Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MoECR)
Moldova Higher Education Project (MHEP)

Procurement Reference: MD-MOED-206335-CS-INDV

TERMS OF REFERENCE
Individual Consultant for Adapting or Developing
the Tool for Engaging Stakeholders (TES)

1. Background information on the project

„Moldova Higher Education" Project (MHEP) is a World Bank-financed Project to be implemented between May 2020 and December 2025.

The total cost of credit is EUR 35.7 million (US$39.4 million equivalent) financed by the International Development Association (IDA) and is provided to the Republic of Moldova in support of Moldova Higher Education.

The Project Objective is to improve the labor market orientation of selected higher education institutions and the quality assurance mechanisms. The Project is organized around three components and includes systemic interventions in the areas of higher education quality, financing and management, as well as a targeted program to be implemented by selected higher education institutions and pedagogical colleges to address some of their most pressing needs in labor market orientation.

The MHEP components are described below:
1. Improving the Quality Assurance Mechanisms
2. Improving the Labor Market Orientation through Targeted Interventions
3. Project Management

Component 1 – Improving the Quality Assurance Mechanisms. This component aims to improve Moldova higher education system's quality assurance mechanisms, which would also contribute to improve its labor market orientation. It comprises three sub-components that support activities in: (i) National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and Quality Assurance (QA); (ii) System Management and Monitoring; (iii) Higher Education Financing.

Component 2 – Improving the Labor Market Orientation through Targeted Interventions. This component would finance the design and implementation of a targeted and needs-based program (Higher Education Improvement Program - HEIP) aimed at improving the labor market orientation of Moldova's higher education institutions, as well as their research capacity.

Component 3 – Project Management. This component would support the day-to-day management of the Project by the MoECR with assistance of a dedicated team of individual consultants who would provide managerial, fiduciary, and technical support to the implementation of the proposed Project for its full duration.

Component 2 has **HEIP Preparation** sub-component that will finance technical assistance for the preparation of improvement programs by eligible higher education institutions and pedagogical colleges, including the development of guidelines for beneficiaries, evaluation of these proposals, constant and high-quality fiduciary support at the HEIP implementation stage and the adaptation or development of a tool for engaging stakeholders in the design and implementation of the HEIP (participatory planning and decision making). Stakeholder engagement is an inclusive process that

must be conducted throughout the project life cycle, during the project preparation stage through to implementation and closure of the project.

In this context, the MoECR intends to hire an Individual Consultant who will assist the MoECR in adaptation and/or developing a Tool for Engaging Stakeholders (TES) for the Project. HEIP.

Stakeholder engagement activities will be targeted at project affected individuals as well as at other interested parties (MoECR and government agencies, NGOs, businesses and media, general public,). The TES will outline special considerations that will be given to ensure outreach and engagement of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. TES activities will include establishment and management of a Project grievance redress mechanism, public meetings, trainings and workshops, media and social media communication, disclosure of written materials, involvement of communication/ public relations officers from higher educational institutions and pedagogical colleges, as well as a survey conducted among affected individuals to gauge satisfaction with the quality of citizen engagement and share additional concerns.

2. Objective(s) of the assignment

The objective of the consultancy is to adapt and/or develop a TES for the MHEP.

The tool should be developed from the multi-dimensional perspective and should include activities that would pro-actively engage stakeholders and citizens in planning at the outset of the actions and monitoring during implementation, as well as a continuous feedback mechanism.

The main goals of the TES are:
- to develop dialogue platforms to genuinely engage higher education institutions' communities on Project implementation;
- to engage employers in participatory planning and designing of Project-supported activities (e.g. internship programs and career guidance);
- to facilitate participatory monitoring and evaluation of Project's activities and helping with laying the foundation for institutions that are responsive to feedback from a range of stakeholders;
- to generate awareness among stakeholders, direct and indirect beneficiaries of the opportunities to contribute to Project's activities and to integrate citizen voice in Project implementation;
- to establish trust among stakeholders' members and maintain a constructive relationship among them;
- to gain consensus on decision making processes;
- to gain a broad understanding of the stakeholders, direct and indirect beneficiaries' reactions to proposed development actions, including impacts and potential mitigation measures;
- to generate a range of feasible and acceptable solutions from key stakeholders about ways to improve engagement actions;

3. Scope of Work
In order to achieve the objective, the individual consultant shall perform the following tasks:

Task 0. Assignment Work Plan. The consultant will develop his/her workplan in respond to the scope of work, time frame and deliverables expected, which will include, but not limited to:

- collect, review and analyze all the necessary documents to fully substantiate all stages of TES elaboration and implementation.
- collect, review and analyze all the necessary documents to fully understand the administrative framework for TES elaboration and implementation.
- present the main objectives of the online platform, including the architecture, functional requirements and user groups.

Task 1. Develop and present the methodology with specific, detailed, and practical steps regarding the elaboration and/or adjustment of the TES.

The methodology should take into consideration, but not limited to the following aspects:

- *to include the participatory planning and decision-making* activities *that* will utilize an innovative online interactive tool to engage with and collect suggestions from relevant stakeholders, including, but not limited to higher education institutions, labor market representatives, public agencies etc.
- *to include the possibility to use online platforms (*e.g. online classrooms/ online working and focus groups or debate clubs, pages in social media, online communication groups, webinars, websites, video conferences, surveys etc.) that will be customized during 2021 to support: (i) the preparation of proposals for financing through the HEIP, and (ii) the engagement of students in the revision of the curricula. Targeted information and awareness building materials would ensure that students with disabilities and from disadvantaged backgrounds are given the opportunity to provide informed inputs and fully participate in the planning and decision-making processes established for the Project activities.
- *to include participatory monitoring* activities such as annual open days and follow-up workshops, activities, etc. that would empower beneficiaries and stakeholders to effectively verify and monitor the progress with the implementation of the HEIP awarded proposals.
- *to elaborate a feedback mechanism that* will be established through annual perception surveys with Project beneficiaries (mainly focused on students, graduates and academic staff from selected higher education institutions and pedagogical colleges that benefit from sub-financing under the HEIP component) and project stakeholders (higher education institutions and pedagogical colleges, teaching staff of universities and colleges, rayon education authorities, sectoral business associations, representatives of the vulnerable groups identified above, National Employment Agency, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, ODIMM, etc.), starting in year 2 of the Project, to obtain their opinion on (i) the effectiveness and utilization of citizen engagement approaches, and (ii) their satisfaction with the civic technology platform established for the Project. Survey findings will be collated and discussed in discussion forums, such that they provide valuable information to the implementation of the Project. These results shall be reported in the Project results framework.

Task 2. Review the Stakeholder Engagement Action Plan as part of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) developed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research to bring

out the roles and responsibilities of key players and institutions that play a vital role in Project implementation and develop recommendations to strengthen linkages between entities and integration strategy.

As part of the reviewed SEP, the consultant will elaborate TES including sustaining engagement aspect on how to enrol beneficiaries and stakeholders in an effective and efficient way.

TES will include but not limited to:

- provide step-by-step guidance to help higher education institutions and pedagogical colleges to engage a broad spectrum of stakeholders in an efficient and transparent manner;
- provide tools, including online one, to help higher education institutions and pedagogical colleges staff to document their plans, experiences, opinions and feedbacks as they implement a stakeholder engagement strategy and systematically identify activities that work in their day-to-day tasks and decision-making process;
- offer a methodology on how to easier day-to-day activities and decision-making process of the higher education institutions and pedagogical colleges staff so that the MHEP Project Development Objective is reached, and mainly the actions to improve the labor market orientation of selected higher education institutions and pedagogical colleges;

This toolkit should consist of several steps, but are not limited to: i) plan and budget stakeholders engagement actions; (ii) secure commitments to guiding principles; (iii) design a monitoring and evaluation systems of engagement stakeholders actions; (iv) engage stakeholders and sustain relationships, etc.

Each step should outline a series of tasks to perform to successfully complete the step. The tasks describe a course of action, the expected result and an explanation that will help to understand and accomplish the task. In some cases, a series of tools, including online ones, should be provided to help to complete the tasks in each step.

Once the integration process is executed, the Consultant will document the TES exercises and share with stakeholders through appropriate channels. Documentation should include, but not limited to, practical strategy, experiences, tips and techniques, success stories and challenges, and recommendations,

Task 3. Knowledge sharing and TES implementation. The following relevant activities will be carried out:
- to ensure TES implementation through stakeholders' consultation, working closely with relevant partners and involve them in necessary processes.
- to provide support and training to MoECR in support of the introduction of the TES and to organize minimum two workshops, one for all higher educational institutions and one for all pedagogical colleges selected to be financed in the frame of HEIP sub-financing scheme. The main goal of workshops is to present, explain and guide on steps toward implementation of TES.
- to inform the MoECR/PMT on the result of workshops and present feedback on TES adjustment, if applicable.

- to define information exchange mechanisms with relevant stakeholders and to make recommendations to improve the grievance mechanism and update the TES, taking into account information from stakeholders.

Task 4. Maintenance, support and monitoring of the TES implementation. The actions to be taken will include, but not limited:
- to develop an organizational structure to be proposed to higher educational institutions and pedagogical colleges that supports TES implementation after the project closure.
- to collect all feedbacks from stakeholders and beneficiaries on TES structure and elaborate updated versions, if needed.
- to carry out monitoring and reporting on implementation of the TES on a semi-annual basis.
- to perform any other functions as may be required by the MoECR related to TES.

4. Duration of the assignment, estimated time input and Expected Outcomes

This consultancy is expected to last 40 months, but no more than the Project closing day, starting with August 2021 and the deliverables submitted as follow:

Deliverables	Submission Deadline	Approval by
Inception Report which covers Assignment workplan (Task 0)	4 weeks from signing the contract	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
Progress Report #1 which covers Task 1 and will include the Methodology with specific, detailed, and practical steps regarding the elaboration and/or adjustment of the TES. (Task 1)	14 weeks from signing the contract	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
Progress Report #2 which covers Task 2 and will include the proposed TES and its relevant documents, report containing statistical and sociological analysis regarding the review of stakeholder analysis based on the Higher Education Project, Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) and develop recommendations on actions to be taken to strengthen linkages between entities for a sustainable SEP (Task 2)	59 weeks from signing the contract	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
Progress Report #3 which covers Task 3 and will contain the Report on consolidated actions including, but not limited to multi-stakeholders workshop/training containing resource materials. The number of participants, subjects and locations of the workshops will be agreed with MoECR and based on the methodology approved. (Task 3)	104 weeks from signing the contract	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research

Progress Report #4 which will cover the Task 4 and will include the Report on monitoring the TES implementation process. (Task 4)	134 weeks from signing the contract	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
Final report which covers the results of all Tasks and the Analysis and results of the TES implementation.	160 weeks from signing the contract	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research

In addition to the deliverables mentioned above, the consultant will prepare and submit to the MoECR for approval the five semi-annual Progress Reports, regarding the implementation and monitoring process of the TES. Payments will be performed based on approval of deliverables received from the MoECR. All deliverables shall be submitted in Romanian in electronic (MS Office) Period of approval of deliverables will not exceed 10 working days from the submission date to MoECR. The submission date is considered the date MoECR confirms receiving the deliverables.

5. Qualification requirements and basis for evaluation (evaluation criteria)
 (i) General experience (30 points):
- A post-graduate or equivalent qualification/ degree in social science, communications, education, or a closely related field.
- At least 3 years of prior work experience in dealing with education and social issues especially in the national, regional, or international context.
- Demonstrated interest in and proven knowledge of technology issues, technology and knowledge transfer and online information system design. Good knowledge of using online platforms, common digital and online learning tolls.

 (ii) Adequacy for Project (50 points):
- Demonstrated experiences and skills in facilitating stakeholder/working group consultations.
- Demonstrated experience in constructing and implementing stakeholder engagement programs with a range to stakeholders and the preparation of surveys would be an asset
- Demonstrate experience in developing awareness materials for projects or institutions.
- Ability to discuss with a range of stakeholders at all levels for social tool development and/or adaptation.
- Proven track record of supporting, advising and collaborating with Government structure.

 (iii) Language and Experience (20 points):
- Have good interpersonal skills and can work as part of a team.
- Fluency in written and spoken Romanian.
- Possess good spoken and written English skills.

- Possess excellent documents editing skills.

6. Institutional Arrangements

The Consultant will report to the Project Coordinator, Project Executive Director and Head of the Higher Education Policies Department of the MoECR. The Project Management Team will oversee the process of consulting services, manage the implementation of the contract.

The MoECR and Project team will provide the Consultant the necessary support to complete the assignment: Project documents necessary for assignment accomplishment, necessary work conditions.

Confidentiality statement: All data and information received from MoECR for the purpose of this assignment is to be treated confidentially and are only to be used in connection with the execution of these Terms of Reference. All intellectual property rights arising from the execution of these Terms of Reference are assigned to MoECR. The contents of written materials obtained and used in this assignment may not be disclosed to any third parties without the expressed advance written authorization of the MoECR.