

Terms of reference (ToR) for the procurement of services below the EU threshold

CONFIDENTIAL

Design and operationalisation of the ESF+/EaSI National Contact Point function at MLSP, informed by a gap analysis and institutional readiness report mapped to relevant EU/EaSI requirements, practices and expectations.	Project number/ cost centre: S-010925-025 Tender number 10045595
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0. List of abbreviations

AG	Commissioning party
AN	Contractor
ANOFM	National Employment Agency
AVB	General Terms and Conditions of Contract for supplying services and work
BMAS	German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
BMZ	German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development
EaSI	The Employment and Social Innovation
ESF+	The European Social Fund Plus
EU	European Union
FK	Expert
FKT	Expert days
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPA	The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
KZFK	Short-term expert
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova
NCP	National Contact Point
ToRs	Terms of reference

1. Context

Since EU accession negotiations with the Republic of Moldova were formally opened in June 2024, and given the ambitious accession timeline, full compliance with the Copenhagen criteria remains a key political priority for the Government of the Republic of Moldova. A key prerequisite is the effective use of the instruments and funds that the EU provides under its accession strategy for Moldova.

The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) is the EU's main financing and support instrument for investments in sustainable employment, skills development, and social inclusion. As part of EU cohesion policy, it strengthens economic, social, and territorial cohesion within the EU and its member states. In June 2024, Moldova became associated with ESF+ through the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) strand, enabling Moldovan organisations to participate in projects funded under this component.

Pursuant to Government Decision No. 449/2025, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) was designated as the national institution responsible for coordinating and monitoring Moldova's participation in the EaSI strand of ESF+. Lessons from the accession experience of Member States such as Romania and Bulgaria underline the importance of establishing, at an early stage, the necessary institutional arrangements, capacities and working processes to enable effective participation in, and use of, EU financing and support instruments such as ESF+ following accession.

Against this backdrop, the individual measure aims to support the operationalisation and strengthening of the ESF+/EaSI National Contact Point function within MLSP, with a focus on information, coordination and guidance for relevant Moldovan stakeholders interested in EaSI and future ESF+ opportunities. End beneficiaries are individuals and population groups in Moldova who may benefit from ESF+-funded investments in social inclusion, sustainable employment, and skills development. These include socially disadvantaged and vulnerable groups (e.g. Roma, single mothers, pensioners), young jobseekers, and employees seeking to adapt to the digital and green requirements of the modern labour market through further training.

Expected results include designing the organisational and functional set-up and working processes of the ESF+/EaSI NCP function, training designated MLSP staff, building networks with the European Commission and other national ESF+ contact points, and establishing information and communication channels with potential applicants and relevant stakeholders in Moldova.

The measure will contribute to Moldova's EU integration process and will support national actors in better accessing and participating in European funding opportunities aimed at improving social conditions even prior to EU accession. The planned operationalisation of the ESF+/EaSI NCP function is replicable and can serve as a model - beyond this individual measure - for setting up or strengthening further national contact points for other European financing and support instruments.

2. Tasks to be performed by the contractor

The contractor is responsible for supporting the design and operationalisation of the ESF+/EaSI National Contact Point function at MLSP, informed by a gap analysis and institutional readiness report mapped to relevant EU/EaSI requirements, practices and expectations.

Step 1: Gap analysis

- 1.1. Review the current institutional positioning and functional arrangements of the designated NCP function within the MLSP, considering the relevant EaSI/ESF+ coordination role and practices applicable to National Contact Points.
- 1.2. Evaluate current staff capacity, workload and language competencies, particularly in English and Romanian, required to monitor EU calls, participate in relevant transnational working groups and prepare or translate key information materials.
- 1.3. Analyse internal decision-making paths, basic risk-management arrangements and cooperation channels with relevant national and external stakeholders.
- 1.4. Assess the MLSP's practical capacity to establish feasible inquiry-handling arrangements, mainly through existing institutional communication channels, including a functional email address and designated contact persons.
- 1.5. Assess the existing content management system and internal procedures required to create and maintain a dedicated ESF+/EaSI webpage or sub-section on the MLSP website in Romanian and, where feasible, in English.
- 1.6. Review existing arrangements for data storage, confidentiality and tracking of inquiries, event participants and basic outreach indicators, without implying the immediate establishment of a full CRM system.

Step 2: Functional & workflow design

- 2.1. Define the proposed mandate, core tasks, and responsibilities of the of the ESF+/EaSI NCP function, taking into account the current EaSI coordination role and Moldova's gradual preparedness for future ESF+ responsibilities.
- 2.2. Design practical operational workflows, including communication with EU-level interlocutors, monitoring of relevant calls, internal information-sharing, reporting, provision of general guidance and information to potential applicants, and dissemination of information to relevant stakeholders.
- 2.3. Develop draft interface arrangements describing how the ESF+/EaSI NCP function interacts with relevant MLSP subdivisions, including policy, legal, finance, communication and IT functions, to ensure clear coordination and avoid duplication of effort.

Step 3: Capacity planning & human resource considerations

- 3.1. Conduct a workload assessment based on the proposed workflows and identify feasible staffing options, considering MLSP's available institutional resources.
- 3.2. Propose a functional arrangement for the ESF+/EaSI NCP function within MLSP, including possible roles and reporting lines, without prejudging the creation of a separate organisational unit.
- 3.3. Draft indicative role descriptions and competency profiles for the proposed functions, outlining required skills, language capacities and relevant experience with EU-funded programmes, in line with the applicable national civil service framework.
- 3.4. Define KPIs to monitor the performance of the ESF+/EaSI NCP function.

Step 4: Operationalization & final reporting

- 4.1. Consolidate all findings into a draft internal operational framework, which may include, as appropriate, elements of an internal regulation, operational procedures and an action plan.
- 4.2. Conduct a validation workshop/meeting with designated MLSP representatives and the GIZ project coordinator to present the proposed functional model, workflows and staffing options, and to collect feedback.

- 4.3. Finalize all documentation and provide a practical roadmap for the gradual operationalisation, staffing and capacity-building of the ESF+/EaSI NCP function, taking into account MLSP's institutional framework and available resources.

Certain milestones, as laid out in the table below, are to be achieved during the contract term:

Milestones/process steps/partial services	Deadline/place/person responsible	Criteria for acceptance
Inception report & methodology Outlines the expert's detailed work plan, methodology, and a synthesis note building on the preliminary gap analysis and needs assessment.	Week 2-3	Written approval by the designated MLSP contact point and GIZ project coordinator or equivalent.
Gap analysis report A report identifying key organisational, procedural and, where relevant, technical gaps in the current MLSP arrangements, considering relevant EU/EaSI requirements, practices and expectations for National Contact Points, and providing practical recommendations for the next implementation steps.	Week 4-6	Written approval by the designated MLSP contact point and GIZ project coordinator or equivalent.
Functional architecture A practical document detailing the proposed tasks and roles of the ESF+/EaSI NCP function, workflow diagrams, KPIs and draft interface arrangements with relevant MLSP's subdivisions.	Week 6-8	Written approval by the designated MLSP contact point and GIZ project coordinator or equivalent.
Staffing and capacity options Proposed functional arrangement, workload and human resources capacity assessment and indicative role descriptions and competency profiles for the ESF+/EaSI NCP function.	Week 10-12	Written approval by the designated MLSP contact point and GIZ project coordinator or equivalent.
Final operational framework document, including the proposed functional model, draft internal operational arrangements and a practical implementation roadmap for the gradual operationalisation of the ESF+/EaSI NCP function.	Week 14-16	Validation by designated MLSP representatives and the GIZ project coordinator. Readiness for internal use ensured.

Period of assignment: from 2. November 2026 until 31.May 2027.

3. Concept

In the tender, the tenderer is required to show *how* the objectives defined in Chapter 2 (Tasks to be performed) are to be achieved, taking into account the technical-methodological

requirements of the assignment, where applicable. In addition, the tenderer must describe the proposed approach to managing and delivering the services.

Note: The numbers in parentheses correspond to the lines of the technical assessment grid.

Technical-methodological concept

Strategy (1.1): The tenderer is required to consider the tasks to be performed with reference to the objectives of the services put out to tender (see Chapter 1 Context) (1.1.1). Following this, the tenderer presents and justifies the explicit strategy with which it intends to provide the services for which it is responsible (see Chapter 2 Tasks to be performed) (1.1.2) including relevant MLSP subdivisions and stakeholders involved in or interacting with the ESF+/EaSI NCP function and describe the proposed cooperation with them.

The tenderer is required to present the actors relevant for the services for which it is responsible, including relevant MLSP subdivisions and stakeholders directly involved in or interacting with the ESF+/EaSI NCP function, and describe the **cooperation (1.2)** with them.

The tenderer is required to describe the key **processes** for the services for which it is responsible and create an **operational plan** or schedule (1.4.1) that describes how the services according to Chapter 2 (Tasks to be performed by the contractor) are to be provided. In particular, the tenderer is required to describe the necessary work steps and, where applicable, take into account the milestones and **contributions** of relevant actors (partner contributions) in accordance with Chapter 2 (Tasks to be performed) (1.4.2).

The tenderer is required to describe its contribution to knowledge management for MLSP, with a focus on practical transfer of knowledge, internal use of deliverables and sustainability of the ESF+/EaSI NCP function (1.5.1) under **learning and innovation**.

4. Personnel concept

The tenderer is required to provide personnel who are suited to performing the tasks described, on the basis of their CVs (see Chapter 6), the range of tasks involved and the required qualifications.

The qualifications specified below represent the requirements to reach the maximum number of points in the technical assessment.

Key expert 1 – Institutional and EU Governance expert

Tasks of key expert 1

- Review Moldova's current regulatory framework relevant to EU integration, the MLSP's internal regulations, and the relevant rules, guidance and practices related to the ESF+ Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) strand.
- Prepare gap analysis and needs assessment, identifying institutional barriers, dependencies or practical constraints relevant for the operationalisation of the ESF+/EaSI NCP function.
- Conduct structured consultations with designated MLSP representatives, including relevant internal subdivisions such as European integration, human resources, legal, finance, communication and IT functions, as appropriate, in order to align expectations regarding the functional scope and institutional arrangements of the ESF+/EaSI NCP function.

- Define the proposed mandate, core functions, responsibilities and operational limits of the ESF+/EaSI NCP function in a draft internal operational framework.
- Conduct a workload assessment based on the proposed workflows and identify feasible staffing and capacity options, taking into account MLSP's available institutional resources and the expected scope of EaSI-related coordination, monitoring, information and outreach tasks.
- Assess the MLSP's practical capacity to establish feasible inquiry-handling arrangements, including a functional email address, relevant contact points and, where appropriate, a dedicated phone line or other communication channels.
- Propose a functional arrangement for the ESF+/EaSI NCP function within MLSP, including possible roles, responsibilities and reporting lines, without prejudging the creation of a separate organisational unit.
- Define relevant KPIs to monitor and assess the performance of the ESF+/EaSI NCP function.
- Draft indicative role descriptions and competency profiles for the proposed functions, outlining required skills, language capacities and relevant experience with EU-funded programmes, in line with the applicable national civil service framework, including Moldovan Law No. 158/2008 on Public Office and Status of Civil Servants, where relevant.
- Facilitate a validation meeting with designated MLSP representatives and the GIZ project coordinator to present the draft functional model, workflows, interface arrangements and staffing options.
- Integrate relevant written and verbal institutional feedback from the validation meeting into the final deliverables.
- Produce a practical, time-bound implementation roadmap detailing the recommended steps for the gradual operationalisation, staffing and capacity-building of the ESF+/EaSI NCP function over the next 12 months, taking into account MLSP's institutional framework, internal procedures and available resources.

Qualifications of key expert 1

- Education/training (2.2.1): Master's degree (or equivalent University degree) in Public Administration, Law, Economics, European Studies, Organizational Development.
- Language (2.2.2): C1 - level language proficiency in English language.
- General professional experience (2.2.3): A minimum of 7 years of professional experience in institutional capacity building, public sector organizational design, or public administration reform.
- Specific professional experience (2.2.4): At least 3 years of direct experience dealing with the management, implementation, coordination or design of EU funds (ideally European Social Fund / ESF+ or similar pre-accession or EU-funded instruments).
- Regional experience (2.2.6): Experience working with public administration structures in EU candidate or accession countries (specifically the Western Balkans or Eastern Partnership countries) or in EU Member States. Proven familiarity with the public administration architecture of the Republic of Moldova will be awarded maximum points.
- Other (2.2.8): Analytical skills: Demonstrated ability to analyse complex regulatory and institutional frameworks (reports, recommendations, etc.)

5. Costing requirements

Assignment of personnel and travel expenses

The following basic calculations for the contract for works are a reference value based on the acceptance criteria for each partial work/milestone specified in Chapter 2 (Tasks to be performed by the contractor).

Since the contract to be concluded is a contract for works, we would ask you to offer your services at a lump sum price.

In addition, the assessment of the financial bid is also based on the underlying daily rate. Please also provide the underlying daily rate. A breakdown of days is not required.

Milestones/partial works	Estimated expert days for orientation	Deadline/place/person responsible
Inception report & methodology	3	Expert 1
Gap analysis report	10	Expert 1
Functional architecture	15	Expert 1
Staffing and capacity options	7	Expert 1
Final operational framework	5	Expert 1

Travel expenses	Quantity	Number per expert	Total	Comments
Per-diem allowance in country of assignment	10	1	10	Up to two expert missions to Moldova, estimated up to 5 working days each, if required and agreed in advance by GIZ
Overnight allowance in country of assignment	8	1	8	Up to two expert missions to Moldova, estimated up to 4 overnight stays each
Transport	Quantity	Number per expert	Total	Comments
International flights	2	1	2	Travel to the place of delivery of the work in the Republic of Moldova
CO₂ compensation for air travel Link to working aid and table for determining the budget and Guidance for	4			A fixed budget of EUR 200 is earmarked for settling carbon offsets against evidence.

GIZ service providers on avoiding, reducing and offsetting GHG emissions on setting the budget.				
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6. Requirements on the format of the tender

The structure of the tender must correspond to the structure of the ToR. In particular, the detailed structure of the concept (Chapter 3) should be organised in accordance with the positively weighted criteria in the assessment grid (not with zero). The tender must be legible (font size 11 or larger) and clearly formulated. It must be drawn up in English (language).

The complete tender must not exceed 10 pages (excluding CVs). If one of the maximum page lengths is exceeded, the content appearing after the cut-off point will not be included in the assessment. External content (e.g. links to websites) will also not be considered.

The CVs of the personnel proposed in accordance with Chapter 4 of the ToRs must be submitted using the format specified in the terms and conditions for application. The CVs shall not exceed 4 pages each. They must clearly show the position and job the proposed person held in the reference project and for how long. The CVs can also be submitted in English (language).

Please calculate your financial tender based exactly on the parameters specified in Chapter 5 Quantitative requirements. The contractor is not contractually entitled to use up the days, trips, workshops or budgets in full. The number of days, trips and workshops and the budgets will be contractually agreed as maximum limits. The specifications for pricing are defined in the price schedule.

As the contract to be concluded is a contract for works, please offer a fixed lump sum price that covers all relevant costs (fees). The price bid will be evaluated on the basis of the specified lump sum price. In addition, please also provide the underlying daily rate. A breakdown of days is not required.