



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Analysis, Evaluation, External Relations  
**Impact Assessment, Evaluation**

## **CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

**VP/2013/005**

**Pilot Projects to carry out ESF related Counterfactual Impact  
Evaluations**

**BUDGET HEADING 04.022000**  
**ESF Technical Assistance operational budget 2007-2013**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The European Union approaches the next seven-year programming period for the European Social Fund (ESF). Budgets are tighter and concern about the effective use of funds has grown. Accordingly, the European Commission is encouraging Member States (MS) to conduct more impact evaluations identifying the net effects (impacts) of ESF support in the current and future programming periods. Counterfactual impact evaluation (CIE) allows for estimating net effects i.e. the difference between what has happened in the presence of ESF interventions and what would have happened without ESF support. This allows attributing a certain amount of the achieved results to the intervention itself, since external factors are netted out.

During the programming period 2007-2013, some Member States have already carried out CIEs or are planning to do so. However, experience has proved that CIE presents significant challenges, relating notably to availability and accessibility of data, capacity within the public administration and the evaluation community, and cooperation among authorities holding the relevant data.

In order to promote an increased use of CIEs, DG EMPL organised in Brussels, on 25 October 2011 an Expert hearing on MS experiences on using control groups in ESF evaluations. Eight Member States volunteered to discuss the motivations and objectives for conducting such studies, the methodological approaches chosen, the data and indicators used, the findings, the limitations and challenges faced. They also showed the variety of approaches followed and of methods used in the MS.

Furthermore, on the basis of the results from the expert hearing, following on consultations with ESF Managing Authorities (MA), DG EMPL has elaborated a Practical Guidance on Counterfactual Impact Evaluation which (1) provides an overview of relevant concepts and methodologies (2) presents practical recommendations for ESF MAs on why, how and when to carry out counterfactual impact evaluations and (3) suggests practical ways to overcome implementation difficulties and move forward the CIE agenda.

This call for proposals is part of the support the European Commission intends to provide to MS, in order to further encourage the use of CIEs and thus, to be able to better assess what has been achieved with ESF support.

The focus of this call for proposals is on the 2007-2013 ESF programming period.

### **1.1 The European Social Fund**

The European Social Fund was established by the Treaty of Rome and is the longest existing Structural Fund. It is the main financial tool through which the EU translates its strategic labour market, human resources development and social inclusion policy aims into action.

The European Commission, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, is responsible for the ESF. Over the period 2007-2013, some €75 billion are invested in the EU Member States and regions to achieve its goals.

For the programming period 2007-2013, the ESF is governed by the following regulations: Council Regulation 1083/2006 laying down general provisions on the ERDF, ESF and the Cohesion Fund, Regulation 1081/2006 on the European Social Fund,

Commission Regulation 1828/2006 setting out rules for the implementation of Council Regulation 1083/2006.

The scope of assistance for the programming period 2007-2013 is set out in Art. 3 of the ESF Regulation No 1081/2006:

- a. Increasing adaptability of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs with a view to improving the anticipation and positive management of economic change.
- b. Enhancing access to employment and the sustainable inclusion in the labour market of job seekers and inactive people, preventing unemployment, in particular long-term and youth unemployment, encouraging active ageing and longer working lives, and increasing participation in the labour market.
- c. Reinforcing the social inclusion of disadvantaged people with a view to their sustainable integration in employment and combating all forms of discrimination in the labour market.
- d. Promoting partnerships, pacts and initiatives through networking of relevant stakeholders, such as the social partners and non-governmental organisations, at the transnational, national, regional and local levels in order to mobilise for reforms in the field of employment and labour market inclusiveness.
- e. Expanding and improving human capital.
- f. Strengthening institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and public services at national, regional and local level and, where relevant, of the social partners and non-governmental organisations, with a view to reforms, better regulation and good governance especially in the economic, employment, education, social, environmental and judicial fields.

The activities are carried out in shared management and take the form of operational programmes (OPs) within the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF). The OPs include information on priority axes and their specific targets (Art. 37, Regulation 1083/2006). For each OP, the Member State designates a number of authorities, including a Managing Authority. The responsibilities of the Managing Authority include ensuring that operations are selected for funding in accordance with the criteria applicable to the operational programme (Art. 60, Regulation 1083/2006). "The ESF shall take into account the relevant priorities and objectives of the Community in the fields of education and training, increasing the participation of economically inactive people in the labour market, combating social exclusion – especially that of disadvantaged groups such as people with disabilities – and promoting equality between women and men and non-discrimination." (Art. 2(2) ESF Regulation No 1081/2006).

## **1.2 ESF evaluation requirements**

Under the Structural Funds regulations for 2007-2013, Member States are responsible for the ex ante and on-going evaluations of their operational programmes. No particular requirements have been set for on-going evaluation as regards examination of effectiveness or impact. The evaluations can be of a strategic or operational nature.

For the 2014-2020 programming period, the draft Common Provisions Regulation<sup>1</sup> (CPR) sets out more precise requirements. Regarding the on-going evaluation, Member

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/what/future/proposals\\_2014\\_2020\\_en.cfm#1](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/proposals_2014_2020_en.cfm#1)

States shall carry out evaluations to assess effectiveness, efficiency and impact of their programmes. At least once during the next programming period, an evaluation shall assess how support from the CSF Funds has contributed to the objectives for each priority axis (Art. 49(3)).

MS are required to provide the necessary resources and ensure that procedures are in place to be able to evaluate the programme, including data collection arrangements (Art. 47(2)).

A variety of methods are available to capture the impacts of ESF supported interventions: it is for the Member States to decide which one, or which combination of methods, is the most suitable to satisfy the regulatory requirements.

Rigorous quantification of the impacts of interventions involves counterfactuals which allow estimating what would have happened in the absence of a specific intervention. Defining such counterfactuals requires to identify a control group (comprising people who might have been targeted but were not subject to the intervention) and to compare the results for this group with those of the group of participants (the treatment group).

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE CALL**

The general objective of this call for proposals is to set up pilot projects conducting CIEs in order to further promote the use of counterfactual impact evaluations of ESF interventions in the MS.

This call for proposals offers the applicants a possibility to assess the impact of ESF funded interventions for the 2007-2013 programming period applying one or more quasi-experimental counterfactual impact evaluation methods.

The specific objectives are the following:

- To provide robust evidence on the net effects (impacts) of the ESF interventions being evaluated through the chosen pilot projects;
- To raise awareness on counterfactual impact evaluations and on the use of their findings in the selected MS and
- To enhance MS capacity to effectively implement CIEs.

The foreseen results of this call for proposals are:

- Informed assessment of the impact of the evaluated ESF interventions in the selected MS;
- Increased awareness and knowledge on counterfactual impact evaluations and their methods;
- Improved understanding of the necessary administrative and institutional settings for MS to further carry out CIEs;
- Improved understanding of the advantages, challenges and limitations of implementing and using the results of counterfactual impact evaluations.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

CIEs may provide good quality evidence of the net effects (impacts) of interventions, including ESF funded interventions. They only do so however, if they are well planned and executed appropriately.

The main methodological distinction in CIEs is between evaluation designs that are experimental and those that are quasi-experimental. The experimental approach is commonly referred to as the ‘randomised control trial’ and sometimes also as ‘social experimentation’. In an experimental approach, the persons supported by the ESF funded intervention would be selected randomly from a potential population of eligible participants to the intervention. The random assignment assures that, on average, those exposed to the program (treatment group) and those who are not (control group) are similar and thus, the difference on a specific result between the two groups can be attributed to the intervention.

Quasi-experimental methods such as: difference-in-differences (DiD); regression discontinuity design (RDD); instrumental variables (IV) and propensity score matching (PSM) are different approaches to mimic experimental methods, in such a way that the control and treated participants are, before benefiting from the ESF funded intervention, similar and the difference in the result between the two groups can be attributed to the intervention. More detailed information about counterfactual impact evaluation methods and their implementation can be found at: <https://circabc.europa.eu/w/browse/a81ef0f8-d9a4-4fdc-9745-704ec410faf3>

The scope of this call is limited to quasi-experimental methods.

The attention of potential applicants is drawn to the following elements, which constitute the necessary precondition for carrying out a successful CIE:

1. The intervention supported by the ESF needs to be discrete, distinctive and relatively homogenous.
2. The assignment rules (i.e. rules setting out criteria for admission into the intervention) must be clearly described, so that it is possible to identify the eligible (target group) and non-eligible population, as well as the treated and non-treated groups in the eligible population.
3. The size of the comparison and treatment groups must be sufficient so that it is possible to estimate statistically the impact of the intervention.
4. The intervention should be based on a clear causal mechanism; i.e. it should be clear how intervention's inputs and activities are intended to link to outputs and results.
5. The expected results of the evaluated intervention should be quantified.
6. The counterfactual method(s) to be used in order to identify the control group and estimate causal effects must be well defined and their choice must be justified. The assignment rules to the intervention will also drive the choice of the evaluation method to be used.
7. The quality and accessibility of the relevant data is critical to implement a CIE. Broadly, three types of data are required: treatment and control group records with information on the personal characteristics (such as age, gender, labour market conditions before the intervention, etc.) of participants and non-participants (both eligible and non-

eligible ones), result records (results before and after implementation of the program), and contextual data records.

The data can come from administrative records (social security, unemployment or tax records), existing or bespoke surveys and/or monitoring data. The impact evaluation method employed will be triggered also by the type of data available. For instance, a propensity score matching approach can be employed if there are enough data on a large range of characteristics for both the treated and comparison groups.

*Table 1: Data types and possible sources<sup>2</sup>*

Data types	Sources
Treatment group records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intervention participation records (maintained by beneficiaries for example) including ESF monitoring data</li> <li>• Referral records</li> <li>• Application records</li> </ul>
Control group records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative data such as social security and unemployment benefit records (those found to be untreated after treatment group records are inspected)</li> <li>• Application records (rejected applicants)</li> <li>• Participation records (those who were eligible to participate but who did not commence treatment - typically referred to as 'no shows')</li> <li>• National existing surveys such as the LFS</li> </ul>
Result records (required for both treatment and control groups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative data: social security and unemployment records can also be used to construct result measures (benefit/social security receipt results), national insurance and tax records (earnings and employment results)</li> <li>• Administrative records from training providers (training course starts and completions)</li> <li>• Official company census or tax records where available</li> <li>• Employment or output census records (records used in constructing national accounts, for measures of GDP)</li> <li>• Bespoke surveys of treatment and control groups</li> </ul>
Contextual data/control variables (required for both treatment and control groups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative systems - benefit records providing pre-treatment claim histories for example; national insurances and tax records, historic earnings and employment records</li> <li>• Surveys of control and treatment groups. Where treatment rules are clear, control groups can be identified ex-ante and baseline data collected</li> <li>• Intervention monitoring tools - in some circumstances, monitoring systems can be used to collect baseline measures from both treatment (see Annex XXIII of the Implementing Regulation<sup>3</sup>) and control groups, for example application systems where failed applicants can be used as controls.</li> </ul>

In order to support MS with the implementation of impact evaluations, and notably CIEs, the Commission is setting up a **centre for research on impact evaluation (CRIE)** at the Joint Research Centre (JRC) in Ispra.

If needed, the pilot projects selected under this call will receive further support and assistance from CRIE for their implementation through:

- a) training for the staff involved in the implementation of the pilot projects;

<sup>2</sup> DG EMPL Practical Guidance on Counterfactual Impact Evaluation

<sup>3</sup> Implementing regulation No 1828/2006

- b) assistance in analysing and addressing specific data problems;
- c) advising on appropriate methodologies in the light of the data availability and fine-tuning the use of the methodology; and
- d) providing hands-on support to the MS authorities in charge of the project at all stages of the CIE implementation, including the discussion of results.

Applicants should submit their proposals in one of the three working languages of the Commission (English, French or German).

In addition, applicants are required to submit an executive summary of their proposal in English.

#### 4. SCOPE

The selected pilot counterfactual impact evaluations will not cover entire OPs, but a distinguishable relatively homogeneous ESF intervention<sup>4</sup>. As the focus of CIE is on results, only participants who have already left the intervention can be considered in the analysis. The intervention to be evaluated should have already bedded down and reached a level of maturity.

The Commission invites potential applicants to present proposals for CIE of the following ESF supported type of intervention:

Training for unemployed, including long-term unemployed, with a view to their integration into the labour market.

The intervention selected should assess the net effects of the ESF support on the overall treatment group with regard to integration into the labour market, as well as on a limited number of sub-groups selected according to a number of characteristics such as gender, age, educational attainment, unemployment spells, etc. To this purpose, a sufficient number of participants with these characteristics is needed for the treatment, as well as for the control group, in order to allow for a robust statistical analysis. In view of the worrying unemployment situation of young people in Europe, the Commission encourages potential applicants to pay specific attention to this target group.

#### 5. INDICATIVE TIMETABLE

	Stages	Date and time or indicative period
a)	Publication of the call	04/2013
b)	Deadline for submitting applications	21/06/2013
c)	Evaluation period	07/2013
d)	Information to applicants	09/2013
e)	Signature of grant agreement	09/2013
f)	Starting date of CIE	10/2013

<sup>4</sup> On the basis of MS experience which have already conducted CIEs, these have been carried out at the level of priority axis or below.

## **6. BUDGET**

The total budget earmarked for the co-financing of projects is estimated at €1,000,000 euro.

The grant requested will be €100,000 minimum and €250,000 maximum.

According to the quality of applications received, the number of accepted pilot projects could be between 4 and 10.

The grant will not exceed 80% of the total eligible costs of the action<sup>5</sup>. The applicant has to guarantee the co-financing of the remaining 20%. This 20% cannot be funded under other EU funds – including Technical Assistance Priority Axes of the ESF Operational Programmes.

Contributions in kind are not accepted as co-financing.

The Commission reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available.

## **7. START AND DURATION OF PROJECTS**

The projects should start after signature of grant agreements.

The planned duration of a project may not exceed 14 months.

In view of the time required to evaluate applications, actions should not start before the deadline given in Section 5.

## **8. EXCLUSION AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

### **8.1 Exclusion criteria**

Applicants must sign a declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in one of the situations referred to in articles 106(1) and 107 to 109 of the Financial Regulation<sup>6</sup>, filling in the relevant form attached to the application form accompanying the call for proposals and available at <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/swim/displayWelcome.do>.

### **8.2 Eligible applicants**

The applicant must be an authority in a Member State which is in charge of ESF evaluation. In principle, this will be a Managing Authority of an operational programme designated according to art. 59(1) of the Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006. However, as in some Member States, the evaluation function is centralised and belongs to another authority, this body would also be eligible to apply.

### **8.3 Eligible applications**

- a) Applications must be submitted in the online application SWIM available at <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/swim/displayWelcome.do> before the deadline referred to in section 5b;

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<sup>5</sup> The term "action" is used interchangeably with "project", designating all the phases in the implementation of the selected pilot counterfactual impact evaluations.

<sup>6</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/budget/biblio/documents/regulations/regulations\\_en.cfm#rf\\_modex](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/biblio/documents/regulations/regulations_en.cfm#rf_modex)



- b) Applications must be submitted online before being printed and sent by registered mail or notified by personal delivery in three copies as a paper application duly signed (one original and two copies of all submitted documents);
- c) Applications must be complete and include all the documents indicated in the checklist mentioned in Section 16 of this call;
- d) The technical part of the proposal must be structured according to the points set out in Annex I of this call;
- e) Applications must respect the maximum limit for EU co-financing, namely maximum 80% of the total eligible costs of the action;
- f) The duration of the counterfactual impact evaluation is 14 months maximum;
- g) The requested grant must be between 100,000 € and 250,000 €

## **9. SELECTION CRITERIA**

Only proposals which comply with the requirements of the eligibility and exclusion criteria will be eligible for further evaluation.

The applicants must have the operational resources and the professional skills and qualifications needed to successfully implement the pilot projects.

This operational capacity must be attested by the provision of the following items:

1. A declaration on honour concerning the operational capacity to carry out the pilot project.
2. CVs (educational and professional qualifications) and job specifications of the project manager and of the internal staff who will be involved in the implementation of the pilot project by the MS authority in charge of ESF evaluation. CVs should be presented in Annex E5 of the SWIM form.

The verification of financial capacity does not apply to public bodies (Article 131 of the Financial Regulation).

## **10. AWARD CRITERIA**

Proposals which fulfil the eligibility and selection criteria indicated above will be assessed according to the following award criteria:

### 1) Understanding of the work to be carried out and methodological criteria (60 points)

- Description of the general approach to the work and of the various steps envisaged and how they respond to the objectives set for this call;
- Clear explanation of why the intervention to be evaluated is suitable for a CIE. This implies to show that the intervention is discrete, distinctive and homogenous, but also that there are expected results of the intervention that can be quantified. Precise set of evaluation questions;

- Description of the intervention assignment rule and of its implications to identify the eligible and non-eligible population, and the participants and non-participants to the intervention;
- Description of the CIE method(s) to be employed, given the intervention design and the data availability;
- Clear identification of data sources, their accessibility and their content (available information).

## 2) Organisational criteria (25 points)

- Realistic and structured timetable;
- Sufficiency and adequacy of resources, including external expertise where relevant, and their allocation;
- Clear description of work organisation, coordination and division of responsibilities.

## 3) Financial criteria (15 points)

- Clarity and completeness of the proposed budget;
- Value for money of the proposed budget.

Proposals which do not obtain at least 60% of the maximum score for award criteria 1 and 2 and 50% for criterion 3 and do not reach at least 60% of the overall score for all criteria will not be considered for funding.

In principle, the Commission intends to support a maximum of one pilot project per Member State. All projects will be ranked according to their quality and the highest quality project submitted by each Member State will be selected. If, following this process, the selected projects do not exhaust the available budget, the next best scored project(s) on the ranking list will be financed irrespective of their origin.

## **11. PAYMENTS**

In the event of a grant awarded by the Commission, the payment of the grant will be made in three instalments: two pre-financing payments and a final payment.

For more detailed information on payment arrangements, general legal and administrative provisions, please see the model grant agreement which is available on the call website.

## **12. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

The reporting requirements are foreseen under art. II.23 of the general conditions of the grant agreement.

The request for the second pre-financing payment shall be accompanied by a progress report on implementation of the project ("technical report on progress") that should be structured around the following indicative headings: introduction, description of the intervention being evaluated, data collection arrangements, CIE method(s) used and (possible) findings of the evaluation. The report should be in English (maximum 40 pages plus annexes) and should emphasise the positive aspects of the projects and, if the case, their limitations and challenges.

The request for final payment shall be accompanied by a final technical report as specified in art. II.23.2 and elaborated according to the template attached to the grant agreement. The final technical report should include an annex containing an additional report structured according to the same indicative headings as the progress report, but with an emphasis on the findings and lessons learnt. This report should be in English (maximum 50 pages plus annexes).

### **13. DATA PROTECTION**

All personal data received in the context of this call for proposals will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data.

Unless indicated otherwise, the questions and any personal data requested are required to evaluate the application in accordance with the specifications of the call for proposal will be processed solely for that purpose by the entity acting as data controller.

Details concerning the processing of personal data are available on the privacy statement at: [http://ec.europa.eu/dataprotectionofficer/privacy\\_statements\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dataprotectionofficer/privacy_statements_en.htm)

### **14. LEGAL COMMITMENTS**

In the event of a grant awarded by the Commission, a grant agreement, drawn up in euro and detailing the conditions and level of funding, will be sent to the beneficiary, as well as the procedure in view to formalise the obligations of the parties.

### **15. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS**

For implementation contracts, the beneficiary must award the contract to the bid offering best value for money or the lowest price (as appropriate), avoiding conflicts of interests and retain the documentation for the event of an audit. The beneficiaries shall abide by the applicable national public procurement rules.

The overall coordination and management, as well as the financial management of the project cannot be sub-contracted. Procedures to award contracts may have been initiated, but contracts may not be concluded by the beneficiaries before the start of the implementation of the projects.

### **16. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS**

The call, the application form, the Financial Guidelines for Applicants and further information related to the call for proposals are provided on the following website:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=630&langId=en>

The applicants are requested to number the accompanying documents to be submitted with the application as shown below and send three paper copies (one original and two copies). Documents will be printed doublesided, if possible. Only two-hole folders will be used. The dossier should not be bound or glued.

<i>Order</i>	<i>Documents composing the paper application</i>	<i>Available in SWIM</i>
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1.	Cover letter of application quoting the reference number of the call (VP/2013/005) signed and dated by the legal representative of the applicant organisation.	No
2.	Submitted on-line application form. The print-out should be dated and signed by the legal representative. The on-line form must be electronically submitted before printing. Once the electronic application is submitted, no further changes will be possible.	Yes
3.	Declaration on honour certifying that the applicant is not in one of the situations referred to in articles 106(1) and 107 to 109 of the Financial Regulation and that the applicant has the operational capacity to carry out the project. The declaration on honour should be signed by the legal representative of the applicant public authority.	Yes
4.	Financial identification form duly completed and signed by the account holder of the applicant organisation and bearing the stamp and signature of the bank. It is also possible to attach a copy of a recent bank statement to the financial identification form, in which event the stamp of the bank and the signature of the bank's representative are not required. The signature of the account holder is obligatory in all cases (available at <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/financial_id/financial_id_en.cfm">http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/financial_id/financial_id_en.cfm</a> ).	Yes
5.	Legal entity form completed and signed by the legal representative of the applicant public authority (available at <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/legal_entities/legal_entities_en.cfm">http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/legal_entities/legal_entities_en.cfm</a> ).	Yes
6.	Document "Contracts for implementing the action" for subcontracting	Yes
7.	CVs (educational and professional qualifications) and job specifications of the project manager and of the internal staff who will be involved in the implementation of the pilot project by the applicant authority.	Yes

Please make sure that the full set of the application form and all accompanying documents are included in your proposal, to be sent by registered mail before the set deadline.

**Applications accompanied by the annexes and all the required documentary proof must be submitted:**

**1) in electronic format via the SWIM online application**

The web-based application called SWIM allows applicants/beneficiaries to introduce, edit, validate, print and submit grant applications, request for payments and request for modifications on the budget estimate. SWIM can be accessed at the following web address <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/swim/displayWelcome.do>.

The electronic application in the online application SWIM must be "valid". Invalid electronic applications are automatically excluded from further evaluation.

In order to validate the application, click on the "send" button.

This step is irreversible and must be carried out before the deadline.

and

**2) in hard copy in triplicate (2 copies + original) to the following addresses:**

a) **by registered mail** or express courier service (the submission date will be taken as the date of dispatch, as evidenced by the postmark or the express courier receipt date):

European Commission  
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion  
Unit A3 (SPA3 00/023): Call for proposals VP/2013/005  
B-1049 Brussels  
Belgium

b) or **by personal delivery** against a signed receipt from the Commission's central mail service (this personal delivery can be direct or through any authorised representative of the applicant, including private messenger service etc.) by 16.00 h, 21/06/2013:

European Commission  
Unit A3 - Call for proposals VP/2013/005  
Central courier service  
Avenue du Bourget, 1  
B-1140 Evere  
Belgium

The reference of the call for proposals must be indicated on the envelope.

**Failure to submit to the Commission the application by registered mail and online by the deadlines indicated above will entail the ineligibility of the request for subsidy.**

Complementary documents sent by post, by fax or by electronic mail after the deadlines mentioned above will not be considered for evaluation unless requested by the European Commission. Please do make sure that the full set of the application form and all accompanying documents as listed above are included in your sending by post by the closing date.

The applicant's attention is also drawn to the fact that incomplete or unsigned forms, hand-written forms and those sent by fax or e-mail will not be taken into consideration. **The Financial Guidelines for Applicants** annexed to the present call for proposals provide more detailed information for the applicants, especially as regards guidelines for presenting the proposal's provisional budget along with the rules governing which categories of expenditure are eligible and which are not.

The information contained herein together with the Financial Guidelines for Applicants provides all the information you require to submit an application. Please read it carefully before doing so, paying particular attention to the priorities of the present call.

## **17. EVALUATION PROCESS**

Applications will be assessed by an independent Evaluation Committee. The work of the Evaluation Committee consists in assessing each of the applications against the exclusion, eligibility, selection and award criteria.

Applications which are not submitted by the deadline will automatically be rejected. After the deadline for submission of proposals, the Commission may contact the applicant to provide clarification. Failure to reply to the clarification request will invalidate the application.

Only proposals which satisfy the exclusion and eligibility criteria will be evaluated further against selection and award criteria.

The Commission will inform each applicant of the final decision taken.

Successful applicants will receive two original copies of the grant agreement detailing the conditions and level of funding for acceptance and signature. Both copies must be sent back to the Commission which will return one to the applicant once it has been signed by both parties.

## **18. CONTACT**

The Commission will publish and update all questions and answers of general interest on <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/swim/displayWelcome.do>

Contacts between the contracting authority and potential applicants can only take place in certain circumstances and under the following conditions:

Before the final date for submission of proposals, at the request of the applicant, the Commission may provide additional information solely for the purpose of clarifying the nature of the call.

**Any requests for additional information must be made by e-mail only to [empl-vp-2013-005@ec.europa.eu](mailto:empl-vp-2013-005@ec.europa.eu), indicating the reference VP/2013/005.**

To ensure a more rapid reply, it would be helpful if the requests for additional information could be sent in English.

In the interest of equal treatment of applicants, the Commission cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of an applicant or an action or on the outcome of the call before the official publication of results.

The Commission may, on its own initiative, inform interested parties of any error, inaccuracy, omission or other clerical error in the text of the call for proposals. Any additional information including that referred to above will be published on the internet in concordance with the various call for proposals documents.

## ANNEX I

### **INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILLING IN ANNEX E1 (DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION) OF THE SWIM FORM**

Annex E1 (Description of the action) of the SWIM form must be structured and drafted according to the below instructions.

#### **a) Describe the general and specific objectives that the action aims to achieve**

**Context, proposed intervention and target population:** Describe the context, the intervention selected for CIE, its geographical scope, the target population, its time coverage and specify the ESF programme under which it is implemented.

**Suitability of the intervention for a CIE:** Show to what extent is the selected intervention discrete, distinctive and relatively homogeneous so that it can be assessed through CIE. Present possible limitations in this respect. Regarding homogeneity, consider in particular the possible divergent intensity and scope of support offered under the intervention.

#### **Theory of change - expected effect of the ESF funded intervention at the time of the implementation of the CIE:**

1) The objectives of the intervention and its intervention logic should be presented in a clear causal manner. A useful tool could be a logical framework which sets out the means by which the intervention's inputs and activities are intended to link to outputs and results. Particular focus should be paid to the expected results of the intervention and to the timescale of their materialisation. If there are studies of similar interventions, their findings should also be discussed.

2) Demonstrate that the effects of the interventions should be already observed at the time of the CIE. The points in time when the quantifiable results will be measured should be identified having in mind how much time is needed for positive effects to emerge. Alternatively, looking at the same quantifiable results in different points in time can provide some valuable findings.

#### **b) Describe the action (on the basis of the main activities planned) and where it will be implemented**

Explain in a logical consecutive manner the different tasks and activities into which the project is divided and indicate who will be in charge of them. Point out possible difficulties related to the timeframe and resources. A detailed timetable based on the description provided here, should be presented in Annex E2 of the SWIM form.

### c) Methodology to be followed

**Discuss the assignment rules to the intervention:** describe the *eligible* population, as well as the *participants* and *non-participants* of the intervention. Describe how the participants are selected (participation to the program determined by the participant himself/herself, based on specific criteria, a combination of both).

**Discuss the various types of support** offered by the intervention, the different levels of support intensity.

**Present the size of the treatment group** (number of units having benefited from the intervention). The group of treated must be solely composed of individuals who have directly benefitted from an ESF funded intervention. The applicant should think well about the timeframe in relation to the results to be assessed. For example, if a result examined is supposed to materialise one year after an individual leaves a training, then only individuals who left the intervention one year or more before the time of data collection on result measures should be taken into account. The proposal should specify the number of participants who can reasonably be examined.

**Describe the CIE method that will be employed:** there are four main methods: difference-in-differences (DiD), regression discontinuity design (RDD), instrumental variables (IV) and propensity score matching (PSM). It might prove beneficial to combine, in certain circumstances, the DiD and PSM approaches. The assignment rules to the intervention and the type of data available will largely drive the choice of the evaluation method to be used and hence how the control group will be identified. The control group must be constructed in such a way that it is equivalent to the treatment group on average in all important aspects, both in observable and unobservable dimensions, except that it was not exposed to the intervention. In other words, the control group informs on what would have happened to the members of the group subject to the intervention if they had not been exposed to it.

**Present the data sources, their accessibility and their content:** CIE requires micro-data – that is data which contains observations on individuals in both treatment and control groups. There are three main types of data required: treatment and control group records; result records; and contextual data. These data may come from separate data sources (monitoring system, administrative registers, existing and/or endline survey data) or from the same data source. The sources need to be structured to form analytical datasets (or analytical samples) that are used to estimate impacts.

For example, it might be possible to identify the eligible population, the participants and the eligible non-participants to the intervention using administrative data (e.g. unemployment or public employment office records) and to merge these data with endline survey of participants and non-participants. The administrative data will often also contain information on some personal characteristics of the eligible units, participants and non-participants to the intervention (gender, age, previous labour market status, etc). In that particular example, the endline survey should contain information on the results of interest (it might also contain retrospective information if there is a lack of available indicators in the administrative data). The applicant must keep in mind that, according to the CIE method employed, different types of data might be required. A propensity score approach implies to be able to collect substantial information on the personal characteristics of treated and non-treated units. In addition, it is also usually necessary to merge the information on the control and treated groups with some contextual data such as the local labour market characteristics (local unemployment rates or measures of labour market tightness, etc.).



The proposal should identify the different data registers and ways, procedures and time necessary to access the data. If preliminary agreements have been found with the holders of data registers, this should be mentioned.

**Further methodological issues:** The applicant should point out any possible methodological or practical difficulties which may be encountered in the evaluation and suggest possible ways of dealing with them.

#### **d) Expected results and their use**

The expected results of the CIE (meaning of the whole evaluation process and the evaluation findings) and its deliverables should be described. Their use and dissemination, including the identification of targeted audience, should be outlined.

#### **e) Project management**

The proposal should explain how the evaluation is to be organised in terms of involved organisations, expertise and the repartition of responsibilities.

The evaluation can be entirely carried out internally by the applicant or it could partly be performed externally by another public body and/or private company (or a consortium of private companies).

The proposal should identify the expertise proposed for this evaluation, including previous experience with ESF and Structural Funds evaluation, with particular attention to statistical expertise.

As outlined in section 3, JRC can assist the chosen MS methodologically. The proposal should therefore indicatively identify particular fields in which this methodological support will be requested.

Organisation of the work of the team, including the identification of responsibilities of the different experts (and possibly organisations) involved, should be clearly spelt out. Particular attention should be paid to coordination tasks when several organisations are involved.

#### **f) Arrangement for monitoring/supervision of the operation and risks involved in its implementation**

The applicant should explain how the project will be monitored. The applicant should refer to any risks involved in its implementation, how they might affect the objectives and results of the action and how they could be mitigated.

#### **g) Sustainability of the project's achievements**

The applicant should explain how sustainability will be secured once the project has been completed. This can include considerations about different dimensions of sustainability: financial, economic, institutional (structures which would allow the results of the project to continue), environmental, policy, etc. (where applicable, depending on the provisions of the basic act).