

Bucharest
09.08.2017

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (CONSULTING SERVICES – INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANTS)

ROMANIA

Romania Secondary Education Project
Loan Agreement No 8481-RO

Assignment Title: Technical Assistance to Support Systemic Interventions related to Assessment and National Examinations

Reference No.: C 1.2/6.2

The *Government of Romania (GoR)* has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the *Romania Secondary Education Project*, and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consulting services.

The consulting services (“the Services”) include *Technical Assistance to Support Systemic Interventions related to Assessment and National Examinations* within a period of 175 days, between October 2017 and September 2020. The Terms of Reference for Technical Assistance to Support Systemic Interventions related to Assessment and National Examinations are annexed to this Request for Expressions of Interest.

The *Ministry of National Education / Unit for the Management of Externally Financed Projects* now invites eligible consultants (“Consultants”) to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested Consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services.

One Consultant will be selected in accordance with the selection of individual consultants method set out in the Consultant Guidelines. Firms are not allowed to propose individual consultants. Each consultant must indicate the targeted position, taking into account the following minimum qualification requirements:

Qualification

The minimum competencies required are the following:

- (i) Advanced graduate degree (PHD/master degree/other postgraduate studies) in educational sciences or psychology;
- (ii) At least 10 years of experience in the field of assessment and examination at national, regional and/ or international level, in areas such as: test development, development and administration of assessment and examinations at national or international levels, Item Response Theory, computer-based assessment;

- (iii) Experience in development of teacher training programs on assessment and examination topics;
- (iv) Proven international experience in assessment studies;
- (v) Proven experience in formative assessment and evaluation of students' competencies;
- (vi) Understanding of the Romanian system of education, especially of the upper secondary level, and of the Romanian examination system will be an advantage;
- (vii) Proved ability to deliver under tight deadlines and produce high quality outputs;
- (viii) Strong interpersonal skills and excellent written and oral communication skills in English.

The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to paragraph 1.9 of the World Bank's "*Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits and Grants by World Bank Borrowers*" dated January 2011 (revised July 2014). ("Consultant Guidelines"), setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest. In addition, please refer to the following specific information on conflict of interest related to this assignment:

Bank policy requires that consultants provide professional, objective, and impartial advice and at all times hold the client's interests paramount, without any consideration for future work, and that in providing advice they avoid conflicts with other assignments and their own corporate interests. Consultants shall not be hired for any assignment that would be in conflict with their prior or current obligations to other clients, or that may place them in a position of being unable to carry out the assignment in the best interest of the Borrower. Without limitation on the generality of the foregoing, consultants shall not be hired under the circumstances set forth below:

(a) Conflict between consulting activities and procurement of goods, works, or non-consulting services (i.e., services other than consulting services covered by these Guidelines): A firm that has been engaged by the Borrower to provide goods, works, or non-consulting services for a project, or any affiliate that directly or indirectly controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with that firm, shall be disqualified from providing consulting services resulting from or directly related to those goods, works, or non-consulting services. Conversely, a firm hired to provide consulting services for the preparation (before Loan effectiveness) or implementation of a project, or any affiliate that directly or indirectly controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with that firm, shall be disqualified from subsequently providing goods, works, or services (other than consulting services covered by these Guidelines) resulting from or directly related to the consulting services for such preparation or implementation. This provision does not apply to the various firms (consultants, contractors, or suppliers) which together are performing the Contractor's obligations under a turnkey or design and build contract.

(b) Conflict among consulting assignments: Neither consultants (including their personnel and sub-consultants), nor any affiliate that directly or indirectly controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with that firm, shall be hired for any assignment that, by its nature, may be in conflict with another assignment of the consultants. As an example, consultants assisting a client in the privatization of public assets shall neither purchase, nor advise purchasers of, such assets. Similarly, consultants hired to prepare Terms of Reference (TOR) for an assignment shall not be hired for the assignment in question.

(c) Relationship with Borrower's staff: Consultants (including their experts and other personnel, and sub-consultants) that have a close business or family relationship with a professional staff of the Borrower (or of the project implementing agency, or of a recipient of a part of the loan) who are directly or indirectly involved in any part of: (i) the preparation of the TOR for the assignment, (ii) the selection process for the contract, or (iii) the supervision of such contract may not be awarded a contract, unless the conflict stemming from this relationship has been resolved in a manner acceptable to the Bank throughout the selection process and the execution of the contract.

(d) A consultant shall submit only one proposal, either individually or as a joint venture partner in another proposal. If a consultant, including a joint venture partner, submits or participates in more than one proposal, all such proposals shall be disqualified. This does not, however, preclude a consulting firm to participate as a sub-consultant, or an individual to participate as a team member, in more than one proposal when circumstances justify and if permitted by the RFP (Request for Proposal).

One Consultant will be selected in accordance with the selection of individual consultants method set out in the Consultant Guidelines.

Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours 8:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M.

Expressions of interest and CVs must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person, or by mail, or by fax, or by e-mail) by August 21, 2017, at 4 P.M local time. To validate the information presented in the CV, the candidate will attach all supporting documents, necessary to prove at least the minimum qualifications that are mandatory (study diplomas, proofs for the professional experience, list of papers and/or copies after the cover and the content of relevant scientific works, recommendations, training diplomas etc.).

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Romania
Ministry of National Education
Romania Secondary Education Project (ROSE Project)
Loan Agreement N° 8481-RO

**Terms of Reference for Technical Assistance to Support Systemic Interventions related
to Assessment and National Examinations**

I. Background

On April 17, 2015, the Government of Romania (GoR) and the World Bank (WB) signed the Loan Agreement N° 8481-RO on the implementation of the **Romania Secondary Education Project** (hereinafter referred to as **the ROSE Project**). The ROSE Project was declared effective on October 14, 2015 and will be implemented by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) until November 2022, through the Unit for the Management of Externally Financed Projects (UMEFP). The ROSE Project Development Objectives (PDO) are to improve transition from upper secondary to tertiary education and increase the retention in the first year of tertiary education in project-supported education institutions. It is structured in three components, as described below.

Component 1 – School-based and Systemic Interventions. This component finances supply-side interventions at the school and system levels to address the academic and personal factors hindering Romanian students from transitioning from upper secondary to tertiary education, including dropping out, declining to take the Bacalaureate, or scoring a low mark on the Bacalaureate.

Sub-component 1.1 – School-based Interventions. This sub-component supports the transition of students from upper secondary to tertiary education using a decentralized approach based on non-competitive grants to low-performing public high schools.

The criteria for selection of eligible high schools combine the following rates: Bacalaureate passing rate and upper secondary graduation rate. Grants will be awarded to public high schools for a 4-year period to allow sufficient time for implementing activities aimed at supporting students from Grade 9 through Grade 12. At the end of the Project, it is estimated that approximately 80 percent of Romanian public high schools would benefit from this sub-component.

Sub-component 1.2 – Systemic Interventions. This sub-component will support a series of interventions aimed at addressing the systemic challenges faced by all high schools in facilitating the transition into tertiary education. The interventions will be implemented centrally by the MoNE and the financed activities include: (i) revision of the upper secondary education curriculum, with specific consideration for the needs of disadvantaged students including Roma; (ii) training of teachers and public school directors on implementing the revised curriculum, on adapting the curriculum to the needs and abilities of different students (inclusive education), student-centered teaching approaches, intercultural competence and on formative assessment; (iii) improving teaching conditions within Teachers Houses; (iv) revising and updating Grade 8 and Bacalaureate exam banks of items, and providing training and improvement of existing information and technologies platform; (v) development and implementation of a Grade 10 learning assessment, to be administered at the end of the

compulsory education cycle; (vi) development of digital teaching and learning materials; (vii) development and implementation of campaigns to raise student and teacher awareness, which could be tailored for Roma students; and (viii) strengthening of MoNE's capacity to use educational information to monitor upper secondary education and the transition of students into tertiary education.

This sub-component will finance technical assistance for the National Centre for Assessment and Evaluation (NCAE) in order to design, implement and evaluate the activities mentioned in the list below:

- Revision and update Grade 8 and baccalaureate exam banks of items;
- Training for NCAE and relevant MoNE staff, including the strengthening of the institutional capacity of the NCAE;
- Development and implementation of a Grade 10 learning assessment to be administered at the end of compulsory education.

The sub-component will finance development and validation of appropriate formative assessment instruments for each high school grade aligned with the new curriculum.

In close relationship with the curriculum and assessment items revision, the ROSE project funds will be used to finance training and professional development programs for teachers and directors of Romanian public high schools, focusing on pedagogical techniques aligned with the competence-based approach, student-centered teaching that shifts the focus from teachers to learners, inclusive education, intercultural competence and formative assessment.

Component 2 – University - Level Interventions and Bridge Programs. This component supports activities designed to address the needs of students who are at risk of dropping out of faculties in the first year of study in tertiary education. It finances three grant schemes – one non-competitive and two competitive – for public faculties/universities that serve these at-risk students. Approximately 85 percent of Romanian public faculties would benefit from this component.

Component 3 – Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation. This component finances day-to-day project management activities, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) activities, project audits, as well as incremental operational and staffing costs of the MoNE's UMEFP. This component also finances the carrying out of: (i) surveys concerning high school students attending bridge programs; (ii) an impact evaluation of the high school grants program to assess improvements in student outcomes and school management processes; (iii) a revision of the existing student loan scheme developed for tertiary education students; (iv) an analysis of existing demand-side programs addressing the needs of disadvantaged upper secondary students that are currently under implementation; and (v) other M&E studies, as needed.

II. Objective

The objective of this assignment is to support UMEFP in the design, planning, and implementation of the activities related to assessment and evaluation of competencies included in *Sub-component 1.2. Systemic interventions* of the ROSE Project. The specific focus of this assignment is to support the National Centre for Assessment and Evaluation (NCAE) to prepare and implement activities related to revision of the evaluation items data base and to the design and implementation of a new learning assessment at the end of compulsory education, including a training plan for NCAE staff and for teachers in high schools.

III. Scope of Services

To achieve the objective of this assignment, the Consultant is expected to undertake the following tasks:

a. ***Learning Tasks:***

- Review the ROSE Project documents including the Project Appraisal Document, Loan Agreement No 8481-RO, Project Operations Manual, Project Implementation Plan, the guidelines to support pedagogical activities developed under Subcomponent 1.1 of the ROSE project, and other documents as indicated by the Project Director.
- Review the legislation and methodologies regarding learning assessment and examinations - Law of Education no. 1/2011, current methodologies of national assessments and national examinations, samples of the items used in the national assessments and exams, as well as other relevant documents related to assessment and examinations development and implementation in Romania (e.g. *The OECD-UNICEF Review on Assessment and Evaluation in Romania*), as indicated by the UMEFP and the NCAE.

- b. ***Meet the core members of the ROSE Project Management Unit***, especially the Project Director, the Technical Coordinator, the Monitoring and Evaluation specialist and the Upper Secondary Education Specialist for Systemic Interventions, as well as other specialists in the UMEFP, as indicated by the Project Director.
- c. ***Meet and collaborate with the representatives of the National Center for Assessment and Examinations***, especially the director, as well as other staff, as indicated by NCAE management team.
- d. ***Coordinate and work closely with the consultants*** selected by UMEFP under separate assignments, to support design and implementation of interventions under *Sub-component 1.2. Systemic interventions* of the ROSE Project.
- e. ***Prepare a Work plan*** for supporting NCAE and UMEFP in the tasks related to assessment activities and corresponding training established under ROSE project. The draft of this work plan should be presented to the Project Director. All comments provided to the Consultant should be incorporated in the final version of this document.
- f. ***Prepare a Desk review of international best practice in computer-based assessment, online/offline assessment delivery, item banking, item analysis, scaling, reporting for various audiences, and recommendations for delivering online assessments in Romania***, with a special focus on the requirements and resources needed for setting up this delivery mode at organizational level. The consultant will include the relevant recent examples, highlighting best practices relevant for the Romanian situation, focusing on assessing students competencies.
- g. ***Prepare, after consultation with representatives of the MoNE, NCAE and IES, as well as with the other consultants hired for activities in the Sub-component Systemic interventions under the ROSE Project, an Action plan*** for the implementation of activities regarding revision and update of Grade 8 and Bacalaureate exam banks of items and corresponding training, as well as development and implementation of a Grade 10 learning assessment, to be administered at the end of the compulsory education cycle.

- h. **Perform a thorough needs analysis at the level of NCAE, in order to identify the training needs of relevant NCAE staff** involved in learning assessment, national exams and assessments etc., as indicated by NCAE management team.
- i. **Prepare a Training Plan** for relevant NCAE and MoNE staff, based on the needs analysis, with a range of flexible modules and format, comprising the equivalent of 90 training days over a period of 3 years.
- j. **Assist and advise the NCAE in the actual revision and update of the Grade 8 and Baccalaureate exam banks of items and corresponding training.** The consultant will participate and prepare inputs / training materials for the initial training of the working groups which will elaborate the new items proposed for the national exams mentioned above. He/she will revise a sample of the elaborated assessment items (for 2 subjects for the Grade 8 exam and 4 subjects evaluated in the Baccalaureate exam) and will give feedback to the NCAE regarding the quality of the items analyzed. The consultant will also advise and guide NCAE after the pre-testing and piloting of the new Grade 8 and Baccalaureate assessment items.
- k. **Prepare, after consultation with NCAE, a draft methodology for the design and implementation of a new nationwide non exam learning assessment,** to be administered at the end of the compulsory education cycle. The document will include but will not be limited to proposal for competencies/subjects to be evaluated, administration methodology, calendar of implementation, draft format of the report and possible solutions for ensuring sustainability of this assessment.
- l. **Draft, together with the UMEFP specialists, the ToRs** for the selection of the company which will carry out the development, pre-testing, training, administration, collection of data, analysis and reporting of the Grade 10 assessment.
- m. **Prepare a Report regarding the training needs for teachers in different subjects,** as a basis for development of the training modules related to assessment in the training of teachers envisaged in the ROSE Project. The Consultant is expected to develop a short analysis of assessment documents and practices in Romanian high schools and provide general recommendations regarding the initial and in-service training needs for Romanian teachers and more specific recommendations for at least 3 core subjects, with a special focus on the contribution of Romanian teachers' assessment knowledge and practices to the development of students' competencies.
- n. **Communicate proactively and regularly with the ROSE Project Director and his/her core team and participate in meetings, as needed.**

The draft documents will be presented to the Project Director, who will review them with the core team mentioned above and with NCAE representatives. All comments provided should be incorporated in the final version of the documents.

IV. Deliverables

As a result of the services described above, the Consultant shall deliver the products specified in the table below. All deliverables shall be provided in English.

Deliverable	Due Date (in weeks following contract signing)
Draft Work plan for supporting NCAE and UMEFP in the tasks related to assessment activities and corresponding training established under ROSE project	2 weeks
Final Work plan for supporting NCAE and UMEFP in the tasks	4 weeks

related to assessment activities and corresponding training established under ROSE project	
Draft <i>Desk review of international best practice in computer-based assessment, online/offline assessment delivery, item banking, item analysis, scaling, reporting for various audiences, and recommendations for delivering online assessments in Romania</i>	7 weeks
Final <i>Desk review of international best practice in computer-based assessment, online/offline assessment delivery, item banking, item analysis, scaling, reporting for various audiences, and recommendations for delivering online assessments in Romania</i>	10 weeks
Draft <i>Needs Analysis of NCAE staff</i>	12 weeks
Final <i>Needs Analysis of NCAE staff</i>	15 weeks
<i>Draft Action plan</i> for the implementation of activities regarding revision and update of Grade 8 and Baccalaureate exam banks of items and corresponding training, as well as development and implementation of a Grade 10 learning assessment, to be administered at the end of the compulsory education cycle	18 weeks
Final <i>Action plan</i> for the implementation of activities regarding revision and update of Grade 8 and Baccalaureate exam banks of items and corresponding training, as well as development and implementation of a Grade 10 learning assessment, to be administered at the end of the compulsory education cycle	21 weeks
<i>Draft Training Plan</i> for NCAE staff	24 weeks
<i>Final Training Plan</i> for NCAE staff	26 weeks
<i>Draft Methodology for the design and implementation of a new nationwide non exam learning assessment at the end of compulsory education</i>	40 weeks
<i>Final Methodology for the design and implementation of a new nationwide non exam learning assessment at the end of compulsory education</i>	52 weeks
<i>Input to the ToRs</i> for the selection of the company which will carry out the Grade 10 assessment	60 weeks
<i>Draft Report regarding the training needs for teachers in different subjects</i>	84 weeks
<i>Final Report regarding the training needs for teachers in different subjects</i>	90 weeks
<i>Inputs / training material</i> for the initial training of the working groups which will elaborate the new items proposed for the Grade 8 and Baccalaureate exam	Depending on the calendar for revision of the assessment items for Grade 8 and Baccalaureate exam
<i>Feedback on the revised items for Grade 8 and Baccalaureate exam</i>	Depending on the calendar for revision of the assessment items for Grade 8 and Baccalaureate exam

V. Qualifications

The following qualifications are required for the proposed appointment:

- Advanced graduate degree (PHD/master degree/other postgraduate studies) in educational sciences or psychology;
- At least 10 years of experience in the field of assessment and examination at national, regional and/ or international level, in areas such as: test development, development and administration of assessment and examinations at national or international levels, Item Response Theory, computer-based assessment;
- Experience in development of teacher training programs on assessment and examination topics;
- Proven international experience in assessment studies;
- Proven experience in formative assessment and evaluation of students' competencies;
- Understanding of the Romanian system of education, especially of the upper secondary level, and of the Romanian examination system will be an advantage;
- Proved ability to deliver under tight deadlines and produce high quality outputs;
- Strong interpersonal skills and excellent written and oral communication skills in English.

VI. Other Relevant Terms

Period of the Assignment. The assignment is planned for up to 175 days between August 2017 and July 2020, with the possibility to be extended, if needed, based on positive assessment of the performance of the Consultant.

Reporting Obligations. The Consultant shall report to the ROSE Project Director. All deliverables shall be submitted to the ROSE Project Director.

Confidentiality. The Consultant shall not at any time communicate to any person or entity any confidential information acquired in the course of the proposed assignment.

Proprietary Rights. All documentation compiled or prepared by the Consultant for the MoNE and World Bank in the course of the proposed assignment shall be confidential. The MoNE shall, solely and exclusively, own all rights to any work created in connection with this agreement, including all data, documents, information, copyrights, patents, trademarks, trade secrets or other proprietary rights. The Consultant is not allowed to post or publish (electronically or in print) any project-related information without the explicit permission of the MoNE.