**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**International Individual Consultancy for providing high-level advisory support to Government Ministries on EU integration process.**

**Location:** Remote, with missions to Moldova

**Duration and timeline: 65 days** (within an 8-month period, from end July 2024 to March 2025)

1. **Background**

Moldova has made progress in promoting inclusive growth since the early 2000s. Moldovan political commitments have deepened the path toward European integration. In 2022, Moldova received candidate status for integration with the European Union and, in June 2024, started negotiations with the EU. However, many reforms have yet to be further developed and implemented in line with EU good practices and standards to support accession to the European Union. In the context of these dynamics, the role of line ministries (Education, Labour and Social Protection, and Health) is crucial. Advisory support is needed to assist Government in complex integration and consultation processes but also help them to navigate through EU institutions, practices, and child-related policies.

UNICEF conducted a comparative analysis of the European Social Rights Pillar, which revealed Moldova’s significant progress in achieving greater coverage and child-sensitive policies. Moldova set out concrete initiatives to assess and align national standards in line with EU negotiating chapters (e.g., chapters 19, 26, 28) on Social Rights.

In a proactive move to align with EU standards and good practices, the line ministries requested UNICEF's high-level advisory support on EU integration. This support, which builds on previous initiatives and complements current technical assistance, will facilitate the alignment of national standards and practices with EU principles. The outcomes of this technical assistance are expected to provide a clear vision for the next steps in EU integration for Moldova, particularly line with the 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and EU negotiating chapters (e.g., chapters 19, 26, 28), towards a fair, inclusive, and opportunity-rich society.

1. **Purpose of the technical assistance**

The overall objective of the technical assistance is to support the UNICEF and the government, particularly the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) and the Ministry of Education and Research (MER), in implementing their reforms agenda and, in particular, to assist the ministries in developing the capacities required for EU integration, including the deep and child-sensitive policies.

1. **Objectives of the technical assistance**

The consultant will advise on good EU practices and knowledge sharing, support policymaking strategic planning, strengthen capacities, and enhance stakeholders’ knowledge and awareness of EU policies, legislation, and regulations. Specific advice will be given to ensure the political and institutional feasibility of the reforms and their effective implementation. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. **Support in chapter negotiation and identifying key gaps between Moldova policies and EU.** Dedicated support to the government by working with MLSP and MER to guide the implementation of the EU Social Rights Pillar Policy Brief recommendations and EU negotiating chapters. Also, support the alignment of national reforms with the best practices of the EU in social policy matters that aim to strengthen the national system and transpose good practices that address multidimensional vulnerability and poverty among families with children.
2. **Content and substance support** include contributing to drafting reports and elaborating national policies that align with EU practices, identifying key issues and areas for improvement, and proposing visions and measures to ensure the effective implementation of social policies with a child-sensitive lens.
3. **Advocacy and coordination support.** Guide in expanding the network with EU institutions, including accessing the EU funding mechanisms on implementation. This will involve identifying key EU institutions and contacts, establishing and maintaining relationships with them, and facilitating the process of accessing EU funding to implement social policy initiatives. And
4. **Provide technical advisory support to UNICEF** management and sector-specific sections, including guiding the development of the European Child Guarantee in Moldova.
5. **Details of how the work should be delivered**

The consultant will work in close collaboration with key line ministries in the Education, Social Protection, and Child Protection sectors. As this is cross-sectoral work, each UNICEF section will provide technical backstopping for each sector that fall under the mandate of the section. The technical support will be conducted remotely by organizing regular online meetings to advise on particular actions. Details on the approach to be followed will be developed by the consultant, under guidance from UNICEF sections and in coordination with government institutions.

1. **Deliverables and delivery dates**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Tasks** | **Deliverables** | **Timeline\*** | **Tentative timeframe** |
| * Develop a methodology approach, scope of technical assistance
 | * Inception report with methodology (3-4 pages)
 | 5 working days  | By 30 August 2024 |
| * Provide advisory support to UNICEF management and sections and have online consultation meetings
 | * At least 7 consultations organized
* Contribute to development of an EU child guarantee framework
 | 5 working days | 30 September 2024  |
| * Provide advisory support to Ministry of Education and Research
* Organize regular online meetings to advise Ministry’s management
 | * Contribute to development of strategic vision on EU integration for MER.
* At least 10 online consultations organized
 | 15 working days | By 30 October 2024 |
| * Organize regular online meetings to advise UNICEF management and sector specific sections
 | * At least 15 consultations organized
 | 5 working days | By 20 December 2024  |
| * Provide advisory support to Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
* Organize regular online meetings to advise Ministry’s management
 | * Contribute to development of strategic vision on EU integration for MLSP.
* At least 25 consultations organized
 | 35 working days | By 25 March 2025  |

*\* Exact deadlines will be mutually agreed upon contract signature.*

To achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the individual consultant, under the guidance of UNICEF, will:

* Conduct briefing and de-briefing meetings with UNICEF, key ministries as well as other partners as required;
* Prepare the final version of the policy brief with all key findings and validate the briefs in technical meetings, including ministries and UNICEF feedback.

The consultant will report to each UNICEF homonymous section depending on the sector-specific intervention; the focal person for overall coordination will be the UNICEF Social Policy Specialist, who will regularly communicate with the consultant and provide feedback and guidance on his/her performance and all other necessary support so to achieve objectives of the consultancy, as well as remain aware of any upcoming issues related to consultant’s performance and quality of work.

All activities and deliverables undertaken by the consultant shall be discussed and planned in consultation with UNICEF. The consultant is expected to deliver each component of the workplan electronically (in Word format) and in English/or Romanian. At each stage, the deliverable shall be sent/confirmed with/ to the UNICEF Social Policy Specialist, with Deputy Representative in copy.

1. **Performance indicators for evaluation of results:**

The performance of work will be evaluated based on the following indicators:

* Completion of tasks specified in ToR;
* Compliance with the established deadlines for submission of deliverables;
* Quality of work;
* Demonstration of high standards in cooperation and communication with UNICEF and counterparts
1. **Qualifications and experience**

Technical background and experience required:

* Advanced university degree (Masters, or PhD) in law, social sciences, public policy or international development policy.
* Eight years of professional experience in policy-making or technical assistance related to social policy and inclusion.
* Experience in qualitative data analysis.
* Strong knowledge of EU standards and practices.
* Previous experience in EU government, EU commissions, national government institutions from EU countries on social policy is a strong asset.
* Excellent written and oral communication skills in English required, knowledge of Romanian would be a strong advantage.
1. **Content of technical proposal**

Please provide your Curriculum Vitae.

**9 Content of financial proposal**

The applicant should fill in the Financial Offer Template and specify the consultancy fee in USD, per day of work, requested to complete the deliverables described in the Terms of Reference, as well as breakdown of international travel and daily subsistence allowance (DSA) costs if applicable (as specified in paragraph 14 of this ToR).

Other expenses directly related to the ToR assignments and deliverables such as: (translation/interpretation costs, local transportation etc.) may be included in the financial offer unless specified that UNICEF will cover them separately (see paragraph 14 and 15 below).

The final selection will be based on the principle of “best value for money” i.e. achieving desired outcome at lowest possible fee.

If not provided by ToR, UNICEF will not reimburse costs not directly related to the assignment. This contract does not allow payment of off-hours, medical insurance, taxes, and sick leave.

UNICEF reserves the right to withhold all or a portion of payment if performance is unsatisfactory, if work/output is incomplete, not delivered or for failure to meet deadlines.

1. **Evaluation criteria for selection**

The candidate is expected to reflect in the submission the qualifications, knowledge and experience related to the requirements listed above. Technical evaluation will be performed through a desk review of applications, evaluation of technical proposals, and if necessary, may be supplemented by an interview.

The total amount of points to be allocated for the price component is 30. The maximum number of points (30) will be allotted to the lowest price proposal of a technically qualified offer. Points for other offers will be calculated as Points (x) = (lowest offer/ offer x) \* 30.

The selection process is aimed at selecting the applicant who obtains the highest cumulative score (technical evaluation + financial offer evaluation points) following “best value for money” principle.

1. **Payment schedule**

The payment will be linked to the following deliverables upon satisfactory completion and acceptance by UNICEF:

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| --- | --- |
| **Deliverable (delivered according to the timeline agreed upon with UNICEF)** | **Proportion of payment** |
| Deliverable 1 and 2  | 25%  |
| Deliverable 3  | 25% |
| Deliverable 4 | 25% |
| Deliverable 5  | 25% |

UNICEF reserves the right to withhold all or a portion of payment if performance is unsatisfactory, if work/outputs are incomplete, not delivered for failure to meet deadlines.

1. **Definition of supervisory arrangements**

The specialist will work under the oversight of Social Policy Specialist of UNICEF Moldova. Payments will be rendered upon successful completion of each task, as per the schedule outlined above.

1. **Work location and official travel involved**

The work will be done remotely and requires several missions to Chisinau to meet with the national stakeholders. If needed, meetings will be organized online, and the UNICEF office will facilitate introductions to key informants.

1. **Support provided by UNICEF**

UNICEF in coordination with other partners will regularly communicate with the consultant/s and provide feedback and guidance and necessary support so to achieve objectives of the work, as well as remain aware of any upcoming issues related to the performance and quality of work. UNICEF will provide an initial package of relevant documents and available research, and an initial list of relevant experts and counterparts to work with. UNICEF will also request relevant data – as agreed upon with the consultant – from relevant government counterparts.

1. **Child Safeguarding**

Is this project/assignment considered as “Elevated Risk Role” from a child safeguarding perspective?

YES ☐ NO ☒ If YES, check all that apply:

1. **Ethical considerations**

The Consultant will ensure that the process is in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines1. The Consultant should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty while interacting with stakeholders and beneficiaries. Furthermore, the Consultant should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual information. All participants should be informed about the context and purpose of the Assessment, as well as about the confidentiality of the information shared. The Consultant can use documents and information provided only for the tasks related to these terms of reference.

As per the internal PROCEDURE ON INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANTS, together with the Notification letter, the consultant will be sent the link to UNICEF policies on Prohibiting and Combatting Fraud and Corruption; Prohibition of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority and other relevant policies for their information and acknowledgment. The selected candidate must complete the applicable mandatory online courses on UNICEF’s learning platform prior to signature of contract. All certificates should be presented as part of the contract.