

**OPEN INVITATION TO TENDER****AO/ECVL/TB/Quality Approaches/019/2012*****“Quality approaches in Learning and Training patterns in European small firms”****Ref.: Contract notice - OJ 2012/S 186-304844 of 27/09//2012*

Dear Sir/Madam,

We thank you for the interest you have shown in this tender.

The purpose of this tender and additional information necessary to present a tender can be found in the attached Tender Specifications. You should note however the following important points concerning the submission of a tender and its implications.

1. Tenders (and documents included in them) should be submitted preferably in English, but in any case in one (or in any) of the official languages of the European Union.
2. Tenders may be submitted exclusively in one of the following ways:

(a) by post to be dispatched **not later than the date and time specified in the timetable in point 8 below**, in which case the evidence shall be constituted by the date of dispatch on the postmark or the date of the deposit slip, to the following post address of Cedefop :

**European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop),
Procurement Service, Attention of Mr G. Paraskevaïdis
PO Box 22 427
GR – 55102 Thessaloniki, Greece**

Important:

If using a postal service, tenderers must use a registered, reliable one. If no postmark has been stamped or if the postmark is not legible, Cedefop will accept deposit slip issued by the postal service, provided that this clearly indicates the date as filled in by the post office and not by the tenderer.

Tenderers shall inform Cedefop by e-mail (c4t-services@cedefop.europa.eu) or fax (+30 2310 490028)

- ✓ *that they have submitted an offer in time, and*
- ✓ *that they request Cedefop to confirm receipt of the e-mail or fax.*

Tenderers should not attach their offer to any of the above informative e-mail or fax.

or

(b1) by courier service to be dispatched not later than **the date and time specified in the timetable in point 8 below**, in which case the evidence shall be constituted by the date of dispatch to the address below or the date of the deposit slip,

or

(b2) delivered by hand not later than **the date and time specified in the timetable in point 8 below**, in which case a receipt must be obtained as proof of submission, signed and dated by the official in the above mentioned Service who took delivery,

to the following address (for points **(b1)** and **(b2)** above):

**European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop),
Procurement Service, Attention of Mr G. Paraskevaïdis
123, Europe Str,
GR-57001 Thessaloniki-Pylea, Greece
Tel: +30 2310 490111 / 490 064**

Please note that Cedefop is open from 09h00 to 17h00, Monday to Friday. It is closed on Saturday, Sunday and Cedefop holidays.

3. Tenders must be submitted strictly adhering to the following.

Tenders must be submitted in a sealed envelope itself enclosed within a second sealed envelope. If self-adhesive envelopes are used, they must be sealed with adhesive tape and the sender must sign across this tape.

The **outer envelope**, addressed simply to Cedefop (address depending on the means of submission, see point 2 above), should only bear additionally **the name and address** of the sender.

The **inner envelope**, addressed to the Procurement Service as indicated under point 2 above, must bear a self-adhesive label with the indication **“Open Invitation to tender – Not to be opened by the internal mail service”** and all the necessary information, as shown below:

<p>OPEN INVITATION TO TENDER</p> <p>CEDEFOP No: <i>AO/ECVL/TB/Quality Approaches/019/2012</i></p> <p><i>“Quality approaches in Learning and Training patterns in European small firms”</i></p> <p>Name of tenderer:</p> <p>NOT TO BE OPENED BY THE INTERNAL MAIL SERVICE</p>

The inner envelope must also contain three sealed envelopes, namely, Envelope A – “Supporting Documents”, Envelope B – “Technical Proposal” and Envelope C – “Financial Proposal”. The content of each of these three envelopes is described in point 6 of the attached Tender Specifications.

4. Tenderers must ensure that their tenders are signed by an authorised representative and that tenders are legible. It is mandatory to include in the offer a **Cover Letter, signed by the person/s that is/are authorised to sign the contract in case of contract award, stating that the tenderer accepts in full and without restriction the requirements of these Tender Specifications, and the Special and General conditions governing this contract as the sole basis of this tendering procedure** (see also point 1 of the Tender Specifications).
5. **Submission of a tender implies acceptance of all the terms and conditions set out in this Invitation to Tender, in the specifications and in the draft contract** and, where appropriate, waiver of the tenderer’s own general or specific terms and conditions. It is binding on the tenderer to whom the contract is awarded for the duration of the contract.
6. The opening of tenders will take place at Cedefop on the date and time specified in the timetable in point 8 below. Each tenderer may be represented at the opening of tenders by one person. The name of the person attending the opening must be notified in writing by fax (Fax No +30 2310 490 028) or by e-mail (C4T-services@cedefop.europa.eu) at least two working days prior to the opening session.
7. Contacts between the contracting authority (Cedefop) and tenderers are prohibited throughout the procedure save in exceptional circumstances and under the following conditions only:

7.1 Contacts before the final date for submission of tenders:

- At the request of the tenderer, the Cedefop Procurement Service may provide additional information solely for the purpose of clarifying the tender documents. Any request for additional information must be made in writing by e-mail (C4T-services@cedefop.europa.eu) or by fax (fax No +30 2310 490 028).

Requests for additional information/clarification (if any) from potential tenderers should preferably be written in English and should be received by the date and time as specified in the timetable in point 8 below. No such requests will be processed after that date.

- Cedefop may, on its own initiative, inform interested parties of any error, inaccuracy, omission or any other clerical error in the text of the call for tenders.

The Answers/Clarifications of Cedefop to the requests for additional information/clarification of the tenderers, including that referred to above, will be published on Cedefop's website under the same link where this Open Tender Procedure is announced (<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/working-with-us/public-procurements/calls-for-tenders.aspx>).

Tenderers must ensure that they visit regularly the site for updates up to the closing date for receipt of tenders.

7.2 Contacts after the final date for submission of tenders and before opening:

- Tenderers should not contact the Contracting Authority (i.e. Cedefop) on their own initiative.
- Tenderers are not allowed to amend their offers, e.g. by completing the documents they sent, replacing them with amended ones or sending new documents initially not included in the tender, as this may lead to rejection of the tender at a later stage. Any such need for additional information/document identified by the Evaluation Committee during the evaluation process will be notified to the tenderer concerned at Cedefop's initiative, providing for a reasonable deadline for response (see also the provisions under the heading below).

7.3 Contacts after the opening of tenders:

- Tenderers should not contact Cedefop on their own initiative at that stage.
- If clarification on the compliance with the Eligibility and/or Selection Criteria is required or if obvious clerical errors in the tender need to be corrected Cedefop may contact tenderer/s in writing to obtain further clarification or documents on specific points of the tender or to correct obvious clerical errors.
- If the necessary information and/or supporting documents for the assessment of an award criterion are missing, these may not be requested as clarification if this might alter the proposal. Any requests for clarification in that regard should not lead to amendment of the terms of the tender. Tenderers must not modify their tender or add any new elements to it. The reply must therefore make clear reference to the relevant information already present in the file. This will serve solely the purpose to provide the Evaluation Committee with a clarification regarding the technical proposal provided the terms of the tender are not modified as a result.
- In regards to possible clarifications on obvious clerical errors in the Financial Offer, tenderers must not add any new prices, but only explain the quotation on the basis of elements and prices already present in the offer. In case a tenderer alters his financial offer during a clarification (beyond the correction of any obvious clerical/calculation errors), this offer will be automatically rejected.
- Tenderers should be prepared to reply to such requests for clarification within a short reasonable deadline as it will be stated in the request for clarification.

8. Timetable:

	DATE	TIME
Deadline for request of any clarifications from the Contracting Authority (Cedefop)	30/10/2012	17.00h
Last date on which clarifications are issued by Cedefop	<i>as soon as possible</i>	N/A
Deadline for submission of tenders (hand delivered)	07/11/2012	17.00h
Deadline for submission of tenders by post / courier	07/11/2012	N/A
Validity of the tenders	07/05/2013	N/A
Tender opening session	19/11/2012	10.30h

9. Tenderers must maintain the validity of their tender for at least 6 months following the deadline of submission of tenders.

In exceptional cases, before the period of validity expires, Cedefop may ask the tenderers to extend the period for a specific number of days, which may not exceed 40.

The selected tenderer must maintain his tender for a further period of 60 days from the date of notification that his tender has been recommended for the award of the contract. The further period of 60 days is added to the initial period of 6 months irrespective of the date of notification.

10. All costs incurred in preparing and submitting tenders should be borne by the tenderers.
11. Up to the point of signature, the contracting authority may either abandon the procurement or cancel the award procedure, without the candidates or tenderers being entitled to claim any compensation. If such decision is taken, the tenderers will be notified accordingly.
12. This invitation to tender is in no way binding on Cedefop. Cedefop's contractual obligation commences only upon the signature of the Contract with the successful tenderer.
13. Evaluating your tender and your possible subsequent replies to questions in accordance with the specifications of the invitation to tender, will involve the recording and processing of personal data (such as your name, address and CV). Unless indicated otherwise, such personal data will be processed by Cedefop's Finance and Procurement Service solely for that purpose and pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of data by the Union institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data. Details concerning the processing of your personal data are available on the privacy statement at: http://ec.europa.eu/dataprotectionofficer/privacystatement_publicprocurement_en.pdf.

You have the right of recourse at any time to the European Data Protection Supervisor for matters relating to the processing of your personal data

14. Your personal data (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form, registration number and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the Early Warning System (EWS) only or both in the EWS and Central Exclusion Database (CED) by the Accounting Officer of the Commission, should you be in one of the situations mentioned in:
 - the Commission Decision 2008/969 of 16.12.2008 on the Early Warning System (for more information see the Privacy Statement on http://ec.europa.eu/budget/info_contract/legal_entities_en.htm), or
 - the Commission Regulation 2008/1302 of 17.12.2008 on the Central Exclusion Database (for more information see the Privacy Statement on http://ec.europa.eu/budget/library/sound_fin_mgt/privacy_statement_ced_en.pdf).

15. All tenderers will be informed in writing of the results of this tender procedure.

Yours sincerely,

G. Paraskevaïdis

Head of Finance and Procurement

Attached: Tender Specifications

OPEN INVITATION TO TENDER

AO/ECVL/TB/Quality Approaches/019/2012

“Quality approaches in Learning and Training patterns in European small firms”

Tender Specifications

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Introduction to Cedefop: Europe's agency for training policy

Source: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-cedefop.aspx>

To provide people with the skills they need, vocational education and training systems (VET) need to adapt quickly to changing demands. European VET policy's central aim is to promote excellence through VET. To make it both an attractive learning option for the brightest and best young people and adults and an effective way of helping those with low levels of qualification to develop their skills.

Cedefop, (the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) founded in 1975 and based in Greece since 1995, is a European Union (EU) agency. It provides the European Commission, Member States ⁽¹⁾ and social partners with insights into trends concerning VET and offers advice on how European VET policy should meet the challenges Europe and its citizens face.

The evidence Cedefop provides comes from its:

- Monitoring of VET policy developments and reforms in Member States;
- Comparative research and analyses, including anticipation of future skill supply and demand;
- Forums for debates among policy-makers, social partners, researchers and practitioners on the best ways to tackle the challenges Europe faces.

CEDEFOP'S OBJECTIVE AND PRIORITIES FOR 2012-14

Cedefop's activities are guided by its strategic objective and medium-term priorities for 2012-14. Cedefop's strategic objective is to contribute to designing and implementing policies for an attractive VET, that promotes excellence and social inclusion and to strengthening European cooperation in developing, implementing and analysing European VET policy. This objective is supported by three priorities:

▪ **Supporting modernisation of VET systems**

Modern VET systems must be relevant to individual and labour market needs. They should take into account learning acquired in different ways (for example through work experience) and at different times, and allow people to move between countries and sectors.

Member States decide national VET policies and Cedefop monitors and reports on the reforms and changes they make to their systems. Cedefop also works to improve international VET statistics.

European cooperation in VET, led by the European Commission working with Member States and social partners, has agreed shared objectives. As part of this cooperation, Cedefop has helped develop, and is now working to implement, common European tools and principles which aim to make it both easier to work and study abroad and move between different parts of a national education and training system (for example between general and vocational education).

▪ **Careers and transitions – Continuing VET, adult and work-based learning**

Today, people are likely to change jobs more often. Cedefop is looking at how continuing training and work-based learning for adults can help people to manage their careers better and improve their job prospects. Cedefop is also examining how work-based learning for adults can help enterprises to deal with technological change, generate innovation and increase competitiveness.

New demands are also being made of VET teachers and trainers and Cedefop is looking at their changing roles and their skill and learning needs.

⁽¹⁾ Cedefop also works with Iceland and Norway.

- **Analysing skills needs to inform VET provision**

Europe's growth and competitiveness will be held back if people's skills do not meet job requirements. Unemployment currently coexists with skill shortages. Understanding and anticipating the skills required helps ensuring that training meets labour market needs. It helps to promote a better match between individuals' potential and jobs' requirements.

Cedefop's skill needs analysis provides insights into the trends that influence skill supply and demand and the imbalances that may arise both in the EU and individual Member States. Cedefop is also finding out more about sectoral and occupational developments, such as the demand for 'green' skills for sustainable growth and, as the population ages, the potential for jobs creation and impact of skill needs of the 'silver' economy.

CEDEFOP'S INFORMATION

Cedefop shares its expertise through its publications, networks, conferences, seminars and web portal www.cedefop.europa.eu. The web portal provides news on Cedefop's major themes "Identifying skills needs", "Understanding qualifications", "Analysing policy" and "Developing lifelong learning". All Cedefop publications are available for download. Cedefop hosts and organises conferences and events throughout the year. Cedefop also coordinates the study visits programme for the European Commission. Study visits are short-term visits of three to five days for a small group of 10 to 15 specialists to examine a particular aspect of lifelong learning.

In addition to its web portal www.cedefop.europa.eu, Cedefop's work can be followed on Facebook at www.facebook.com/cedefop and Twitter at www.twitter.com/cedefop.

1 Overview of this tender

In submitting his tender in response to this tender procedure, the tenderer accepts in full and without restriction the requirements of these Tender Specifications, and the Special and General conditions governing this contract as the sole basis of this tendering procedure, whatever his own conditions of sale and terms of business may be, which he hereby waives. No account can be taken of any reservation or disclaimer expressed in the tender as regards the tender dossier's Tender Conditions and Specifications and the Contract's Special and General Conditions. If necessary, clarification may be requested by the potential tenderer concerned while the tender submission phase is open – see point 7 of the Invitation to tender. Any reservation or disclaimer may result in the rejection of the tender without further evaluation on the grounds that it does not comply with the conditions of the Tender Dossier.

Tenderers are expected to examine carefully and comply with all instructions, forms, contract provisions and specifications contained in this tender dossier. Failure to submit a Technical and Financial Proposals containing all the required information and documentation may lead to the rejection of the tender.

1.1 Description and type of the contract

- Title of the contract:

“Quality approaches in learning and training patterns in European small firms”

- Short description of content of this contract:

Through a literature review of 27 EU Members States (plus Norway and Iceland) and 20 case studies, the study aims at providing a critical analysis of measures supporting small firms in training their staff through work-based learning, including non-formal and informal learning.

- Type of contract: *Direct Service Contract*

1.2 Place of delivery or performance

The tasks must be completed outside Cedefop in the Contractor's premises.

1.3 Division into lots

This tender procedure is not divided into lots.

1.4 Variants

Tenderers may not offer variant solutions to what is requested in the tender specifications. Cedefop will disregard any variants described in a tender, and reserves the right to reject such tenders without further evaluation on the grounds that they do not comply with the tender specifications.

1.5 Value or quantity of purchase

The estimated budget for the required services described in this call for tenders is of the order of 200,000 Euro (without VAT).

1.6 Duration of the contract

The contract shall enter into force on the date of signature of the last contracting party, and shall have a duration of 14 months.

1.7 Main terms of financing and payment

Three payments will be made in total within 30 days of submission of invoices and at the conditions set out in the draft contract.

2 Terms of Reference

2.1 The SME dimension

SMEs are the backbone of the EU economy. In 2010, there were almost 20,8 million SMEs in the EU non-financial business economy of which 19,2 million were micro-firms with less than 10 employees. In 2009, compared to large businesses representing 0,2% of the EU firms, SMEs accounted for over 95% of enterprises in OECD countries generating two thirds of employment and accounting for two in three new jobs within the EU.

In the present economic crisis SMEs will contribute to recovery and development due to their flexibility to react to changed conditions, thus, creating employment and developing new products and services. It is estimated that altogether SMEs provided in 2010 more than two-thirds of all employment opportunities in the private sector in the EU and 58,4% of the total gross value-added ⁽²⁾.

The current crisis and global recession are not yet overcome. This calls for higher effectiveness and efficiency by all, national economies, organisations and firms alike. Companies, both large and small, have, on one hand, to minimize costs and increase their productivity and on the other hand, to retain, if not expand, their market share, if they are to continue existing and prosper.

At the same time, there is a need for innovations (e.g. new products, new services, new forms of organisational change) and new forms of work organisation, both of which rely heavily on the availability of skills and a qualified workforce. Not only because of the aging population but also because of structural changes, lifelong learning in the sense of continued education and training throughout working life becomes even more important for the economy, businesses and the individuals themselves.

In large companies, special expertise is provided by several departments and experts. Such expertise is not available in most SMEs. Therefore small businesses depend heavily on external support instruments and policies and on SME friendly environments. An example of policies tailored to SME specificities and needs is the Small Business Act of 2008, which is a comprehensive SME policy framework at both EU and Member States level ⁽³⁾. The European Commission/ Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry is regularly organising the “European SME week”, which comprises events in all Member States and in Brussels to inform, support and network businesses and to promote entrepreneurship among young people⁽⁴⁾. The SME dimension is an integral part of EU policies, including health, employment, education and training.

2.2 Introduction to the study

The above mentioned “Small Business Act” for Europe states that many small companies consider that schools do not adequately provide the competences they need. SMEs continue to suffer from lack of skilled labour in several fields such as new technologies or languages ⁽⁵⁾. For small firms the adaptability to new demands and changes is vital for their existence since “SMEs basically have just two options: either to adapt effectively to changes or to disappear from the market” ⁽⁶⁾. Small and micro firms depend heavily on their owner/manager for adaptation. In fact, the owners/managers of small and micro enterprises have to dispose of an array of skills to be successful. They need good entrepreneurial skills to monitor changes in

⁽²⁾ European Commission, 2011 Are EU SMEs recovering from the crisis? Annual Report on EU Small and Medium sized Enterprises 2010/2011

[Http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/facts-figures-analysis/performance-review/pdf/2010_2011/are_the_eus_smes_recovering.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/facts-figures-analysis/performance-review/pdf/2010_2011/are_the_eus_smes_recovering.pdf)

⁽³⁾ [Http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0394:FIN:en:PDF](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0394:FIN:en:PDF)

⁽⁴⁾ [Http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/magazine/articles/smes-entrepreneurship/article_10085_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/magazine/articles/smes-entrepreneurship/article_10085_en.htm)

⁵ Cedefop, 2002 Internationalisation and changing skills needs in European SMEs. Synthesis report, Cedefop Reference series;23

⁶ Identification of future skills needs in micro and craft(-type) enterprises up to 2020, European Commission, DG Enterprise and Industry, FBH, WMP, Ibw, January 2011, p 36

the outside world and convert opportunities into business propositions, solid managerial skills to run the business efficiently and strong craftsmanship skills to supply customer oriented quality products and services.

These skills are vital for the firm's capacity for good performance. But even if the entrepreneur's skills may suffice for starting up a small firm, the personnel's performance is decisive for the firm's further growth and adaptation to changes. This is largely acknowledged inter alia by the European Charter for small enterprises, which considers "the availability of skills" as an important dimension for supporting small firms ⁽⁷⁾. However, "the recruitment of skilled personnel often poses problems for small firms" ⁽⁸⁾. In addition, small firms tend to carry out little training, as several Cedefop studies have also confirmed ⁽⁹⁾.

In all firms, owner-managers and their employees 'learn' but they do not necessarily 'train' in a formal way. This is an important distinction as understanding this difference allows the proper appreciation of the efforts of both owner-managers and employees on one hand and the identification of business deficiencies, on the other. Necessary skills, if not acquired through recruitment of new personnel, have to be developed within the company. Work-place learning represents the main form of training in small firms. In this context, training takes place mostly on the job and employees are encouraged to pass on knowledge and experience among them, often with the active involvement of the entrepreneur himself. Much of this training is informal, in scope and type, making it difficult to recognise and validate the acquired competences and capabilities.

It has been shown that in the small business sector employers and senior personnel are the most important providers of non-formal learning and their role in identifying skill needs is decisive. In smaller firms typically management is a prerogative function of the entrepreneur who also decides on activities related to staff training and skill development. But entrepreneurs, even if successful at business level, are not always equally capable to shape an adequate personnel policy and equip employees with the right skills at the right time. Industry skills do not necessarily go in pair with managerial competence. The time spent on such informal processes is generally not accounted for in SMEs; neither is the cost of informal training recorded. However, because of the apparent benefits derived from personalised forms of employee training (support), such as better performance, loyalty and staff satisfaction, these informal processes are regarded by many owner-managers as important.

In relation to up-skilling, several surveys ⁽¹⁰⁾ and literature on SMEs have indicated the following main barriers to training:

- the disruption to business caused by staff unavailability as a result of attending training courses: SMEs do not have spare staff capacity to cover for such absences;
- the fear of poaching of trained staff by competitors;
- the management's lack of understanding of the role of training ⁽¹¹⁾ and their perception of training as a cost rather than as an investment in human resources.

For these reasons, but also because of the problem to establish clearly a direct relation between formal training and improvements of performance, it is difficult to motivate SMEs to embark on formal training

⁽⁷⁾ European Charter for small enterprises: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/charter/docs/charter_en.pdf

⁽⁸⁾ Cedefop, 2010a Quality in VET in European SMEs A review of the food processing, retail and tourism sectors in Germany, Ireland and Greece: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/5057.aspx>

⁽⁹⁾ Cedefop 2010a, p.7 and Cedefop, 2010b Quality in VET in European SMEs A review of the food processing, retail and tourism sectors in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/16009.aspx>

⁽¹⁰⁾ Guide for Training in SMEs
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=544&furtherNews=yes>

⁽¹¹⁾ Cedefop, 2010-Employer-provided vocational training in Europe Evaluation and interpretation of the third continuing vocational training survey http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5502_en.pdf

programmes for their employees. When training is provided, a number of important criteria besides cost are considered for selecting training providers and training programmes. Such criteria include the following:

- the perceived benefit of the firm relying on some external training provider, compared to that to be derived from in-house on-the-job training;
- the relevance of the courses to the needs of the company – in other words their degree of effective customisation;
- the value of business/technical problem-solving in the immediate, short and medium term;
- the type of providers – who they are, their relevant business experience, background and qualifications;
- the type of materials and resources used for training;
- their geographical location, that is, their degree of proximity to the company's site.

If these criteria are not fulfilled as it is frequently the case, entrepreneurs, even if interested, abandon the idea of providing (formal) training to their personnel through external providers. Indeed in many micro and small firms, entrepreneurs decide to cover by themselves skill and competence deficit. They invest time and effort in training their staff and they assume the role of trainers⁽¹²⁾. These entrepreneurs are sensitive to the changes in their environment and to the need to keep up with developments. They do often participate in external courses themselves and they subsequently pass on the new knowledge and experiences to their employees. This is a sort of a “cascade model” most frequent in relatively small firms. This implies that actual (informal) learning within small firms may be significantly more important (in quantitative and qualitative terms) than what the recorded vocational training activities in these firms and statistics indicate.

Continuing vocational training - understood as formal qualification activities leading to certification - remains still the exception especially in smaller businesses. The development of an adequate framework for SMEs and financial and non-financial incentives, in order to enhance their participation in lifelong learning, remains an important challenge⁽¹³⁾.

Learning and skill development while working, or ‘learning-by doing’, is crucial. Learning and competence acquisition at work imply a work environment encouraging initiative and responsibility⁽¹⁴⁾. The person in charge of human resources in SMEs is the entrepreneur/owner, who does not necessarily have the expertise to set up and implement strategies for skills development”⁽¹⁵⁾. Despite this, owners frequently undertake the task of transferring themselves knowledge to their employees. The extent and the effectiveness of such knowledge transfer depend on the efficiency of SMEs’ owners to function as “trainers”.

2.3 Rationale of the present study

- 1 The study results should provide evidence and allow suggestions with regard to specific tools and instruments to be applied by small firms to develop lifelong learning. The study aims at analysing training patterns and work placed learning in SMEs. It focusses mostly on the provision of informal and non-formal training (learning while working) in European small firms. Such learning is crucial for longer term success of the companies and for sustaining and improving the employability of staff. It is probably the most frequent form of continuous training in SMEs.
- 2 The study relates to the implementation of the common European tools and principles, most notably to Quality assurance reference framework for VET (EQAVET Recommendation). It relates also to the

⁽¹²⁾ Cedefop 2010 a, p.72

⁽¹³⁾ UEAPME: UEAPME Vocational Training Priorities, Brussels, 2.10.2008

⁽¹⁴⁾ Cedefop, 2011 - Learning while working - Success stories on workplace learning in Europe
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/17770.aspx>

⁽¹⁵⁾ UEAPME: Learning while Working-How skills development in SMEs can be supported
http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/UEAPME_background_note_learning_while_working_SME_needs_041111.pdf

validation of learning outcomes and to the EUROPASS Experience, a new instrument for recording learning experiences, presently under development.

- 3 The results of the study, including good practice examples, will support strategies and policies stimulating continuous VET and human resources development in SMEs and allow for respective recommendations.
- 4 Training in small firms is provided by various actors: in many of them, owners and senior employees act as “trainers” themselves, usually with little or no formal expertise as trainers. In addition, non-formal training is provided by external trainers, technology providers, business partners or sector business co-operations. In most cases, training is still not recorded; however, through documentation and validation of learning outcomes employees could find a stronger motivation to actively participate in such trainings and typical SME entrepreneurs could be encouraged to upgrade their performance as “trainers”. This would also benefit companies as they would become more attractive employers, besides the positive effects acquired skills will have on performance.
- 5 The study will focus on skills development in small firms with up to 50 employees. Its scope will extend to work-based learning and analyses of the various approaches SMEs use for adapting their employees to changes and for enriching their overall skills base.
- 6 The study aims also at supporting employers in better managing their activities as trainers if and when they foster themselves learning and knowledge development. It also refers to the content of training and support programmes tailored to the needs of the firms.
- 7 The study will also refer to the attitudes towards training and education of both employers and employees and formulate suggestions on how they could best benefit from such training. By making comparisons between countries, sectors, firms and learning patterns, the study shall contribute to a better overall understanding of learning processes at such workplaces and raise awareness of the importance of non-formal training and learning. Improvements could help small firms to become a more attractive employment option for younger people and to retain personnel over time.
- 8 The study should provide evidence and make suggestions with regard to specific tools and instruments to be applied by small firms to develop their skill basis in a lifelong learning perspective.

2.4 Research questions

Taking as a starting point the fact that the present study focuses on small firms (up to 50 employees), Cedefop aims to investigate:

1. the different forms of formal/non-formal/work-based learning that take place in small firms, expecting a comprehensive research based on review of relevant literature and enquiry at the level of business associations. In particular, training/ non-formal training and skills development targeted at SMEs and provided by business associations, by companies of the same or inter-related fields/sectors or branches through co-operation, by suppliers and other business partners and by training providers should be investigated. Systematic approaches to upgrade the training skills of entrepreneurs and senior personnel in SMEs should be also included. It should be understood that Cedefop expects a systematic overview of the institutional settings in the 27 Member States (plus Norway and Iceland) and of major initiatives which impact or govern the support of continuous (formal, non-formal and informal) training in small enterprises. This will be based mainly on available statistical data, literature review and, for example, a survey at the level of business associations. Results should allow an assessment of differences between the Member States highlighting institutional and structural specificities. This overview should be supplemented by a more qualitative analysis of the issues mentioned in the research questions of this section. In addition, a number of case studies should analyse some of the more successful practices;
2. the extent to which the different forms of learning/training patterns address different objectives related to:
 - a) Company’s needs in order to adapt to technological changes, market developments and labour market needs (demographic changes, population ageing),

- b) Employees' needs (key competences/technical skills/organisational-managerial skills included). The analysis should refer to both work and personal factors that facilitate or hinder learning;
3. how and to what extent the decisions on such training/work-based learning are triggered by the sector (business associations) and legal, technical and quality requirements (e.g. hygiene compliance, safety standards, introduction of new technology, new products etc.), explicit demands of suppliers or customers; employees or management's strategic considerations;
 4. the role of external networks in the transfer of know-how and bench learning: relevant examples of resource pooling may encompass interlinked social networks; networking between small enterprises in certain sectors; networking between small and large firms/multinationals (chains production) and/or VET providers etc.;
 5. type and importance of support provided to small/micro firms by sector/chambers/national /regional/local authorities/tertiary institutions/ universities/social partners and service providers for developing their skills base (e.g. guidance; counselling);
 6. how can small firms' owners be supported in their role of competence developers and lifelong learning agents (including training measures for owners and senior employees to help them better identify and evaluate skill needs and train staff);
 7. the study should also refer to Annex I and Annex II of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training ⁽¹⁶⁾ when appropriate and consider in the analysis at least the following questions:
 - How training is implemented?
 - Are the results and outputs of training/learning assessed and evaluated?
 - Are conclusions drawn from these evaluations and are they used for the planning of activities to improve the training/learning offer?

2.5 Methodological approach

Tenderers are expected to propose a methodology which is appropriate to deliver results to the objectives/questions as defined above. However, the methodology should include the following:

- a. Comprehensive review of available literature on SMEs' training policies and practices as well as exploitation of the available statistical data ⁽¹⁷⁾ in all Member States, Norway and Iceland;
- b. The contractor should approach representative national business institutions/associations - for example by way of a survey or structured interviews - to identify applied measures and recent developments in supporting SMEs in improving their human potential, in particular through on the job training (including formal, non-formal and informal approaches);
- c. The results of the literature review and statistical analysis together with the results of the inquiry at the level of business associations (points *a* and *b* above), should allow a country critical review (EU Member States, Norway, Iceland). This should include more detailed descriptions of significant practices in selected sectors. Selected sectors should be typically SME dominated sectors (the selection of sectors, to be agreed with Cedefop, should focus on the non-financial business economy);
- d. The sector descriptions should provide a basis for the selection of relevant and significant case studies which will support the conclusions and suggestions of the study;
- e. In assessing the relevance of the workplace learning activities, the contractor should consider the quality model in the aforementioned EQAVET Recommendation. The Recommendation focuses on

⁽¹⁶⁾ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:155:0001:0010:EN:PDF> - OJ 2009/C 155

⁽¹⁷⁾ With a specific focus on Continuing Vocational Training (CVTS 3 and forthcoming CVTS 4), the Adult Education (AES) and Labour Force (EU LFS) surveys.

VET systems and VET providers. However, firms are also concerned as they provide training and act as (“informal”) training providers, actively promoting learning and skill development;

- f. The contractor should also refer to the CVTS3 study Cedefop has undertaken, including the part on regular/incidental trainers, on the other hand ⁽¹⁸⁾;
- g. In the analysis, whenever appropriate, attention should also be paid to the learning outcomes approach (standards, learning provision/training and validation). In this regard, the Cedefop studies on “*The dynamics of qualifications: defining and renewing occupational and educational standards*” and “*The shift to learning outcomes*” should be consulted ⁽¹⁹⁾. Among other issues, documentation of training processes and validation practices are of particular interest, especially if they reflect learning outcome orientation and use standardized references for the description of skills and competences, qualifications and levels of proficiency;
- h. The selection of about twenty case studies/good practices should be agreed on with Cedefop. The case studies should also cover cases of firms in which learning is provided by the owner/manager himself. Case studies shall also take account of firms with below 10 employees.

Consideration should be also given to the three SME related Cedefop studies mentioned above, to the Cedefop sector related studies in the context of “Skillsnet” ⁽²⁰⁾, to the Cedefop study on “*Internationalisation and changing skills needs in European small firms*”⁽²¹⁾ as well as to the 18 sectoral studies by DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion on future skills needs, where appropriate ⁽²²⁾.

In conclusion and as mentioned in the previous sections, the study should survey the conditions under which non-formal/work-based learning is organised and delivered by various actors such as trainers, consultants (external mode of skill delivery), owners/entrepreneurs/senior staff (internal mode) and evaluate the merits and disadvantages of the different (institutional and organisational) approaches and indicate their efficiency in organising and delivering on the job training/learning. Finally, it should recommend measures for improving their effectiveness.

Texts delivered shall be written in English, shall be language edited and comply with the standards of scientific publications.

2.6 Deliverables, reports and timetable (outcome)

The successful tender (contractor) is expected to deliver to Cedefop:

- an inception report two months after signing the contract. This report will provide the basis for a dialogue with Cedefop on the research and analysis to be conducted and for fine-tuning the methodology proposed by the contractor. It should also propose the sectors to be selected and include a more detailed work and time planning;
- an interim report four months later, on the work progress, which should also propose a list of case studies from which, together with Cedefop, the actual cases to be analysed in-depth will be selected;
- the final study report 12 months following the signature of the contract (without annexes, the final study should not exceed 150 pages);
- a PowerPoint presentation of the main findings and conclusions of the study, accompanied by a synthesis of up to ten pages one month after Cedefop’s approval of the final report.

⁽¹⁸⁾ http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5502_en.pdf

⁽¹⁹⁾ http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5195_en.pdf; <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/12900.aspx>

⁽²⁰⁾ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-cedefop/projects/identifying-skill-needs-in-sectors-andenterprises/identifying-skill-needs-in-sectors-and-enterprises.aspx>

⁽²¹⁾ Cedefop, 2002-Internationalisation and changing skills needs in European small firms. Synthesis report <http://eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED481328.pdf>

⁽²²⁾ DG EMPL Sectoral level analysis <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=784&langId=en>

The selected contractor shall submit all deliverables in English, in hard copy and in electronic format. Figures and tables should be delivered separately in Excel or in Word, as appropriate. Excel charts should include the data used to be able to reproduce the charts. The electronic files must correspond fully to the hard-copy version. Lay-out and format of the text – in particular for citation, bibliography, tables and figures – have to comply with Cedefop’s style manual (Annex H).

The selected Contractor shall ensure that the final reports as submitted to Cedefop have been subject to professional proof-reading and editing in English, the cost for which should be included in the Financial Proposal (the Table in point 5.4, item 2c).

2.7 Meetings

The selected contractor will be requested to attend three meetings with Cedefop:

- one meeting of one day to discuss the inception report;
- two follow-up meetings (of maximum two days each) to discuss the interim and (pre-) final reports. The contractor may be requested to present the findings and conclusions of the study to relevant European bodies on Cedefop prior invitation.

The cost for participation at the three meetings requested by Cedefop should be included in the cost calculation for this contract in point 2a) of Table 1, paragraph 5.4 below. Other extra travel expenses for any additional meetings related to the contract that might eventually be requested by Cedefop, will be subject to Cedefop’s prior approval and shall be reimbursed by Cedefop separately, according to its regulation (see Annex IV of the draft contract in Annex B).

2.8 Definition of terms used

For the purpose of the present work, the below terms and definitions drawn from the following two Cedefop publications: Cedefop, 2011 *Glossary, Quality on Education and Training* ⁽²³⁾ and of *Terminology of European education and training policy* ⁽²⁴⁾ will apply:

Assessment of learning outcomes - The process of appraising knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences of an individual against predefined criteria (learning expectations, measurement of learning outcomes). Assessment is typically followed by validation and certification. Comment: in the literature, ‘assessment’ generally refers to appraisal of individuals whereas ‘evaluation’ is more frequently used to describe appraisal of education and training methods or providers. Related term: certification of learning outcomes.

Continuing Education and Training (CVET) - Education or training after initial education and training – or after entry into working life aimed at helping individuals to:– improve or update their knowledge and/or skills;– acquire new skills for a career move or retraining;– continue their personal or professional development. Comment: continuing education and training is part of lifelong learning and may encompass any kind of education (general, specialised or vocational, formal or non-formal, etc.). It is crucial for the employability of individuals. Related terms: adult education, compensatory learning, initial education and training, lifelong learning.

Good practice- Method or approach that leads to better and transferable achievements. Comment: the terms innovative/interesting/best practice are often used as a synonym.

Informal learning - Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner’s perspective. Comments: – informal learning outcomes do not usually lead to certification but may be validated and certified in the framework of recognition of prior learning schemes; – informal learning is also referred to as experiential or incidental/random learning. Related terms: formal learning, learning, learning outcomes, non-formal learning, validation of learning outcomes.

²³Cedefop, 2011 Glossary Quality in education and training
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/17663.aspx>

²⁴ Cedefop, 2008 Terminology of European education and training policy: A selection of 100 key terms.
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/13125.aspx>

Initial learning - General or vocational education and training carried out in the initial education system, usually before entering working life.

Comments: (a) some training undertaken after entry into working life may be considered as initial training (e.g. retraining); (b) initial education and training can be carried out at any level in general or vocational education (full-time school-based or alternance training) pathways or apprenticeship.

Related terms: compulsory education, continuing education and training.

Learning by doing - Learning acquired by repeated practice of a task, with or without prior instruction.

Related terms: learning, learning by using.

Learning outcomes /learning attainments - The set of knowledge, skills and/or competences an individual has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process, either formal, non-formal or informal. Related terms: assessment of learning outcomes, certification of learning outcomes, formal learning, informal learning, non-formal learning, validation of learning outcomes.

Lifelong learning (LLL): All learning activity undertaken throughout life, which results in improving knowledge, know-how, skills, competences and/or qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons.

New Member States: Countries that have joined the European Union in 2004 and 2007.

Non formal learning - Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. Comments: – non-formal learning outcomes may be validated and lead to certification. Non-formal learning is sometimes described as semi-structured learning. Related terms: formal learning, informal learning, learning, validation of learning outcomes.

On-the-job training: Vocational training given in the normal work situation. It may constitute the whole training or be combined with off-the job training. Related term: off-the-job training.

Sectors: For the purpose of this study, case studies should be drawn from any six among the following sectors: construction, tourism; retail distribution; food processing; health care; wholesale trade; manufacturing; agriculture and personal services. The Tourism industry comprises both the hotels and restaurants sub-sectors and case studies drawn from this sector should clearly indicate the sub-sector they refer to.

Skill The ability to perform tasks and solve problems. Related terms: competence, knowledge, know-how.

Small enterprises for the purpose of the present study enterprises with up to 50 employees are to be analysed, including inter alia crafts, micro-enterprises, family owned or social economy firms. The contractor should make a clear distinction between enterprises with up to 10 employees and enterprises with up to 49 employees.

Up-skilling - Short-term targeted training typically provided following initial education or training, and aimed at supplementing, improving or updating knowledge, skills and/or competences acquired during previous training. Related terms are continuing education and training, initial vocational education and training, retraining.

Validation of learning outcomes - Confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal or informal setting have been assessed against predefined criteria and are compliant with the requirements of a validation standard. Validation typically leads to certification. Related terms: assessment of learning outcomes, certification of learning outcomes.

Work based learning - synonymous to on the job learning and to learning at the work place.

3 Specific information concerning participation to this tender

3.1 Exclusion criteria

Participation to this tender is only open to tenderers who are in a position to subscribe in full to the Declaration on Exclusion criteria and Absence of conflict of interest, given in Annex C. Therefore all tenderers, all group (consortium) members (if any) and any subcontractor/s (identified as per the two bullet-points in the fourth paragraph of point 4.2 below) **MUST** provide the self-declaration found in Annex C duly signed and dated. The exclusion criteria will be assessed in relation to each company individually.

Cedefop reserves the right to check the situations described in points c) and f) of the declaration.

In the event of recommendation for contract award, point l) of Annex C will apply.

3.2 Selection criteria

The selection criteria concern the tenderer's capacity to execute similar contracts.

The tenderers must submit documentary evidence (or statements, where required) of their economic, financial, technical and professional capacity to perform this contract.

Each and all requirements for economic and financial capacity should be fulfilled by the tenderer - alone (in the case of single tenderers) or as a whole (in case the tenderer is a grouping/ consortium). Participation in tendering is open to all legal persons bidding either individually or in a grouping (consortium) of tenderers.

An economic operator may, where appropriate and for a particular contract, rely on the capacities of other entities, regardless of the legal nature of the links which he has with them. He must in that case prove to the contracting authority that he will have at his disposal the resources necessary for performance of the contract, for example by producing an undertaking on the part of those entities to place their resources at his disposal. This obligation may be fulfilled by presenting signed statements from those entities. Please note that natural persons (individuals, freelancers) are also considered 'entities' for this purpose.

3.2.1 Economic and Financial capacity

The tenderer must be in a stable financial position and have the economic and financial capacity to perform the contract.

Requirements:

- The average annual turnover of the tenderer for the last three financial years concerning the type of services to be covered in this call for tenders should be at least **200,000€**.

Proof of economic and financial capacity **must** be furnished by the following document:

- Signed Statement (Please fill-in and sign your Statement in Questionnaire 2 of Annex G) of the tenderer's turnover for the last three financial years concerning the type of services similar in nature to those making the subject of this call for tenders.

In case of a consortium (grouping) or subcontracting each member of the consortium and all sub-contractors (in line with points 4.1 or 4.2 below) must provide the required statement for the economic and financial capacity, but the assessment of whether the minimum requirement is met will bear on the consortium as a whole or the tenderer together with his subcontractors.

In the event of recommendation for contract award the winning tenderer (single tenderer or in the case of a consortium (grouping) - each member of the consortium) will be requested to prove the above by submitting Audited Financial Statements (Audited Profit and Loss Account/ Statement or equivalent), if these are foreseen by the respective national legislation. Should total subcontracting exceed 40% of the work by value, Cedefop reserves the right to request audited financial statements also from the subcontractors. For tenderers or sub-contractors (identified as per any of the two bullet-points in paragraph 4 of Art. 4.2 below) who are natural persons / freelancers, a tax declaration and tax clearance statement for the last three financial years will be requested.

If, for some exceptional reason the winning tenderer (or any consortium member or sub-contractor) is unable to provide one or other of the above documents, he is required to justify the non-provision and may prove his economic and financial capacity by any other document which Cedefop considers appropriate.

Cedefop reserves the right to request any other document enabling it to verify the tenderer's economic and financial capacity.

3.2.2 Technical and professional capacity

The Tenderers are required to have sufficient technical and professional capacity to perform the contract. They must demonstrate qualifications, experience, knowledge, skills and the ability to perform the tasks outlined in the terms of reference.

Requirements (mandatory) for Technical and professional capacity:

- The tenderer must have **six (6)** years of experience at least in international research management and project implementation with particular reference to education and VET and/or to labour market needs/employment issues;
- Adequate structure and resources for the tenderer to perform the services described in the Terms of Reference;
- The tenderer's team of experts, who will be proposed to implement the contract, must have the relevant to the subject of the study profiles, knowledge and experience for the successful implementation of the contract. In particular:

For the proposed Research Team Leader (project manager):

- **Five years** of experience at least in the field of SMEs economics and human resources development at national and European/international levels;
- Proven scientific experience (a minimum of 5 years) in the field of applied research with particular focus on SMEs;
- Proven research experience (a minimum of 3 years) in the field of quality approaches to VET with particular reference to work-based learning in-company training and competence acquisition;
- Linguistic ability to communicate and draft to a high standard in English (Level C1Europass²⁵).

For the proposed researchers:

- Each of the proposed researchers should have **three years** proven specific individual experience in the field of research on SMEs and their skill needs;
- The research team as a whole should show linguistic ability to communicate and draft to the same high standard in English as above.

Proofs / Evidences of Technical and professional capacity

The following documents or information must be presented by the tenderer to prove his technical and professional capacity to perform the proposed contract:

- Brief company profile with short presentation of the Tenderer (please fill-in Annex G, Questionnaire 4) describing his/her experience in comparative research and analysis on education and training policies in Europe and capacity to formulate suggestions to the attention of policy makers on how to promote skills development within SMEs at national and European levels;
- List of at least 3 contracts performed in the past six years (to have been concluded by the deadline of submission of offers) similar to the scope, size and nature as those required in this call for tenders (covering issues of human research development and skill needs in SMEs in the EU), describing the contracting authorities, the subjects, the amounts, the dates, the percentage and the specific tasks performed by the tenderer (please fill-in Annex G, Questionnaire 3);
- Detailed CVs of the experts (preferably in Europass format) who will be proposed to implement the study (the Research Team Leader and the researchers), i.e. the persons whose involvement will be crucial for performing the contract, including reference to linguistic abilities to prove the compliance with each of the minimum obligatory requirements, specified above.

In the case of consortium or subcontracting, the consortium or the tenderer with all subcontractors together have to provide evidence of technical and professional capacity as a whole (please see also 4.1 and/or 4.2 below).

²⁵ <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/LanguageSelfAssessmentGrid/en>

3.3 Legal Position

Tenderers may choose between submitting a joint offer (see 4.1) as a Consortium / Grouping or introducing a bid as a single tenderer, in both cases with the possibility of having one or several subcontractors (see 4.2). Whichever type of bid is chosen, the tender must stipulate the legal status and role of each legal entity in the tender proposed. To identify himself the tenderer must complete a Legal Entity Form found in Annex D which must be accompanied by all documents and information indicated in the form. Tenderers are also requested to complete the respective forms (tables) in Annex G.

The Legal Entity Form should be completed and signed by the representative(s) of the tenderer (who sign(s) the cover letter as per point 4 of the Invitation to tender) authorised to sign contracts with third parties.

The Legal Entity Form should not be submitted by sub-contractors (if any).

4 Additional information concerning participation to this tender procedure

Participation in Cedefop tendering procedures is open on equal terms to all natural and legal persons or groupings of such persons (consortia) falling within the scope of the Treaties. It includes all economic operators registered in the EU and all EU citizens. Pursuant to Article 106 of the general Financial Regulation the participation is also open to all natural and legal persons from non-EU countries that have a ratified agreement with the European Union in the field of public procurement on the conditions laid down in that agreement. Cedefop can therefore accept offers from and sign contracts with tenderers from 34 countries, namely: the 27 EU member States, 3 EEA Countries (Lichtenstein, Norway, Iceland) and 4 SAA Countries (Croatia, FYROM, Albania and Montenegro).

The procurement (tender) procedures of Cedefop are **not** open to tenderers from GPA countries.

A natural or legal person can take part (as an individual tenderer or as a member of a consortium submitting a tender) in only one tender. In the opposite case all tenders in which that person has participated may be excluded from the evaluation.

4.1 Joint Offers/ Groupings (Consortia)

Groupings (consortia), irrespective of their legal form, may submit a tender on condition that it complies with the rules of competition. A consortium may be a legally-established permanent grouping, or informally constituted group of tenderers submitting an offer (joint offer) for a specific tender procedure.

Cedefop does not require consortia (if any) to have a given legal form in order to submit a tender, but reserves the right to require a consortium to adopt a given legal form before the contract is signed (if this change is necessary for proper performance of the contract). This can take the form of an entity with or without legal personality but offering sufficient protection of the contractual interests of Cedefop.

If awarded the contract, the tenderers of the group (consortium) will have an equal standing towards Cedefop in executing it.

A grouping (if any) of firms 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.

Tenders submitted by consortia of firms must specify the role, qualifications and experience of each member or of the group (please fill-in the respective Questionnaires in Annex G).

Each member of the group (consortium) must provide the required evidence for the exclusion and selection criteria. Concerning the selection criteria, the evidence provided by each member of the group (consortium) will be checked to ensure that the consortium as a whole fulfils the criteria.

The offer has to be signed by all members of the group (consortium). However, if the members of the group so desire they may grant an authorisation to one of the members of the grouping (consortium). In this case they should attach to the offer a power of attorney (see model in Annex I) authorising this company or person to submit a tender on behalf of the grouping (consortium). For groupings not having formed a common legal entity, Annex I, model 1 should be used and separate legal entity forms (see point 3.3 and Annex D) should be completed and signed by all members. For groupings with a legal entity in place, Annex I, model 2 and one legal entity form (see point 3.3 and Annex D) should be completed and signed only by the single representative of the consortium.

The contract will have to be signed by all members of the group (consortium). If the members of the group (consortium) so desire, they may grant authorisation to one of the members of the grouping by signing a power of attorney. The same model as above duly signed and returned together with the offer (Annex I) is valid also for signature of the contract.

Partners in a joint offer assume joint and several liability towards Cedefop for the performance of the contract as a whole.

4.2 Subcontracting/Subcontractors

Subcontracting is defined as the situation where a contract has been or is to be established between Cedefop and a contractor and where the contractor, in order to carry out that contract, enters into legal commitments with other entities for performing part of the service. If awarded, the contract will be signed by the selected Tenderer (the Contractor), who will be vis-à-vis Cedefop the only contracting party responsible for the performance of this contract. Cedefop has no direct legal commitment with the subcontractor(s).

The contractor retains full liability towards Cedefop for performance of the contract as a whole. Cedefop will treat all contractual matters (e.g. payments) with the contractor, whether or not some tasks are performed by a subcontractor. Under no circumstances can the contractor avoid liability towards Cedefop on the grounds that the subcontractor is at fault. Any subcontracting/subcontractor must be approved by Cedefop, either by accepting the bidder's tender, or, if proposed by the Contractor after contract signature, in writing by an exchange of letters. In the latter case subcontracting/subcontractor will be accepted only if it is judged necessary and does not lead to distortion of competition.

Tenderers are free to choose their subcontractors from both eligible and non-eligible countries. Thus, in principle all economic operators can act as subcontractors of eligible tenderers. However the subcontracting of persons/ economic operators from non-eligible countries is limited to max 30% of the work by value.

The tenderer must clearly indicate the identity of each Subcontractor and the percentage of work by value that he will perform for this contract (please fill-in Annex G).

Only in cases when:

- a Subcontractor undertakes between 10% and 40% of the work by value,
- the total subcontracting is above 40% of the work by value, independently of the individual Subcontractor's contribution to the work by value,

the tenderer should submit with the offer:

1. the Declaration on exclusion criteria and absence of conflict of interest (Annex C) filled-in and signed by the respective Subcontractor;
2. the required documents related to the economic/financial and technical/professional capacity of the Subcontractor as described in points 3.2.1 and 3.2.2;
3. the Form in Annex J (Model of Letter of Intent for Subcontractor/s) duly filled-in and signed by each respective Subcontractor, stating his unambiguous undertaking to collaborate with the tenderer if the latter wins the contract. Also should be stated the roles, activities and responsibilities of the subcontractor(s) and the extent of the resources that the respective subcontractor will put at the tenderer's /contractor's disposal for the performance of the contract.

N.B. The subcontractor(s) (if any) have to provide the documents to prove their capacity only for the parts of the contract that are relevant to them. The evidence provided will be checked to ensure that the tenderer with the subcontractor(s) altogether fulfil the criteria.

Where no subcontractor is given (meaning that possible individual subcontracting is below 10% by value and total subcontracting does not exceed 40%), the work will be assumed to be carried out directly by the tenderer (single tenderer or group of tenderers (consortium)).

5 Award of the contract

Only the tenders meeting the requirements of the exclusion and selection criteria will be evaluated in terms of quality and price.

The contract shall be awarded to the tenderer submitting the tender that offers the best-value-for-money as represented by the highest Total Score (TS) out of 100.

The Total Score (TS), comprising quality + price score, will be calculated for each tender by applying the formula below:

$$\text{Total Score (TS)} = X * (\text{TQV}/100) + Y * (\text{Cheapest TFO} / \text{TFO})$$

Whereby:

TQV = Total Quality Value of the tender (as per points 5.1 and 5.2);

TFO = Total Financial Offer of the tender (as per points 5.3 and 5.4);

X is the weighting for quality score (TQV) and for this tender procedure it is fixed to (65);

Y is the weighting for price (TFO) and for this tender procedure it is fixed to (35).

Cheapest TFO is the Cheapest Tender Price of a technically compliant tender (i.e. among those having achieved a minimum of 50% of the possible score for each of the award (evaluation) criteria 1-3 below and in total a minimum of **65 out of 100 points** (TQV) in the technical evaluation – see below).

5.1 Technical evaluation

The assessment of the technical quality will be based on the ability of the tenderer to meet the purpose of the contract as described in the tender specifications.

The evaluation will be carried out on the basis of the following technical award criteria:

- **Award criterion 1 – The level of understanding of the nature of the assignment, its context and results to be achieved (40 points)**
 - The level of understanding of conceptual and practical issues related to 1) the importance of micro and small firms for the economy and employment in the EU and 2) the importance of sectors and national contexts in which they operate and of their interactions (**10 points**);
 - The level of understanding of conceptual and practical issues related to human resources development within SMEs with particular reference to the role of owners/ senior management (**10 points**);
 - The level of understanding of the benefits and challenges of various (informal, non-formal) learning and (formal) training patterns within SMEs (**10 points**);
 - The level of understanding of the European Union SMEs- and VET- related policies (**5 points**);
 - The capacity of drawing up pertinent conclusions on the basis of comparative analysis and formulating conclusions and recommendations at policy level, whether sector, regional, national or EU (**5 points**).
- **Award criterion 2 – The quality and appropriateness of the methods suggested to carry out the work (35 points)**
 - Proposal for carrying out the tasks in terms of methodology for defining data sources, for collecting and analysing data as well as for carrying out a comparative analysis of the case studies and sectors selected. The methodological proposal should define the steps envisaged to meet the requirements of the assignment (**20 points**);
 - Rationale for the selection of sectors and case studies (**15 points**).

➤ **Award criterion 3 – The organisation and management arrangements (25 points)**

- Allocation of tasks, type and degree of involvement of the proposed experts **(10 points)**;
- Capacity to perform the tasks as defined in the terms of reference within the deadline given (clarity, coherence and feasibility of the work programme and timetable) **(10 points)**;
- Capacity to deliver a final report ready for publication **(5 points)**.

In order to guarantee a minimum threshold of quality, offers that do not reach a minimum of 50% of the possible score for each of the award criteria 1-3 above will be eliminated from further evaluation. Tenders scoring as a total less than **65** (of a maximum of 100) points against the award (technical) criteria, will not be considered acceptable and will therefore not have their financial proposal evaluated.

Only the technically compliant (acceptable) tenders as per the above will be subject to Financial (Price) Evaluation (5.3).

5.2 Technical proposal

The tenderer's technical proposal should consist of a clear and comprehensive response to all requirements as per the Terms of Reference in point 2 above providing a practical, detailed description of the services proposed for performance of the contract.

Tenderers are requested to organise the technical offer in headings or to structure it in such a way as to ensure that the content of the technical offer meets the requirements set out in the Terms of as closely as possible and to facilitate the subsequent evaluation of tenders against the technical award criteria. It is up to the tenderer to present in his Technical Proposal a detailed organisation and methodology such that they fulfil (comply in full to) all requirements outlined in the Terms of Reference.

For the technical evaluation of the offer against the award (technical) criteria mentioned above, the tenderer must provide:

- brief description of the subject demonstrating in-depth understanding of the concepts, methodologies and research issues;
- brief description of the methodology proposed to meet the requirements of the research;
- detailed description of the envisaged approach and methods, including a list of steps, potential data sources, classifications to be used etc.;
- explanation of the nature and extent of the team members and experts' participation in the study/project;
- preliminary assessment of likely difficulties in carrying out the work and proposed actions;
- detailed work plan illustrating intended organisation and management of the task including:
 - ✓ composition of the proposed team;
 - ✓ timetable with descriptions of the deliverables (reporting, training...);
 - ✓ arrangements for secure and easy communication with Cedefop;
 - ✓ management of the project;
 - ✓ quality assurance.

The tenderer shall identify a person within his/her organisation who will represent the single contact point for all administrative and operational communication in regards to the contract implementation. Cedefop will also designate the Contact Person in charge of handling the contact with the selected tenderer.

In addition to the above the tenderer must clearly specify which parts of the work will be subcontracted (if any) and specify the identity of those subcontractors only undertaking more than 10% of the work by value (or of *all* subcontractors if total subcontracting is above 40% of the work by value) as requested in point 4.2.

For award criterion 1

- ✓ A concise discussion paper demonstrating in-depth knowledge and understanding of SMEs' importance for economic development, job creation and employment growth within the European Union (maximum 5 pages);
- ✓ A concise discussion demonstrating knowledge of the EU policies concerning SMEs (maximum 3 pages);
- ✓ A concise discussion demonstrating in depth knowledge of the importance of human resources management and skills development for SMEs' set up, survival and growth (maximum 5 pages);
- ✓ A concise discussion demonstrating in-depth understanding of the importance of various patterns of training and learning within SMEs and of their respective advantages and limitations (maximum 5 pages);
- ✓ A concise presentation of the EU VET policies and tools related to the present study (maximum 3 pages);
- ✓ A concise discussion demonstrating understanding of the importance of quality in training and learning within SMEs (maximum 2 pages);
- ✓ A concise discussion demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the role of sector institutions for promoting innovation and learning within SMEs including assisting them in establishing their training needs (maximum 5 pages);
- ✓ A concise discussion demonstrating in-depth knowledge of the particularities and challenges of small enterprises (up to 49 employees) with particular focus on micro firms (2 to 9 employees) in the EU including of their work organisation (maximum 2 pages);

For award criterion 2

- ✓ A detailed description of the approach to be followed to carry out the tasks defined under point 2.4 "Research Questions" of the Technical specifications including methodology for data collection and analysis and for policy recommendations (maximum 5 pages);
- ✓ An argumentation on the sectors to be selected as well as an argumentation of the case studies to be analysed;

For award criterion 3

- ✓ A description of the work organisation and management, i.e. the team to be assigned to the project and the distribution of tasks among them;
- ✓ A detailed timetable with description of deliverables, and the different stages of work, including an analysis of the difficulties likely to be encountered in carrying out the work and an indication of how these could be met at best.

5.3 Financial evaluation

Only tenders scoring in total **65** points or more (of a maximum of 100 points) against the technical award criteria and **50%** or more of the possible maximum score for each of the award criteria 1-3 above will have their financial proposal evaluated. The evaluation will be made on the basis of the **Total Price** offered in the Price Table (see point 5.4 below).

The tenders are awarded points for the Total Price offered by using the following formula:

*Financial score = (cheapest Financial Proposal / Financial Proposal of the tender considered) * 35.*

Where 35 = price weighting (see the complete formula under point 5 above)

5.4 Financial proposal

The financial offer must be clear and in compliance with the tender specifications. The Financial Proposal should indicate the total price in order to carry out all the activities indicated in the Terms of Reference. The tenderer must fill out the Price schedule table and present a detailed breakdown of the price offered. The Financial Proposal should clearly match the Terms of Reference and the estimate of value (see point 1.5). All services that shall be provided should be included in the price.

All costs incurred (travel, accommodation etc.) related to Cedefop's meetings as per point 2.7 of the Terms of Reference have to be included in the financial offer, point 2a) of the "**Price Table**" below. Any other travel, accommodation etc. expenses that may occur in performing the tasks as described in the ToR have also to be included in the financial offer, point 2b) of the Table.

1)	Names / positions of the Experts /Service	Number of person-days	Unit price (EUR) per person-day	Price (in EUR) for services/ experts
	1a)			
	1b)			
	1c)			
	1 N)			
Subtotal 1 (1a+1b+.....1 N.)				
2)	2a) Attending 1 meeting x 1-day and 2 follow-up meetings x max 2-days each at Cedefop premises (as per point 2.7)	Number of meetings/person	Price (EUR) per meeting/person	Amount (EUR) for all meetings
	2b) All estimated travel, accommodation, etc. expenses related to performance of the tasks of this study	Number of persons	Price (EUR) per person	Amount (EUR) for travel, accommod. etc
	2c) Other administrative expenses including professional proof-reading and editing in English of final report (see point 2.6 – last paragraph)	Number of Units (if applicable)	Unit price (EUR) (if applicable)	Amount (EUR) for other administrative expenses
Subtotal 2 (2a+2b+2c)				
3)	Total Price (Total Financial Offer TFO)= Subtotal 1 + Subtotal 2			

The VAT amount must be indicated separately here (this applies to tenderers established in Greece only): ... EUR.

The estimated total number of working days must be justified by the methodology and work organisation.

The Financial Offers will be checked for any arithmetical errors in computation and summation. Errors will be corrected by the evaluation committee as follows:

- where there is a discrepancy between a unit price and the total amount derived from the multiplication of the unit price and the quantity, the unit price as quoted will be the price taken into account. Tenderers will be requested to confirm in writing the corrected calculation so that it may eventually be included in the contract.

Information concerning price

- The prices quoted must be fixed and are not revisable.
- Prices must be quoted in euro and include all expenses.
- Under Articles 3 and 4 of the Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the European Union, Cedefop is exempt from all charges, taxes and dues, including value added tax (VAT). Such charges may not therefore be included in the calculation of the price quoted.

6 Information on presentation and content of tender

It is important that tenderers provide all documents necessary to enable the evaluation committee to assess their tender. Tenderers should fully respect the instructions indicated under points 2, 3 and 4 of this open invitation to tender.

In addition, below you will find details of the required documentation.

6.1 Envelope A - Supporting documents

One original and one copy of:

- cover letter, signed by the person/s (name and position) that is/are authorised to sign the contract in case of contract award
- the exclusion criteria declaration requested in point 3.1 and standard template found in Annex C
- the selection criteria documents as requested in points 3.2, 4.1, 4.2
- Questionnaires 1 – 4 as found in Annex G
- Power of Attorney (Model 1 or 2), as required in point 4.1 (if applicable) and found in Annex I
- Model of Letter of Intent for Subcontractor/s as required in point 4.2 (if applicable) and found in Annex J
- the Legal Entity Form as requested in point 3.3 and found in Annex D
- the Financial Identification Form as found in Annex E
- the checklist found in Annex F

In the case of tenders submitted by groupings (consortia) or involving contribution by subcontractors, envelope A should also contain all relevant documentation as requested in points 4.1 and 4.2 respectively (with reference to points 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3).

6.2 Envelope B – Technical proposal

One original signed version and three copies of:

- the Technical Proposal providing all information requested in point 5.2, including information relevant to subcontracting, if any, as requested in point 4.2.

6.3 Envelope C – Financial proposal

One original signed version and three copies of:

- the Financial Proposal containing all information requested in point 5.4.

ANNEX A

CONTRACT NOTICE

(Given as separate file in *.pdf format)

ANNEX B

DRAFT CONTRACT

(Given as separate file in *.pdf format)

ANNEX C

**Declaration of honour with respect to
the Exclusion Criteria and absence of conflict of interest**

(Given as separate file in *.doc format)

ANNEX D

LEGAL ENTITY FORM

Legal Entity Form to be downloaded, depending on the nationality and legal status of the tenderer, from the following website:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/legal_entities/legal_entities_en.cfm

Legal Entity Form to be completed and signed by a representative of the tenderer (group leader in case of consortium, with indication of entity, name and function) authorised to sign contracts with third parties. It should not be signed by sub-contractors (if any).

ANNEX E

FINANCIAL IDENTIFICATION FORM

To be downloaded, depending on the nationality of the tenderer, from the following website:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/financial_id/financial_id_fr.cfm

and completed and signed by an authorised representative of the tenderer (group leader in case of consortium, with indication of entity, name and function), but not by subcontractors.

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PLEASE NOTE:

Please indicate the BIC (Bank Identification Code) in the REMARKS box of the downloaded form.

ANNEX F

CHECK LIST OF MANDATORY DOCUMENTS

(Given as separate file in *.doc format)

ANNEX G

Questionnaires 1-4

(Given as separate file in *.doc format)

ANNEX H

Cedefop Style Manual & Referencing Guide

ANNEX I

MODELS of POWER OF ATTORNEY

(Given as separate file in *.doc format)

ANNEX J

Model of Letter of Intent for Subcontractor/s

(Given as separate file in *.doc format)

ANNEX K –

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Budget breakdown	The schedule which breaks down the contract value according to the different items or services, stating out fee rate, unit prices and lump sums for each item provided (Services, Supplies, Works).
Consortium	A grouping of eligible natural and legal persons or public entities which submits a tender or an application, under a tender procedure or in response to a Call for Tenders. It may be a permanent, legally-established grouping or a grouping which has been constituted informally for a specific tender procedure. All members of a consortium (i.e., the leader and all other partners) are jointly and severally liable to the Contracting Authority (Cedefop).
Contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct Contract: contract containing all the details necessary to implement it (as opposed to FWC) • Framework Contract (FWC): contract establishing only the general outline of the services or goods to be delivered and requiring an additional step to make the actual purchase • Specific Contract or order form: contract specifying details of a particular task based on the previously signed framework contract • Purchase Order: request for services, supplies or works used generally for procurement of a value below €25 000 as an equivalent to a contract
Contracting Authority	Cedefop
Evaluation committee	A committee made up of an odd number of members (at least three) with the necessary technical and administrative expertise to give an informed opinion on tenders.
Fee-based contract	A contract under which the services are provided on the basis of fixed fee rates for each day worked by experts (SERVICES).
Financial offer	The part of a tender which contains all the financial elements of the tender, including its summary budget and any detailed price breakdown or cash-flow forecast required by the tender dossier.

Framework contract (FWC)	<p>A framework contract is a contract concluded between Cedefop (the Contracting Authority) and an economic operator for the purpose of laying down the essential terms governing a series of specific contracts and/ or Order Forms to be awarded during a given period, in particular as regards the duration, subject, prices, conditions of performance and the quantities envisaged.</p> <p>Cedefop may also conclude multiple framework contracts, which are separate contracts with identical terms awarded to a number of suppliers or service providers.</p>
General conditions	The general contractual provisions setting out the administrative, financial, legal and technical clauses governing the execution of all contracts of a particular type.
Lump Sum Contract	A contract under which the services are performed for an all-inclusive fixed price (SERVICES).
Open procedure	Calls for tenders are open where all interested economic operators may submit a tender.
Project	The project in relation to which the services/works/supplies are to be provided under the contract.
Project manager	The person responsible for monitoring the implementation of a project/contract on behalf of Cedefop.
Service contract	A contract between a service provider and Cedefop for the provision of services such as technical assistance or studies (SERVICES).
Services	Activities to be performed by the Contractor under the contract such as technical assistance, studies, training and designs (SERVICES).
Special Conditions	The special conditions laid down by Cedefop (the Contracting Authority) as an integral part of the tender specifications (tender dossier), including amendments to the General Conditions, clauses specific to the contract and the terms of reference (for a service contract) or technical specifications (for a supply or works contract).
Successful Tenderer	The tenderer selected at the end of a tender procedure for the award of contract.
Supplier	Any natural or legal person or public entity or consortium of such persons and/or bodies offering to supply products (SUPPLIES).
Supplies	All items which the Contractor is required to supply to Cedefop (the Contracting Authority), including, where necessary, services such as installation, testing, commissioning, provision of expertise, supervision, warranty, maintenance, repair, training and other such obligations connected with the items to be provided under the contract (SUPPLIES).

Supply contract	Supply contracts cover the purchase of products. A contract for the supply of products and, incidentally, for siting and installation shall be considered a supply contract.
Tender	A written or formal offer to supply goods, perform services or execute works for an agreed price and under agreed conditions.
Tender dossier	The set of tender specifications which contains all the documents needed to prepare and submit a tender.
Tender specifications	Document or set of documents giving full details of the conditions, organisation and subject of the procurement procedure (includes technical specifications).
Tender Price	The sum stated by the tenderer in his tender for carrying out the contract.
Tender procedure	The overall process of putting a contract out for tender, starting with the publication of a contract notice and ending with the award of the contract (contract award notice).
Tenderer	A natural or legal person or consortium thereof submitting a tender with a view to concluding a contract.
Technical Specifications	The document drawn up by Cedefop (the Contracting Authority) setting out its requirements and/or objectives in respect of the provision of supplies (or works), specifying, where relevant, the methods and resources to be used and/or results to be achieved (SUPPLIES, WORKS).
Terms of Reference (ToR)	The document drawn up by Cedefop (the Contracting Authority) setting out its requirements and/or objectives in respect of the provision of services, specifying, where relevant, the methods and resources to be used and/or results to be achieved (SERVICES).
Warranty obligations	The warranty of the Contractor towards Cedefop that the supplies are new, unused, without defects, of the most recent models and incorporate all recent improvements in design and materials.

Where Services, Supplies or Works are not specified the definition applies to all types of contracts.