
Specifications – Invitation to Tender VT/2007/0015

**PEER REVIEW IN SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION AND
ASSESSMENT IN SOCIAL INCLUSION**

1. TITLE OF THE CONTRACT

**Peer Review in Social Protection and Social Inclusion and Assessment in
Social Inclusion**

VT/2007/0015

Prior Information notice N° 2007/S 59*071943 of 24/03/2007

Contract notice n°

2. BACKGROUND

The European Commission's Social Agenda (2005-2010) set out promoting more and better jobs and offering equal opportunities for all as its overall goal. The implementation of the Social Agenda relies on a combination of instruments comprising EU legislation, the so-called open method of coordination, as well as financial support, mainly from the European Social Fund, but also from Community programmes.¹

In the period up to 2006, two distinct Community programmes supported the open method of coordination in the employment and social inclusion/social protection fields. Two further Community programmes backed up the promotion of gender equality and the non-discrimination principle. In addition, separate interventions addressed the promotion of labour law including health and safety regulations.

With a view to greater coherence and simplification in the way Community programmes are delivered, the Commission proposed for the 2007-2013 period that all these separate programmes be integrated into one framework programme, PROGRESS.

Decision n°1672/2006 establishing a Community programme for employment and social solidarity – PROGRESS was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council on 24 October and published in the Official Journal on 15 November 2006.²

¹ For information on the Social Agenda see:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_policy_agenda/social_pol_ag_en.html

for general information on EU employment and social policy and related Community programmes in the 2000-2006 period, see: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/index_en.html

² Official Journal L 315 of 15.11.2006, p. 1–8

The overall aim of PROGRESS³ is to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in employment, social affairs and equal opportunities, as set out in the Social Agenda. It will thereby also contribute to the achievement of the EU 'Lisbon' Growth and Jobs Strategy.⁴

It aims at supporting the core functions of the European Community towards fulfilling its Treaty-delegated tasks and powers in its respective areas of competence in the employment and social sphere. It will support initiatives aimed at reinforcing the role of the Community in proposing EU strategies; implementing and following-up EU objectives and their translations into national policies; transposing and following-up of EU legislation's application in a coherent way through Europe; promoting the co-operation and co-ordination mechanisms between Member States and cooperating with social partners and organisations that represent civil society.

More specifically, PROGRESS will support:

- (1) the implementation of the European Employment Strategy (section 1);
- (2) the implementation of the open method of coordination in the field of social protection and inclusion (section 2);
- (3) the improvement of the working environment and conditions including health and safety at work and reconciling work and family life (section 3);
- (4) the effective implementation of the principle of non-discrimination and promotion of its mainstreaming in all EU policies (section 4);
- (5) the effective implementation of the principle of gender equality and promotion of its mainstreaming in all EU policies (section 5).

Section 2 of the Programme shall support the implementation of the open method of coordination (OMC) in the field of social protection and inclusion by:

- a) improving the understanding of social exclusion and poverty issues, social protection and inclusion policies, in particular through analysis and studies and the development of statistics and common indicators, within the framework of the OMC in the field of social protection and inclusion;
- b) monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the OMC in the field of social protection and inclusion and its impact at national and Community level as well as analyzing the interaction between this OMC and other policy areas;
- c) organizing exchanges on policies, good practice and innovative approaches and promoting mutual learning in the context of the social protection and inclusion strategy;

³ For a detailed account of the activities that will be put in place or promoted under PROGRESS, please visit the preliminary PROGRESS website at:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_en.html

⁴ On the Growth and Jobs Strategy see: http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/index_en.htm

- d) raising awareness, disseminating information and promoting the debate about the key challenges and policy issues raised in the context of the Community coordination process in the field of social protection and inclusion, including among the social partners, regional and local actors, NGOs and other stakeholders;
- e) developing the capacity of key European level networks to support and further develop Community policy goals and strategies on social protection and inclusion;

The Commission is responsible for implementing the Programme under the supervision of a Programme Committee made up of national representatives.

In order to assist the Commission services and the Member States in carrying out a voluntary mutual learning process through a peer review methodology, the Commission manages a **Peer Review sub-programme**. This activity contributes to the dissemination and identification of good practice on the basis of a systematic exchange of experiences and evaluation of policies, actions, or institutional arrangements taking place in seminars hosted by individual Member States.

In order to assist the Commission in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the National Action Plans on Inclusion (NAPsIncl), i.e. the social inclusion section of the National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion, in accordance with the Common Objectives for the integrated Open Method of Coordination on Social Protection and Social Inclusion⁵ adopted by the March 2006 European Council, the Commission also manages an **Assessment sub-programme**. In the context of this sub-programme a **Network of Independent Social Inclusion Experts** was set up, which, at the start of 2007 covered all 27 Member States and one Candidate Country, Turkey. The members of the network have produced a series of reports on the implementation of the NAPs/inclusion as well as on new policy developments or key trends. They work bilaterally with DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities on other related issues.

Both activities have been carried out for several years on the basis of contracts for services. The current contract will end in February 2008.

Therefore, the Commission is launching a new open call for tender to assist it in the management of these two closely related activities, the Peer Reviews on Social Protection and Social Inclusion and the network of independent experts on Social Inclusion.

3. SUBJECT OF THE CONTRACT

The subject of the contract is to provide support services to the Commission for the joint management of the Peer Reviews and the Network of Independent Experts in the field of social inclusion, integrated in one single Service Contract: 'Peer Review in Social Protection and Social Inclusion and Assessment in Social Inclusion'.

Synergies between these two activities should be actively exploited, particularly in terms of the identification of priority topics for analysis, dissemination of results and composition of the team of experts for the network and for the Peer review seminars. The 'Peer Review' and 'Network' Core Teams (see below) should work closely together on social inclusion issues.

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/objectives_en.htm

The **Peer Review in Social Protection and Social Inclusion sub-programme** is a mutual learning process involving the scrutiny of specific policies, programmes or institutional arrangements on the basis of proposals volunteered by Member States.

The sub-programme consists of a series of peer review sessions, in which host countries:

- either present policies which have great potential for dissemination, in view of their particularly good results and their general interest for the Union (good practice);
- or invite other countries in order to gather expert advice to inform the process of preparation of a major policy reform or new programme or institutional arrangement.

The experience of the host country is confronted with the comments and critical analysis of peer countries. The programme started in 2004 and has been assessed by Member States as a valuable tool for mutual learning.

The aim of the peer review programme is to encourage the dissemination of good practice across Member States by assessing the effectiveness of key policies or institutions. It can serve as a useful tool to Member States, including authorities at local and regional level, to help them in the design and implementation of more effective policies. It should also contribute to the dialogue with stakeholders such as NGOs, service providers and social partners and where appropriate, people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

Peer Review support services are to be delivered by the contractor through a coordinating team (hereafter the Peer Review Core Team) that includes members with social protection/social inclusion expertise, and that is assisted by thematic experts working under its responsibility in the context of the seminars. The contractor will prepare and organize Peer Reviews, in accordance with a work plan and calendar agreed with the Commission (the Commission will consult with representatives from the Member States) and will develop and implement a communication strategy aimed at ensuring timely documentation and broad and effective dissemination of the findings of the reviews.

In the context of the **Assessment in Social Inclusion sub-programme**, the **Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion** shall assist the Commission by providing independent:

- Information and expert assessment on any significant development in the socio-economic or political context and in the legislative framework;
- Analyses of the actual implementation of National Action Plans for social inclusion at both national and local level, including governance aspects.

Budgetary allocations that are relevant to the fight against social exclusion should also be taken in due consideration and should be reported upon.

Assessing the interlinkages between the activities carried out in the framework of the Open Method of Coordination for Social Protection and Social Inclusion and the implementation of the revised Lisbon strategy will be an integral part of the experts' tasks.

The support services to the network of independent social inclusion experts are to be delivered by the contractor through the Network Core Team that includes members

with social inclusion expertise, assisted by the social inclusion experts, working under its responsibility and in close contact with the geographical desks of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. The Network Core Team will steer and coordinate the activities of the network of the independent social inclusion experts, liaise with the Commission, and process their contributions into regular reports for publication or just for the Commission, as appropriate. The reports for publication (see below) will be made available in the context of the communication strategy mentioned above.

Exchange of information and collaboration with other groups of experts under Progress (European Network of Legal Experts in the field of gender equality, Group of experts on Gender, Social Inclusion and Employment, European Network of Legal Experts in the non-discrimination field and European Employment Observatory Networks) and with the Network of Independent Experts on Fundamental Rights (DG Justice, Freedom and Security) should be developed. Further information about the work of these networks can be found on:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equ_opp/rights/experts_en.html

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/gender_equality/gender_mainstreaming/gender/exp_group_en.html

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/fundamental_rights/policy/aneval/legnet_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/employment_analysis/observatory_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/cfr_cdf/index_en.htm

4. PARTICIPATION

Please note that:

The competition is open to any natural person or legal entity coming within the scope of the Treaties and any other natural person or legal entity from a third country which has concluded with the Communities a specific agreement in the area of public contracts, under the conditions provided for in that agreement.

Where the Multilateral Agreement on Public Contracts concluded within the framework of the WTO applies, the contracts are also open to nationals of States that have ratified this Agreement, under the conditions provided for therein. It should be noted that research and development services, which come under category 8 of Annex II A of Directive 2004/18/CE, are not covered by this Agreement.

In practice, the participation of applicants from third countries that have concluded a bilateral or multilateral agreement with the Communities in the area of public contracts must be allowed, under the conditions provided for in that agreement. Bids submitted by applicants from third countries that have not concluded such an agreement may be accepted, but may also be rejected

5. TASKS TO BE CARRIED OUT BY THE CONTRACTOR

5.1. HORIZONTAL TASKS AND SPECIFICATIONS

5.1.1. GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

The contract will cover the 27 Member States. EFTA/EEA countries (i.e. Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein) in accordance with the conditions established in the EEA Agreement; the candidate countries associated to the EU (Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey), as well as the Western Balkan countries included in the stabilisation and association process, may join the PROGRESS Programme upon negotiating Memoranda of Understanding. If, during the contract period, some of these countries start to participate in the Programme, an extension of the contract will be made by negotiated procedure according to Article 126(1)(f) of Commission Regulation n° 2342/2002 (EC, Euratom) laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities⁶.

Bidders are requested to foresee experts for 27 Member States, Croatia, Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and take account of these countries in their tender and financial offer.

5.1.2. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

In view of the importance of effectively disseminating the lessons learned in the context of both the peer review and the assessment part of this contract to a wide audience the contractor should develop and implement a communication strategy. In the context of this strategy the web site and the newsletter are important instruments.

5.1.2.1. WEB SITE

The contractor will maintain a public website in English, German and French with outputs of the activities conducted in the framework of the Peer Reviews and the Network of Independent Experts. The website will contain extensive links to relevant national and Commission websites.

Such a website is already available (<http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.net>). The contractor will be requested to host the existing website at the same address.

The 'peer-review-social-inclusion.net' domain and rights will have to be transferred from the existing contractor to the new contractor at the new contractor's expenses. The 'peer-review-social-inclusion.eu' domain will have to be booked for 3 years at the new contractor's expenses and the domain-address will have to be redirected.

On the site it should be stated clearly that DG EMPL is associated to the site, without having responsibilities with regard to the information disseminated.

⁶ Official Journal L 357 of 31/12/2002

In order to revamp and facilitate a future porting to the EUROPA data centre or to a future contactor, the contractor will document, review or enhance:

- The layout and the presentation of the site. The contractor, based on the [Europa IPG guidelines](#) and a communication brief by DG EMPL, will have to provide at least 3 design-layout proposals in order to decide on the updated "look and feel" of the Site. The contractor will then implement the changes in the site;
- The programming code of the application and database schema;
- The Technical Design Document;
- The User manual (front end-graphical guidelines);
- The User manual (content management tool);
- Transfer the domain and rights above mentioned to the next contractor or to the Commission.

5.1.2.2. NEWSLETTER

The contractor will prepare and circulate a Flash Report in English, in the form of a bi-monthly electronic newsletter (approx. 4 pages of articles), a digest of noteworthy developments in national social inclusion policies, based on elements of the peer reviews, the experts' reports and further ad hoc optional inputs from national experts. Decisions about the format, content and the circulation of the newsletter will be taken in agreement with the Commission.

The newsletter should respect the requirements laid out under paragraph 7 concerning the mention of EU financing and reference to the Programme.

5.1.3. QUALITY CONTROL AND ASSESSMENT

Through the Peer Review and Network Core Teams the contractor will ensure the high quality of the activities undertaken and the reports produced. The contractor is requested to carry out an annual evaluation of the activities focusing on:

- The impact of the Peer Reviews on the national (and/or the sub-national, where appropriate) and the European level assessed through surveys, to be conducted a few months after the Peer Review seminars;
- The organisation of the activities;
- The quality and pertinence (in particular alignment with the guidelines) of the work produced by the Network in relation to the Commission activities;
- The effectiveness of the communication strategy with regard to the results of the activities carried out in the framework of the contract;

- The synergies between the two strands of the contract: the Peer Reviews and the Assessment (Network of Independent Experts) sub-programmes.

5.1.4. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The PROGRESS Programme aimed at promoting gender mainstreaming in all its five policy sections and commissioned or supported activities. Consequently, the Contractor will take the necessary steps to ensure that its proposed team and/or staff respects the gender balance at all levels. It will also pay due attention when appropriate to the gender dimension of the service he is asked to deliver as detailed in the description of tasks.

Equally, needs of disabled people shall be duly acknowledged and met while executing the requested service. This will in particular entail that where the Contractor organises training sessions, conference, issues publications or develops dedicated websites, people with disabilities have equal access to the facilities or the services provided.

Finally, the Contracting Authority encourages the Contractor to promote equal employment opportunities for all its staff and team. This entails that the Contractor shall foster an appropriate mix of people, whatever their ethnic origin, religions, age, and ability.

The Contractor will be required to detail in its activity report accompanying the request for the final instalment the steps and achievements it made towards meeting these contractual provisions.

5.2. PEER REVIEWS IN SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

A peer review is an event where a country (host country) presents a policy or institutional arrangement (good practice) or a policy reform to a selected group of decision-makers and experts from other countries (peer countries), stakeholders' representatives and European Commission officials. Host countries can also consider the peer review seminars as an opportunity to gather expert advice from other countries in order to inform the process of preparation of a major policy reform in the field of social inclusion, pensions, healthcare or long term care (or new programme or institutional arrangement). It allows for an open discussion on social protection and social inclusion policies.

The review may involve local visits to institutions active in the delivery of policies, workshops, interviews with those responsible for local implementation, analysis of evaluation studies etc. Such visits may also allow for direct contact with the persons targeted by the policy in question.

The aim of the Peer Reviews is to:

- contribute to a better understanding of the Member States' policies, as laid down in their National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion and of their impact;

- improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the policies and the strategies for social inclusion, pensions, healthcare and long term care in present and future Member States and at EU level, by learning from the experiences in the Member State;
- facilitate the transfer of key components of policies, or of institutional arrangements, which have proved effective in their original context and are relevant to other contexts.

The contractor will be responsible for the organisation of the Peer Review meetings in cooperation with the Commission and the participating countries, especially the host country. This includes:

- the identification, liaison, preparation and support of the policy experts in social inclusion, pensions, healthcare or long term care for each of the reviewed policy themes or practices;
- the preparation of the agenda;
- the organisation of the seminars and visits, including the logistic support;
- the co-ordination and dissemination of the input from the experts prior to the seminars and meetings;
- the provision of a complete logistical support for the participants;
- the management of travel and accommodation costs of participants;
- the facilitation of the seminars;
- the production and publication of reports from the seminars, highlighting key, potentially transferable, lessons and demonstrated mutual learning impact;
- the liaison with the Commission officials involved in the programme;
- the ongoing evaluation of the methodological aspects and of the results of the programme.

5.2.1. Seminars

Between 8 and 10 seminars, each of 1,5 days, are expected to take place during each year.

Each Peer review seminar will typically involve:

- a) One or more representatives from the host country;
- b) One representative from each peer country. The number of participating 'peer' countries may vary, also depending on the type of the review, but it should be comprised between four and ten;

- c) One independent expert in the domain of the peer review (social inclusion, pensions, healthcare, long term care) to assist each representative, both from the host and the peer countries;
- d) The member of the independent social inclusion experts network in the host country;
- e) One thematic expert to present a key note on the policy under review, setting it in a broader comparative European context and helping to draw policy relevant conclusions;
- f) Two or three European Commission officials: they will support the chairperson in steering the discussions, clarify any policy question related to the EU, and deal with administrative issues;
- g) Representatives of relevant stakeholders: two representatives of European NGOs or other stakeholder organisations and possibly one or two representatives of national stakeholders from the host country expressing the viewpoints of the beneficiaries or other important actors involved;
- h) One or two representatives of the Peer Review Core Team responsible for the smooth implementation of the Peer Review process and prepared to assist the chairperson with the facilitation of the meeting;
- i) A professional journalist and editor for the documentation of the meeting and the discussions.

In addition to the Peer Review Core Team involved in the organisation, the contractor is expected to hire the experts mentioned under d), e) and i) and to pay for their fees.

In the selection of the experts, maximum synergy with the network of independent experts should be achieved, in particular for peer reviews concerning social inclusion. However, it is possible to invite experts who are not members of the network, especially for the specialized role of thematic expert.

The seminars are to be held in the meeting premises provided by the host country. Most host countries organise at least one meal for the participants to the Peer review.

The contractor will be in charge of the organisation and payment of travel, accommodation and meals (other than foreseen by the host country, see above) for all participants with the exception of Commission staff (taking account of 10 seminars and an average number of participants entitled to reimbursement of costs of 25 persons).

5.2.2. The thematic independent expert in the Peer review

In each Peer Review seminar the thematic independent expert mentioned above will bring a European comparative perspective on the specific topic of the review drawn. She/he will carry out the following tasks:

- prepare a "comments and questions" paper on the selected good practice (or policy reform) focusing on evaluation results, bringing

European comparative aspects and presenting the main questions to be addressed;

- analyse and synthesise the comment papers of the peer countries;
- assist the Peer Review Core Team of the consultant organisation in cooperation with the host country and the Commission with the preparation of the meeting and the agenda;
- give a short presentation at the meeting with a focus on evaluating or monitoring results and European comparisons, and with a synthesis of key questions to be addressed during the meeting;
- participate actively in the review discussions;
- draft the summary (short report) of the review;
- amend, if necessary, the discussion paper following the meeting;
- draft a synthesis report in English, to be published on the Commission web-site.

Other experts will contribute to the preparation of the Peer reviews by presenting discussion or opinion papers: host country experts, peer countries' experts, European stakeholders' organisations representatives ("experts" from European social NGO networks, European regional or/and local authorities networks or social partners European networks). Their participation will be coordinated by the contractor but the contractor will not have to pay fees for them.

5.2.3. Documentation and dissemination

Summaries, reports and expert papers should be prepared by the contractor and disseminated in English on the Peer review web-site and a copy of the final version should be sent to the Commission in a ready-to-publish format.

In addition, the synthesis report (see below) shall be made available in English, French, German and the language of the host country and it shall be printed (300 copies for English, 100 for French, 100 for German and 100 for the language of the host country if different). Printed publications will be sent to the Commission address in Brussels and directly to participants in Peer reviews and stakeholders.

5.2.3.1. Papers to be produced ahead of a Peer review

- Short presentation of the good practice (or of the planned policy reform) by the host country;
- Thematic expert discussion paper;
- Peer country comment papers;
- Stakeholders comment papers.

The contractor will only be in charge of drafting the thematic expert discussion paper. Other documents will be prepared by participants to the Peer Review but the contractor will be responsible for their coordination and timely dissemination.

5.2.3.2. **Papers to be produced following a Peer Review:**

- Summary (short report);
- Minutes;
- Synthesis report.

The contractor will be responsible for the drafting of all these documents. They shall be finalised shortly after the event so that the results can feed into subsequent discussions. They shall be made available electronically on the Peer review website after approval by the Commission.

5.2.3.3. **After completion of each annual programme of Peer Reviews**

- Annual activity report

The contractor will summarise the activities in a document that will include an assessment of the practical arrangements and the methodology(ies) used, with a view to possible adaptation in the following year of the exercise. The annual activity report will be presented to the Programme Committee and to the Social Protection Committee.

- Annual results report

The main conclusions of the peer reviews and the lessons learned about the transferability of the measures reviewed to the participating countries will be summarised in a report that is to be widely distributed. The annual results report will be presented to the Social Protection Committee and could also be presented at public conferences (e.g. the Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion).

5.3. ASSESSMENT IN SOCIAL INCLUSION: THE NETWORK OF INDEPENDENT EXPERTS

The Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion is made up of at least one independent expert per participating country. At the time of the tender, participating countries shall include: 27 Member States, Croatia, Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. If, for one country, several experts participate in the network, one of them should have the overall responsibility. (See: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/naps_rep_en.htm)

The contractor is responsible for the selection of the experts and will coordinate the activities of the network. The contractor will liaise with the Commission. The annual work programme, the reporting guidelines and deadlines will all have to be agreed with Commission. The contractor will process the experts' contributions into regular reports for the Commission, ensuring quality. The Commission will be consulted on the reports.

The independent social inclusion experts should maintain access to all relevant public documentation at national level and provide regular information covering both labour market and social policy developments, as well as socio-economic trends.

Their contributions will take the form of:

- general periodic reviews on their respective countries,
- cross-country thematic reviews,
- surveys of innovative practices,
- independent policy assessments.

The Commission will facilitate the access of the Experts to contact points in the national ministries and other key partners. It will also keep the Network Core Team informed about relevant developments in EU policy, in particular with regard to social inclusion and social protection issues.

The Network Core Team should take stock of the work carried out by the existing network, and the considerable experience already gathered. In particular, it should take into account the code of conduct adopted by the network in February 2005 (http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/docs/codeofconduct_en.pdf).

The Commission can provide access to a secured communication tool for the experts (Circa) allowing exchange of information and documents as well as discussion forum, if the contractor wishes to use it.

5.3.1. Semester reports

Twice a year, the independent social inclusion experts will provide a report on their respective countries. The timing of these reports is to be agreed with the Commission. The reports will contain:

- an update on national trends and policy developments which are deemed relevant in the context of the EU policy coordination process on social inclusion;
- an assessment of the development of the interlinkages between the OMC on Social Protection and Social Inclusion and the Lisbon reform programmes;
- reporting on the involvement of relevant stakeholders in the social inclusion process and on other key governance issues identified in the guidelines;
- an assessment of how the Member State progresses with regard to the challenges identified;

Furthermore:

- One of these reports will in particular assess the national Lisbon reform programmes from the angle of social inclusion (feeding-in / feeding-out process);
- For some of these reports the Commission will ask for a complementary analysis of a specific topic of interest across the Union or in one or several Member States.

The reports will be based on a wide set of sources, such as official policy communications, statistics, studies and surveys in the public domain, interviews with relevant actors, press information etc.

The reports will be provided in EN with an approximate length of 30 pages (plus annexes) per country. The contractor will ensure that the Commission's

requirements are respected, in a harmonised way, in the national reports, and transmit them to the Commission.

Before submitting their semester reports, experts can be requested to prepare a 1-2 pages flash report in order to provide the Commission with very timely key information.

On the basis of each semester report, the Network Core Team will produce a synthesis report in EN.

After consultation with the Member States to be carried out by the Commission, some of the reports may be published on the website.

5.3.2. Annual national report assessment for the Commission

The experts will carry out an annual independent assessment of the national reports or action plans on social inclusion submitted by their respective Member State. For candidate and EEA countries, an assessment of an equivalent policy document (e.g. the follow-up report for the "Joint Inclusion Memorandum") will be carried out.

Each report should allow the Commission to assess:

- how the Member States and participating countries' social inclusion policies are tackling the key challenges with regard to the overall objectives of the OMC on Social Protection and Social Inclusion and in particular as concerns the specific social inclusion objectives;
- how the measured performance in terms of social inclusion is progressing in relation to national and/or European targets.

It should also confront the content of the National Action Plans with relevant non-official views and also allow the Commission to assess to what extent the policy approaches taken by the Member States support the Lisbon efforts in terms of employment growth and to what extent feeding-in and feeding-out is working.

The Commission may request additional specifications in order to reflect priorities agreed with the Social Protection Committee.

The reports will be provided in EN with an approximate length of 20 to 30 pages per country (to be determined in the guidelines). As in the case of the semester reports, the contractor will ensure that the Commission's requirements are respected, in a harmonised way, in the reports, and transmit them to the Commission.

It is expected that the independent experts will submit their draft assessment of the national reports or action plans within three weeks after the Commission sends them to the Network Core Team, which is responsible for their distribution and for the coordination of work.

Before submitting their full assessment reports, experts can be requested to prepare a 1-2 pages flash report in order to provide the Commission with very timely key information.

The Network Core Team will come up with the draft global conclusions (a synthesis report in EN) four weeks after the submission of the national reports or action plans.

5.3.3. Ad hoc requests

Independent social inclusion experts may be called to assist the Commission with short-term research and information, complementing the information presented in the semester or national report assessment reports or to participate or make specialist presentations at seminars or conferences. The Commission will channel these requests through the Network Core Team.

For each expert 10 working days per year and travel costs for two conferences shall be foreseen for this task.

Expert services delivered for the peer reviews are not included in these 10 days.

Ad hoc requests of a horizontal nature may also be addressed to the experts of the Network Core Team. A provision of 10 working days should be foreseen in the financial offer.

5.3.4. Meetings

The Network Core Team will organise two one-day meetings per year in Brussels with the whole network in order to discuss the results achieved over the closing semester and the detailed specifications of the work for the next semester. The contractor will invite all independent social inclusion experts, prepare together with the Commission the agenda, working documents (inter alia draft outlines for the reporting) as well as minutes. Both meetings will be held in English without interpretation. On the same occasion, it is expected that experts and Commission's desk officers will meet bilaterally. The meetings will take place in Brussels. Meeting rooms, accommodation, travel and subsistence costs for participating experts will be organised and paid for by the contractor.

In addition, the contractor will organise in one of the Member States a two-day annual seminar of the Network of the Independent Social Inclusion Experts which should be dedicated mainly to cross cutting issues and methodological questions. Staff of Commission services will attend this seminar. The contractor will be in charge of all the expenses for this seminar, except the travel and subsistence costs for Commission staff.

Independent social inclusion experts should also envisage being asked to participate or make specialist presentations at seminars or conferences (see details in paragraph 5.3.3 above).

6. PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

See Annex IV of the draft contract, experts' CVs.

Additional requirements: see paragraph "Selection criteria".

7. TIME SCHEDULE AND REPORTING

See Article I.2 Annex I of the draft contract “Tender Specifications and Monitoring”.

Additional requirements (specific deadlines for the performance of tasks):

7.1. TIME SCHEDULE

The contract will have a duration of 12 months starting on 1st March 2008. It may be renewed 3 times.

7.2. INTERIM AND FINAL REPORTING

In addition to the specific reports required by each specific task, as mentioned above,

- an interim report to be submitted during the sixth month of execution of the contract. It shall indicate the state of play of the different activities covered by the contract;
- a final report to be submitted at the end of the contract period.

Both reports should be submitted in English and include, for the time period concerned:

- a complete description of the work done;
- a presentation of the results obtained;
- an assessment of the activities and recommendations to improve management procedures;
- any comments, suggestions or recommendations judged useful or necessary by the Contractor.

Additional requirements:

As a matter of principle, with a view to favouring appropriate monitoring and valorisation by the European Commission of all results obtained and outputs delivered under PROGRESS programme, the Contractor will be required to provide for each of the tasks required under the present Call:

- Presentation of their key points in one page. Key points should be concise, sharp and easily understandable. They shall be provided in English, French and German. Other Community languages would be welcome even if not compulsory.

In accordance with the General conditions, the Contractor is under the obligation to acknowledge that the present service is delivered on behalf of the Community in all documents and media produced, in particular final delivered outputs, related reports, brochures, press releases, videos, software, etc, including at conferences or seminars, as follows.

"This (publication, conference ...) is financed by the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007-2013). This programme was established to support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment and social affairs area, as set out in the

Social Agenda, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy goals in these fields.

The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

The Programme has six general objectives. These are:

(1) to improve the knowledge and understanding of the situation prevailing in the Member States (and in other participating countries) through analysis, evaluation and close monitoring of policies;

(2) to support the development of statistical tools and methods and common indicators, where appropriate broken down by gender and age group, in the areas covered by the programme;

(3) to support and monitor the implementation of Community law, where applicable, and policy objectives in the Member States, and assess their effectiveness and impact;

(4) to promote networking, mutual learning, identification and dissemination of good practice and innovative approaches at EU level;

(5) to enhance the awareness of the stakeholders and the general public about the EU policies and objectives pursued under each of the policy sections;

(6) to boost the capacity of key EU networks to promote, support and further develop EU policies and objectives, where applicable.

For more information see:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_en.html

Every publication or related material developed under the present service contract will also have to comply with the rules of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities concerning the layout, logos, disclaimers and other legal mentions.

Failure by the contractor to respect these obligations could lead the European Commission to reduce by 5% the final amount to be paid under the present service contract.

8. PAYMENTS AND STANDARD CONTRACT

According to Article I.4. of the draft contract:

"Payments under the Contract shall be made in accordance with Article II.4 [of the draft contract]. Payments shall be executed only if the Contractor has fulfilled all his contractual obligations by the date on which the invoice is submitted. Payment requests may not be made if payments for previous periods have not been executed as a result of default of negligence on the part of the Contractor.

1.4.1. Pre-financing

Following signature of the Contract by the last contracting party, within 30 days of the receipt by the Commission of a request for pre-financing with a relevant invoice, a pre-financing payment equal to 30% of the total amount referred to in Article I.3.1 [of the draft contract] shall be made.

If the prefinancing payment exceeds €150,000, a financial guarantee will be required.

1.4.2. Interim payment

The request for interim payment of the Contractor shall be admissible if accompanied by:

– the Interim technical report in accordance with the instructions laid down in Annex I [of the draft contract],

– the relevant invoices,

provided the report has been approved by the Commission.

The Commission shall have 45 days from receipt to approve or reject the report, and the Contractor shall have 30 days in which to submit additional information or a new report.

Within 30 days of the date on which the report is approved by the Commission, an interim payment corresponding to the relevant invoices, up to maximum 40% of the total amount referred to in Article I.3.1[of the draft contract], shall be made.

1.4.3. Payment of the balance

The request for payment of the balance of the Contractor shall be admissible if accompanied by:

– the final technical report in accordance with the instructions laid down in Annex I [of the draft contract],

– the relevant invoices,

provided the report has been approved by the Commission.

The Commission shall have 45 days from receipt to approve or reject the report, and the Contractor shall have 30 days in which to submit additional information or a new report.

Within 30 days of the date on which the report is approved by the Commission, payment of the balance of the total amount referred to in Article I.3.1[of the draft contract] shall be made.

1.4.4. Performance guarantee

Not applicable.

In drawing up the bid, the tenderer should take into account the provisions of the standard contract comprising the "General terms and conditions applicable to service contracts".

See also paragraph 13.1 "Financial capacity".

9. DISPOSITIONS CONCERNING THE PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA

9.1. Processing of the personal data of the contractor

- ". Any personal data included in the Contract shall 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. It shall be processed solely for the purposes of the performance, management and follow-up of the Contract by the Controller without prejudice to possible transmission to the bodies charged with a monitoring or inspection task in conformity with Community law. The Contractor shall have the right of access to his personal data and the right to rectify any such data that is inaccurate or incomplete. Should the Contractor have any queries concerning the processing of his personal data, he shall address them to the Controller. The Contractor shall have right of recourse at any time to the European Data Protection Supervisor.
- For the purpose of this contract, the "Controller" shall be the Head of the Unit in charge of this contract. Any queries concerning the processing of personal data of the Contractor can be addressed by e-mail to the Head of Unit by indicating the contract reference".

9.2. Processing of personal data on behalf of the Commission

- When processing personal data on behalf of the "Controller", in the performance of the Contract, the Contractor
 - 1) shall act only on instructions from the "Controller";
 - 2) shall comply with the obligations set out in Articles 21 and 22 of Regulation (EC) N° 45/2001 on the confidentiality and the security of processing unless, by virtue of Article 16 or Article 17(3), second indent, of Directive 95/46/EC, the Contractor is already subject to obligations with regard to confidentiality and security laid down in the national law of one of the Member States. Appropriate technical and organisational measures will be taken by the Contractor for the security of the processing in accordance with Article 22 of Regulation (EC) N° 45/2001 and will have to be agreed between the Contractor and the "Controller" in writing or in another equivalent form.
- The Contractor shall comply with Council Regulation (Euratom, EEC) N° 1588/90 of 11 June 1990 on the transmission of data subject to statistical confidentiality to the Statistical Office of the European Communities (OJ No L151, 15.6.1990, p. 1)".

10. PRICES

Under the terms of Articles 3 and 4 of the Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the European Communities, the latter are exempt from all charges, taxes and duties, including value added tax; such charges may not therefore be included in the calculation of the price quoted. The amount of VAT is to be indicated separately.

The price must be stated in EUR(€), net of VAT (using, where appropriate, the conversion rates published in the C series of the Official Journal of the European

Union on the day when the invitation to tender was issued), and broken down according to the model in Annex III included in the attached standard contract.

No maximum price is specified.

The financial offer must cover one year (March 2008-February 2009) and be presented in a way that allows identification of the nature and details of costs (number of items, unit prices etc).

Part A: Professional fees and direct costs

- Fees, expressed as the number of person-days multiplied by the unit price per working day for each expert proposed (including the days of participation in meetings / seminars).
- Direct costs include
 - Travel expenses of the contractor's staff;
 - Travel and subsistence costs for participants in Peer reviews;
 - Travel and subsistence costs of the Network of Independent Experts;
 - Costs related to the meetings of the Network of Independent Experts;
 - Reporting expenses;
 - Translation and printing;
 - Shipping of documents;
 - Documentation;
 - Development and updating of the Website;
 - Costs related to quality control and assessment;
 - Any unavoidable expenses necessary to the achievement of the Contract.

Part B: Reimbursable expenses

- Contingencies, if any (maximum 3 % of part A)

Contingencies are subject to prior approval by the Commission.

Total price= Part A + Part B

It must be noted that, in case some activities would not take place, the final price of the contract would be decreased accordingly. Therefore a detailed budget identifying each task must be provided

11. COMPOSITION OF A PARTNERSHIP OR CONSORTIUM

Tenders can be submitted by groupings of service providers/suppliers who will not be required to adopt a particular legal form prior to the contract being awarded, but may be required to do so after the award if this formulation is necessary for the good execution of the contract⁷. However, a grouping of firms

⁷ These entities can take the form of an entity with or without legal personality but offering sufficient protection of the Commission's contractual interests (depending on the Member State concerned, this may be, for example, a consortium or a temporary association).

must nominate one party to be responsible for the receipt and processing of payments for members of the grouping, for managing the service administration, and for coordination. The documents required and listed in the following paragraphs "Exclusion criteria and supporting documents" and "Selection criteria" must be supplied by every member of the grouping.

Each member of the grouping assumes a joint and several liability towards the Commission.

12. EXCLUSION CRITERIA AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

1) Bidders must provide a declaration on their honour, duly signed and dated, that they are not in one of the situations referred to in Article 93 and 94 a) of the Financial Regulation

Those articles are as follows:

Article 93:

Applicants or tenderers shall be excluded if:

- a) *they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;*
- b) *they have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgement which has the force of res judicata;*
- c) *they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the contracting authority can justify;*
- d) *they have not fulfilled their obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the contracting authority or those of the country where the contract is to be performed;*
- e) *they have been the subject of a judgement which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation or any other illegal activity detrimental to the Communities' financial interests;*
- f) *following another procurement procedure or grant award procedure financed by the Community budget, they have been declared to be in*

The contract has to be signed by all members of the group, or by one of the members, which has been duly authorised by the other members of the grouping (a power of attorney or sufficient authorisation is to be attached to the contract), when the tenderers have not formed a legal entity.

serious breach of contract for failure to comply with their contractual obligations.

Article 94:

Contracts may not be awarded to candidates or tenderers who, during the procurement procedure:

a) are subject to a conflict of interest.

- 2) The tenderer to whom the contract is to be awarded shall provide, within a time limit defined by the contracting authority and preceding the signature of the contract, the evidence referred to in Article 134 of the implementing Rules⁸, confirming the declaration referred to in point 12.1) above**

Article 134 of the Implementation Arrangements – Supporting documents

- 1. The contracting authority shall accept, as satisfactory evidence that the candidate or tenderer is not in one of the situations described in points (a), (b) or (e) of Article 93 of the Financial Regulations, production of a recent extract from the judicial record or, failing that, a recent equivalent document issued by a judicial or administrative authority in the country of origin or provenance showing that these requirements are met.*
- 2. The contracting authority shall accept, as satisfactory evidence that the candidate or tenderer is not in the situation described in point (d) of Article 93 of the Financial Regulations, a recent certificate issued by the competent authority of the State concerned. Where no such document or certificate is issued in the country concerned, it may be replaced by a sworn or, failing that, a solemn statement made by the interested party before a judicial or administrative authority, a notary or a qualified professional body in his country of origin or provenance.*
- 3. Depending on the national legislation of the country in which the tenderer or applicant is established, the documents referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 above shall relate to legal entities and/or physical persons, including, where considered necessary by the awarding authority, company directors or any person with powers of representation, decision-making or control in relation to the tenderer.*

See Annex I (which may be used as a checklist) for the supporting documents accepted by the European Commission to be provided by applicants, tenderers or bidders.

- The contracting authority may waive the obligation of a candidate or tenderer to submit the documentary evidence referred to in Article 134 of the Implementing Rules,, if such evidence has already been**

⁸ Commission Regulation n° 2342/2002 (EC, Euratom) laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities - Official Journal L 357 of 31/12/2002

submitted to it for the purposes of another procurement procedure launched by DG EMPL and provided that the issuing date of the documents does not exceed one year and that they are still valid.

In such a case, the candidate or tenderer shall declare on his honour that the documentary evidence has already been provided in a previous procurement procedure and confirm that no changes in his situation have occurred.

13. SELECTION CRITERIA

The candidates will be selected on the basis of their financial and economic capacity and their technical capacity.

13.1. ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CAPACITY

In order for the Commission to determine the sound economic and financial capacity of an undertaking to execute this contract, the following must be provided:

- Proof of turnover in the last financial year at least equivalent to 100% of the price of the contract;
- Full set of financial statements (comprising at least a balance sheet and profit and loss account) for the last two financial years (or the annual budget of the last 2 years in the case of semi-public or non-profit organisations), where the tenderer is required by law to produce such statements. Where the relevant company law requires these financial statements to be audited, the audit's statement should be included. Where the tenderer is not required to produce full financial statements, other documents establishing financial capacity should be submitted (eg internal reports, management accounts, appropriate bankers' statements, evidence of professional risks indemnity insurance etc).

13.2. TECHNICAL CAPACITY:

- The senior members of the management team (or core team) should have
 - a high level of expertise in the field of social inclusion and social protection;
 - strong work experience in managing similar activities;
 - good organisational and coordination skills.
- The management team should show experience in similar activities, organisational capacity, good analytical and drafting capacity and in depth knowledge of the EU social inclusion process. They should have adequate coverage of working languages.

- The pool of experts proposed for the Network of Independent Experts should ensure an optimal coverage across the countries participating in the programme.
- Each expert should have a strong experience in the fields of policy analysis and assessment in social inclusion, a good knowledge of the national context in this respect and show ability to work in an international context.
- The experts should have no-conflict of interest and should be independent. A conflict of interests arises where the ability of an expert to perform his duties impartially and objectively is impaired because of family or emotional ties, political or national affinity, economic interest or any other pertinent connection or common interest with national authorities. Each expert proposed must declare that he/she has no conflict of interests. If he/she discovers during the contract period that such a conflict exists, he/she will declare it immediately and will resign from the contract if required by the Commission.

Means of proof required:

- Details of educational and professional qualifications of the Project Director (CVs) and of the main members of the coordinating team
- Details of educational and professional qualifications of the proposed experts (CVs) including relevant publications and/or studies carried out in the field specified above.
- A list of the works carried out by the organisation in the last five years.

Please note that CVs should not exceed two pages it is recommended that they use the presentation of the Europass CV http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/europass/preview.action?locale_id=1

14. AWARD CRITERIA

The contract will be awarded to the bid offering the best price/quality ratio, taking account of the following criteria:

a) Quality and consistency of the tender

- The degree of understanding of the nature of the assignment, its context and results to be achieved (20 %);

b) Quality of the bid and the proposed methodological approach

- Quality of the bid and of the methodology proposed for organising and coordinating the work, in particular the administrative and logistical tasks involved in coordinating the group of experts, the organisation of the Peer

reviews, the preparation of various outputs and the communication strategy. (25%);

- Extent to which the strategy proposed will ensure a synergy between the two strands of the tender: the Peer Reviews and the Network of Independent Experts (20%);
- Quality of the type of assessment proposed (20%);
- Human resources mobilised to carry out the different stages of the work, structure of the team(s) and allocation to tasks, and ability to complete the work well within the time available (15%).

It should be noted that the contract will *not* be awarded to a tenderer who receives less than 70% on the Award Criteria.

The points total will then be divided by the price, with the highest-scoring bid being chosen.

15. CONTENT AND PRESENTATION OF THE BIDS

15.1. Content of bids

The bid must include:

- all information and documents necessary to enable the Commission to appraise the bid on the basis of the exclusion, selection and award criteria (see points 12, 13 and 14 above);
- a bank ID form duly completed and signed by the bank;
- a "legal entity" form duly completed;
- the price (the financial offer must be signed);
- the detailed CVs of the proposed experts;
- the name and function of the contractor's legal representative (i.e. the person authorised to act on behalf of the contractor in any legal dealings with third parties);
- proof of eligibility: tenderers must indicate the State in which they have their registered office or are established, providing the necessary supporting documents in accordance with their national law

15.2. Presentation of the bid

Bids must be submitted in triplicate (i.e. one original, two copies and an electronic copy of the technical part of the bid (CD rom)).

They must include all the information required by the Commission.

They must be clear and concise.

They must be signed by the legal representative. **Unsigned bids will be rejected.**

They must be submitted in accordance with the specific requirements of the invitation to tender, within the deadlines laid down.

16. VALIDITY OF THE TENDER

Tenders must be valid for up to 8 months after submission.

Annex 1

Annex I

Exclusion criteria (Article 93(1) FR)	Supporting documents to be provided by applicants, tenderers or bidders (Article 134 IR)	
<p>1. Exclusion from a procurement procedure, Article 93(1) FR :</p> <p><i>« Candidates or tenderers shall be excluded from participation in a procurement procedure if:</i></p>		
<p>1.1. (subparagraph a)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>they are bankrupt or being wound up,</i> ▪ <i>are having their affairs administered by the courts,</i> ▪ <i>have entered into an arrangement with creditors have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters,</i> ▪ <i>or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations⁹;</i> 	<p>Recent extract from the judicial record</p> <p style="text-align: center;">or</p> <p>recent equivalent document issued by a judicial or administrative authority in the country of origin or provenance</p> <p style="text-align: center;">or</p> <p>Where no such certificate is issued in the country concerned : sworn or, failing that, a solemn statement made by the interested party before a judicial or administrative authority, a notary or a qualified professional body in his country of origin or provenance</p>	
<p>1.2. (subparagraph b)</p> <p><i>they have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment which has the force of res judicata¹⁰;</i></p>	<p>Cf. supporting documents for Article 93(1)(a) FR above</p>	

⁹ See also Article 134(3) IR : Depending on the national legislation of the country in which the tenderer or candidate is established, the documents referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 shall relate to legal persons and/or natural persons including, where considered necessary by the contracting authority, company directors or any person with powers of representation, decision-making or control in relation to the candidate or tenderer.

¹⁰ Cf. footnote n° 1.

Exclusion criteria (Article 93(1) FR)	Supporting documents to be provided by applicants, tenderers or bidders (Article 134 IR)	
1.3. (subparagraph c) <i>they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the contracting authority can justify;</i>	Declaration by the candidate or tenderer that he is not in the situation described	
1.4. (subparagraph d) <i>they have not fulfilled obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the contracting authority or those of the country where the contract is to be performed¹¹;</i>	Recent certificate issued by the competent authority of the State concerned confirming that the candidate is not in the situation described <p style="text-align: center;">or</p> Where no such certificate is issued in the country concerned : sworn or, failing that, a solemn statement made by the interested party before a judicial or administrative authority, a notary or a qualified professional body in his country of origin or provenance	
1.5. (subparagraph e) <i>they have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation or any other illegal activity detrimental to the Communities' financial interests¹²;</i>	Cf. supporting documents for Article 93(1)(a) FR above	
1.6. (subparagraph f) <i>following another procurement procedure or grant award procedure financed by the Community budget, they have been declared to be in serious breach of contract for failure to comply with their contractual obligations. »</i>	Declaration by the candidate or tenderer that he is not in the situation described	

¹¹ Cf. footnote n° 1.

¹² Cf. footnote n° 1.

Exclusion criteria (Article 94 FR)	Supporting documents to be provided by applicants, tenderers or bidders (Article 134 IR)	
<p>2. Exclusion from a procurement or grant award procedure Article 94 FR : « <i>Contracts may not be awarded to candidates or tenderers who, during the procurement procedure:</i></p>		
<p>2.1. (subparagraph a)</p> <p><i>are subject to a conflict of interest;</i></p>	<p>Statement by the applicant, tenderer or bidder confirming the absence of conflict of interests, to be submitted with the application, bid or proposal</p>	–
<p>2.2. (subparagraph b)</p> <p><i>are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the contracting authority as a condition of participation in the contract procedure or fail to supply this information»¹³.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – No specific supporting documents to be supplied by the applicant, tenderer or bidder – It is the responsibility of the authorising officer, represented by the evaluation committee, to check that the information submitted is complete¹⁴ and to identify any misrepresentation 	–

¹³ Cf. Article 146(3) of the FR Implementing Rules: « ...the evaluation committee may ask candidates or tenderers to supply additional material or to clarify the supporting documents submitted in connection with the exclusion and selection criteria, within a specified time-limit. » and Article 178(2) of the FR Implementing Rules: « The evaluation committee may ask an applicant to provide additional proof or to clarify the supporting documents establishing financial and operational capacity, within a specified time-limit. »

¹⁴ Cf. footnote n°1