

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Title: Capacity gap analysis of pupils' councils to efficiently support child participation in decision making process related to school life and education

Type of consultancy: National Individual Consultancy

Duration: 44 working days over a period of three (3) months

Timeframe: December 2020 – February 2021

1. Background

The Education Code of the Republic of Moldova establishes clear requirements for democratic participation, of children, parents and school personnel in the decision-making processes related to education and school life. The National Education Strategy reinforces this by making similar references to child participation in education, in the context of delivering the education for life principle, as well as active citizenship and social cohesion through quality education.

In accordance with the Child Friendly Schools standards, In July 2018 MECR approved the curriculum for the compulsory school subject Education for Society (EpS) from the 5th to the 12th grade, which aims to develop competencies for democratic and active citizenship. One important aspect of this curriculum is making pupils voices heard, including through Pupils' Council and Students' Councils. The core element of the curriculum is project-based learning in which all students practice and further develop competences for participation and contribution to decision making including through pupils' participatory mechanisms such as councils and committees.

A smooth implementation of the EpS ergo of the Education Code and "Education 2020" Strategy will allow nurturing talents, energy and creativity of pupils and students. Therefore, mapping of existing policies and practices supporting adolescent participation and civic engagement followed by an assessment of capacities of the existing pupils' participatory mechanisms will inform the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research MECR, and also UNICEF teams on further capacity building needs of pupils' councils alongside with schools for enhancing democratic participation and engagement of young people in decision making processes in education and school life.

In this context, UNICEF Moldova is seeking an individual consultant to Conduct a capacity gap assessment of pupils' and students' councils to meaningfully and effectively participate in decision making processes related to education and school life.

2. Purpose of work

The purpose of the consultancy is to enhance the participation of adolescents in decision making related to school life and education, as well as identify the gaps and barriers that hinder the efficient functionality of pupils' councils at local, rayonal and national levels.

3. Objectives

The objectives of the consultancy is to conduct the capacity assessment to identify areas for improvement, develop a set of recommendations, very concrete and specific to address the identified gaps, and support the advocacy efforts of MECR and UNICEF to strengthen the policies and mechanisms aiming at pupils' participation in decision making process at school and education.

The results of the capacity gap assessment will form the basis for developing of practical recommendations and a capacity building plan of actions to strengthen national and local pupils' councils.

4. Details of how the work should be delivered

The consultant, under the supervision of the UNICEF Youth and Adolescents Development Officer will conduct the analysis within the timeframe specified. The analysis is expected to benefit from established best practices and principles, based on a mutually agreed methodology. The analysis should be conducted in a participatory manner, and through consultations with key stakeholders, particularly youth and adolescents who are considered the direct beneficiaries.

The consultant will be required to participate in an inception meeting with the Youth and Adolescent Development Officer at UNICEF Moldova, in order to gain an understanding of the national scope and requirements of this assessment. In consultation with UNICEF, the consultant will be required to produce an inception report, which will include a work plan, the final selection of national research sites and sample characteristics, as well as the research instruments. This activity should not take longer than five days to complete.

The consultant will undertake ten working days conducting a desk review of legal-policy documents, secondary literature, annual reports and other programme documents related to pupils' participation in decision making processes regarding education and school life. The desk review report will be submitted in Romanian to the Youth and Adolescent Development Officer of UNICEF Moldova.

Over a period of 20 days, the consultant will conduct primary research in pre-specified schools and other educational institutions. Primary research will be undertaken in coordination with UNICEF, as follows:

- Informant interviews with MECR and schools' representatives responsible for establishing and coordinating pupils' and students' councils, including programs and projects related to participation and active citizenship;
- Online focus group discussions with adolescents disaggregated by age and gender, geographic distribution, disability and ethnic groups particularly from vulnerable groups;
- Interviews with Municipal/ Rayonal Directorate on Education (i.e. specialist responsible for pupils' participation). Is expected that the consultant will organize at least five interviews in the selected administrative units.

Based on the findings of the policy review report and the capacity gap assessment, the consultant

will organize an online validation meeting with key informants and representatives of the central and local authorities to collaboratively validate findings of reports and identify actions to improve policies and practices regarding pupils' participation in decision making processes related to education and school life. Recommendations will be collected from all stakeholders and feed into a capacity building action plan that will guide MECR and UNICEF in further support strengthening the network of pupils' councils at the school, rayonal and national levels.

5. Deliverables and delivery dates (based on the work plan)

No.	Activity	Deliverables	Tentative deadlines* Working days
1.	Conduct inception meetings and report	Inception report	5 Working days
2.	Carry out a desk-review (mapping) of national legal-policy analysis, literature, annual reports, and other programme documents related to pupils' participation in decision making processes relating to education	- Desk-review report submitted to UNICEF for Feedback	10 Working days
3.	Refine the report as per comments and recommendations received from UNICEF and MECR	• Final desk review submitted to UNICEF	2 Working days
4.	Primary data collection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informant interviews with MECR, schools and pupils' councils' representatives - Online focus group discussions with adolescents - Interviews with rayonal/ municipal Directorates on Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compiled database and information • Draft report containing analysis of data collected submitted for feedback to UNICEF 	20 Working days

5.	Refine the report as per comments and recommendations received from UNICEF and MECR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final report submitted to UNICEF which contains the executive summary 	2 Working days
6.	Organise an online validation workshop at national level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPT presentation with the executive summary of the report Consolidated brief report from the validation workshop 	1 Working days
7.	Elaborate the capacity building action plan as per the findings of the assessment and validation workshop discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft of the action plan submitted to UNICEF for feedback 	3 Working days
8.	<p>Incorporate final amendments based on validation workshop recommendations as required</p> <p>Produce Final report and draft Action Plan (with inputs from the validation meeting)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final draft of the Action Plan (available in Romanian and English) submitted to UNICEF in Word format, electronic version. Final report submitted to UNICEF 	1 Working day
	TOTAL		44 Working Days

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

All deliverables will be submitted electronically in Word format, in Romanian language, to Youth and Adolescent Development Officer.

6. Reporting requirements

The consultant will report to the Youth and Adolescent Development Officer, 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 work plan electronically in Romanian (Word format or PPT where relevant). At each stage, the deliverable shall be sent to the Youth and Adolescent Development Officer by email.

7. Performance indicators for evaluation of results:

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

- Completion of tasks specified in the ToR and jointly agreed work plan
- Compliance with the established deadlines for submission of deliverables;
- Demonstration of high standards of work with UNICEF and with counterparts;
- Quality of work:
- Ensure all activities are aligned with international guidelines and recommendations

The following principles should underpin expected deliverables:

- respect child's right to be heard and ensure that the views and experiences of children and parents are taken into account in the development of services and policies that affect them.
- adopt a strength-based approach that is non-judgmental and that values adolescents' participation and empowerment;
- interpret child and youth participation policies within a children's rights approach as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and recognize children and young people as citizens in their own right.

8. Qualifications and experience

- Postgraduate diploma or degree in education, law, sociology, social policy or other relevant field;
- Minimum of 5 years of relevant professional experience in the area of child participation, non-formal education and/or youth policy development and evaluation.
- Minimum of 3 years of relevant professional experience in the area of child participation, non-formal education and youth policy development and evaluation. Previous engagement in capacity gap assessment;
- Experience in working with the Government of Moldova;
- Experience in working with UNICEF or other UN Agencies will be an asset;
- Proven knowledge of international human and child rights standards (United Nations and European Union standards);
- Proven experience in writing qualitative research reports and capacity gap assessment;
- Fluency in Romanian language, possession of Russian language will be asset;
- Professional level of English, with good abilities in reading and writing.

9. Structure of the Technical Proposal

The Technical Proposal should include, but not limited to the following:

- Relevant experience with similar type of assignments (max 300 words);
- Proposed approach and methodology (max 1000 words), including:
 - Timeline and milestones;
 - Risk and mitigation measures;

- Methodology to run field research;
- Ethical considerations and how the consultant will address them.
- Annex: Short Sample or links to related work previously conducted by the consultant

In addition, provide the application with the *Curriculum Vitae*.

10. 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 for the tasks described in the Terms of Reference. MDL will serve as contract currency, converted at the UN exchange rate applicable at contract signature date.

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). 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.

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

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.

11. Evaluation criteria for selection

The candidate is expected to reflect in the application 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 $\text{Points (x)} = (\text{lowest offer} / \text{offer x}) * 30$.

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.

12. Payment schedule

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

Deliverable (delivered according to the timeline agreed upon with UNICEF)	Proportion of payment
Inception report	30%
Submission of the desk review report	30 %
Submission of the final report with recommendations of the validation meeting incorporated, including the capacity building plan of action	40%

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.

13. Definition of supervision arrangements

The consultant will work under the oversight of Youth and Adolescent Development Officer of UNICEF Moldova. Payments will be rendered upon successful completion of each task, as per the schedule outlined above.

14. Work location and travel involved

The consultancy is remote – based, with at least 20 online meetings as agreed with the supervisor. The consultant should provide its own computer and recording tools when conducting interviews and focus group discussions.

The work will require online meeting and consultations with LPAs schools and pupils, as per their availability. The consultant is expected to cover costs, arrange and schedule such meetings. UNICEF will facilitate introductions to key informants.

15. Support provided by UNICEF

UNICEF will regularly communicate with the consultant 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 with relevant documents and available research; contacts and lists of relevant technical people to work with, constant guidance and feedback in relation to consultant's work.

16. Ethical considerations

Primary data collection through focus groups discussions will take into consideration how ethical concerns shall be addressed to avoid stigma, discrimination, any form of harm to children and their parents, protection of confidentiality, protection of rights, ensuring the dignity and welfare of all respondents.

The consultant will be expected to follow the ethical protocols developed at regional level closely, as well as sign a UNICEF child protection code of conduct. S/he will be required to inform the UNICEF Country Office of any ethical issues, such as child safeguarding concerns, that arise during the data collection period. S/he will also be required to distribute a referral card to

vulnerable parents and adolescents throughout the course of the research process.

As per the DHR PROCEDURE ON CONSULTANTS AND INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANTS, together with the Notification letter, the consultant will be sent the link on Agora containing 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.

17. Copyrights & utilization rights

The copyright and the right of utilization of all the materials will belong to UNICEF Moldova.