall not only bear the name of the department for which it is intended (see below), but also the words "Tender ETUC SociAll – not to be opened by the Mail Department" (Appel d'offres – à ne pas ouvrir par le service du courrier).

A committee will be formed comprising of 3 representatives of the ETUC. One or more members of this committee will initial the documents, confirming the date and time of each bid. The committee members will sign the report on the bids received, which will list the admissible bids and provide reasons for rejecting bids owing to their failure to comply with the stipulations of the tendering process.

This committee will also evaluate the tenders that have been deemed admissible. An evaluation report and classification of participation requests will be drawn up, dated and signed by all the members of the evaluation committee and kept for future reference.

This report will include:

1. The name and address of the contracting authority, the purpose and value of the contract;
2. The names of any excluded candidates and the reasons for their rejection;
3. The names of candidates selected for consideration and the justification for their selection;
4. The names of candidates put forward and justification of their choice in terms of the selection or award criteria.

Candidates must send their bid electronically – to the following e-mail address: amartin@etuc.org – as well as submitting a paper copy of their bid, either delivered by hand or by registered mail or special courier service to:

<p>ETUC Liina CARR Confederal Secretary International Trade Union House Boulevard du Roi Albert II, 5 B – 1210 Brussels BELGIUM</p>
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For bids sent by registered mail, the postmark will serve as proof of the date of dispatch.