

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

### **ROMANIA**

#### ***Romania Secondary Education Project***

Loan Agreement No 8481-RO

**Assignment Title:** *Developing Tracking and survey of highs school students participating to summer bridge programs*

**Reference No.:** *C 3.11/3*

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”) general objective is to develop a ***Report regarding motivation to access tertiary education of high school students who participated in the Summer Bridge Programs*** financed and implemented under the ROSE project. The Report includes results of tracking enrolment in tertiary education of those students, based on data provided by UMEFP, conclusions of the perception survey of these students, developed and applied by UMEFP, regarding the extent to which participation in summer bridge programs influenced their motivation, access and transition to higher education studies, as well as conclusions of focus groups/interviews with selected high school students, conducted by the consultant within a period of *4 months, between July 2024 and November 2024*. The Terms of Reference for *Perception survey and tracking of students participating in Summer Bridge Programs* are annexed to this Request for Expressions of Interest.

The *Ministry of 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 consultant.

## Qualification

The minimum competencies required are the following:

- PHD in sociology or education sciences fields;
- At least 10 years of work experience in education-related fields;
- Proven capacity to develop different types of research/ social studies and/ or reports;
- Experience in implementing evaluation/ impact studies would be an advantage.
- Experience in research or education development projects (at least 1 project);
- Specific experience with World Bank funded projects would be an advantage;
- Very good written and oral communication skills.

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).

**1 Individual 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 [July 8, 2024 at 13:00 Bucharest local time](#). To validate the information presented in the CV, the candidate will attach all supporting, 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.).

Ministry of Education – Unit for the Management of Externally Financed Projects

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**Romania**  
**Ministry of Education**  
**Romania Secondary Education Project**  
**Loan Agreement N° 8481-RO**

**Terms of Reference for perception survey and tracking of students participating in  
Summer Bridge Programs**

## **1. 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 is implemented by the Ministry of Education of Romania (MoE) until November 2024, 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 institutions.

The above-mentioned objectives will be achieved through the implementation of the following three components, comprising a combination of grants and systemic interventions that allow immediate response to learning losses, support recovery, and reduce inequalities aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Component 1 – School-based and Systemic Interventions** (*estimated cost: EUR 133.42 million*). 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 Baccalaureate, or scoring a low mark on the Baccalaureate. The activities under this component are grouped in the following sub-components:

**Sub-component 1.1 – School-based Interventions** (*estimated cost: EUR 76.40 million*). This sub-component supports the transition of students from upper secondary into tertiary education using a decentralized approach based on non-competitive grants to low-performing public high schools selected according to given criteria: average Baccalaureate passing rates and upper secondary graduations rate.

The grants are intended to support activities that reduce high school dropout rates, increase graduation rates and improve performance at the Baccalaureate exam. Eligible activities include pedagogical and support activities (e.g. remedial classes, tutoring, counseling, guidance/coaching, development of socio-emotional skills etc.), extracurricular activities (e.g. outreach programs, documentary trips/visits, internships, competitions, school networking, etc.), minor civil works and purchase of goods, as well as management activities.

In early June 2021, there were 874 high school grants under implementation in all three batches. However, with 3 exceptions, which will finalize their sub-projects in June 2024,

all high schools finalized their grants by March 2024, and savings have been reallocated towards systemic interventions mainly related to standardized assessments and teacher training.

**Sub-component 1.2 – Systemic Interventions** (*estimated cost: EUR 57.02 million*). This sub-component finances interventions aimed at addressing the systemic challenges faced by all high schools in facilitating the transition into tertiary education. The financed activities are implemented centrally by the MoE and include interventions on curriculum, teachers' and public-school directors' training, assessment, awareness raising campaigns, procurement of goods to improve the teaching-learning conditions in the high schools eligible to receive grants, including digital devices etc.

**Component 2 – University-Level Interventions and Bridge Programs** (*estimated cost: EUR 60.68 million*). 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, through provision of grants for public faculties that serve these at-risk students and design and implementation of learning centers.

It also finances the development of *Summer bridge programs*, to be implemented by faculties, which include, inter-alia, tertiary-level campus-based summer courses for high school students, secondary school-faculty/university-labor market partnerships and university campus-based tutoring programs for high school students, as well as other relevant activities, to develop familiarity with the academic and social context and to initiate early skills development relevant to success in tertiary education. More details related to summer bridge programs design and implementation are available in the [Application Guidelines and the Implementation Guidelines from the University Grants Manual](#).

Each faculty implementing summer bridge programs had to track the high school students who participated in such programs and determine whether they accessed higher education.

Faculties have encountered difficulties to track students that chose other universities, so UMEFP will extract data for them from [Single Matriculation Registry of Romanian Universities \(RMUR\)](#).

Moreover, UMEFP has applied a satisfaction survey to students participating in summer bridge programs, available in Annex 1 to the present TOR. 1764 high school students answered.

414 grants have been offered to eligible faculties/universities, out of which 105 Summer bridge programs. 17688 high school students have benefited so far from this intervention, between 2017 and 2023.

**Component 3 – Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation** (*estimated cost: EUR 5.90 million*). 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 MoE's UMEFP. This component also finances an evaluation of the High School Grants Scheme to assess improvements in completion rates, Baccalaureate participation and success rates, as well as carrying out tracking of at-

risk high school students attending summer bridge programs and a perception survey for these students.

**The perception survey and tracking of students participating in Summer Bridge Programs and for these students** aims to assess the extent to which participation of high school students in these university-led programs financed through the ROSE grants, influences their motivation to access and transition to higher education studies.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this assignment is to develop a *Report regarding motivation to access tertiary education of high school students who participated in the Summer Bridge Programs* financed and implemented under the ROSE project. The Report includes results of tracking enrolment in tertiary education of those students, based on data provided by UMEFP, conclusions of the perception survey of these students, developed and applied by UMEFP, regarding the extent to which participation in summer bridge programs influenced their motivation, access and transition to higher education studies, as well as conclusions of focus groups/interviews with selected high school students, conducted by the consultant.

The UMEFP will select and coordinate an individual consultant who will be responsible for effectively, efficiently and timely performing the activities mentioned above, and will monitor the achievements of the above objectives.

## 3. SCOPE OF SERVICES

**The scope of the Consultant's work** is mainly to develop a report regarding *high school students who participated in the Summer Bridge Programs financed and implemented under the ROSE project*. The report will include tracking of the students who participated in summer bridge programs assessing their enrolment in tertiary education, using data collected by the universities or extracted from RMUR and made available by UMEFP. It will also include interpretation of qualitative data collected through focus groups/interviews with high school students or university students who participated in summer bridge programs and through a perception survey already developed and applied by UMEFP of the high school students who participated in the Summer Bridge Programs. To achieve the scope and the specific objectives of this assignment, **the Consultant** to be hired under these Terms of Reference **is expected to undertake the following activities:**

### A. Learning tasks:

- a. Review the ROSE Project documents including the Project Appraisal Document (PAD), Loan Agreement No 8481-RO and Project Operations Manual (POM);
- b. Review the *Universities Grants Manual*;
- c. Review the *Results Framework* data from the beginning of the ROSE Project to date.

- B. Meet the core ROSE Project Management**, mainly the Project Director and the Technical Coordinator (Project Deputy Director) and the UMEFP specialists involved in the management of the University grant schemes. The Consultant will closely work with the ROSE project team in order to ensure the achievement of the objectives throughout the contract period, UMEFP and the Consultant core staff will meet–on a need’s basis. These meetings aim to clarify details of the Consultant specific activities and to discuss the progress of activities, the challenges faced, the solutions implemented and the way to move forward.
- C. Analyze the information collected by UMEFP from the universities or from the [Single Matriculation Registry of Romanian Universities \(RMUR\)](#)** and assess the enrolment in tertiary education of the high school students who participated in the Summer Bridge Programs financed and implemented under the ROSE project.
- D. Communicate proactively** with the Project Deputy Director and the core team of the UMEFP staff, in between the planned meetings, to discuss and address any serious issues related to the contract implementation.

#### **E. Design the Research Methodology**

The objective of the focus groups/interviews is to assess the extent to which participation in the summer bridge programs had an impact on the high school students’ motivation and on their transition to tertiary education.

The Consultant will develop and submit to UMEFP a **Research Methodology**, including:

- *Modality of analysis of the available data regarding enrolment in higher education of high school students who participated in the Summer Bridge Programs financed and implemented under the ROSE project, as well as of the survey designed and conducted by UMEFP;*
- *Selection of the sample of students, considering the tracking performed by universities for the high school students participating to their summer bridge program*
- *Focus groups/interviews instruments (for example, but not limited to):*
  - ✓ Guidelines for interviews;
  - ✓ Guidelines for focus group discussions;
  - ✓ Reports format;
- The schedule of implementation.

This methodology will be written in Romanian, taking into consideration all requirements presented in the PAD, POM and Grant Manuals for high schools and universities and will be presented to the Project Deputy Director. *All comments provided to the Consultant should be incorporated in the final version of this document.*

F. **Implement the approved methodology.** The Consultant will ensure all necessary resources (time, human and financial) to implement appropriately the methodology, especially the administration of specific research instruments.

G. **Prepare a draft *Report regarding motivation to access tertiary education high school students who participated in the Summer Bridge Programs*** financed and implemented under the ROSE project. The draft report will include:

- i. The main issues, **observations and conclusions from the focus groups/interviews** with high school students that participated in the summer bridge programs;
- j. **Analysis of the perception survey administrated by UMEFP - results;**
- k. **Analysis of the tracking reports submitted by the faculties and of tracking data extracted from the [Single Matriculation Registry of Romanian Universities \(RMUR\)](#).**

The draft report will be submitted to the UMEFP. All comments provided to the Consultant should be incorporated in the final *Report regarding the high school students participating in the summer bridge programs* financed and implemented under the ROSE project.

G. **Prepare the final *Report regarding motivation to access tertiary education of the high school students participating in the summer bridge programs*** financed and implemented under the ROSE project, integrating relevant issues, all the conclusions, comments and recommendations and submit it to the UMEFP Deputy Director.

#### 4. DELIVERABLES

The Consultant should prepare and deliver the following products:

Deliverable	Due Date (in weeks following contract signing)
Research Methodology	3 weeks
Draft <i>Report regarding motivation to access tertiary education the high school students participating in the summer bridge programs</i> financed and implemented under the ROSE project	3 months
Final <i>Report regarding motivation to access tertiary education the high school students participating in the summer bridge programs</i> financed and implemented under the ROSE project	4 months



All deliverables will be prepared in Romanian and will be presented to the Project Deputy Director. *All comments provided to the Consultant on the draft studies and reports presented by both the Project Deputy Director and the World Bank project team should be incorporated in the final version of these documents.*

## 5. QUALIFICATIONS

A. The Consultant to be hired for this assignment must have:

- PHD in sociology or education sciences fields;
- At least 10 years of work experience in education-related fields;
- Proven capacity to develop different types of research/ social studies and/ or reports;
- Experience in implementing evaluation/ impact studies would be an advantage.
- Experience in research or education development projects (at least 1 project);
- Specific experience with World Bank funded projects would be an advantage;
- Very good written and oral communication skills.

## 6. OTHER RELEVANT TERMS

**Period of the assignment:** The assignment is planned for the period between July and November 2024.

**Location:** The Consultant will be located in the Consultant's office. She/he will also participate in regular meetings with the UMEFP staff, at the UMEFP office, and travel to locations of high schools or universities, associated with project evaluation activities, when necessary.

**Reporting:** The Consultant will report to the Project Deputy Director and should work closely with the UMEFP core staff. The Consultant will be responsible for delivering the requested outputs and for reporting progress activity during the implementation period. General coordination, input and progress review for the Consultant conducting this assignment will be provided by the UMEFP through feedback on the proposed documents/reports.

**Input:** To ensure the adequate institutional environment for the completion of the Consultant's tasks, UMEFP makes available for the Consultant specific information and facilities such as office space for regular meetings. The UMEFP also ensures the Consultant's access to the ROSE Project documentation (Project Appraisal Document, Loan Agreement No 8481-RO and Project Operations Manual) and other related materials concerning the educational system in Romania, as well as the information and data mentioned in the present TORs.

At the same time, UMEFP ensures the connection between the Contractor work's activities and several involved institutions (i.e. MoE and county inspectorates, high schools etc.).

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

**Proprietary Rights.** All documentation prepared by the Consultant to be hired under these Terms of Reference for the MoE/UMEFPP during the proposed assignment shall be confidential and shall become and remain the absolute property of the MoE. The Consultant shall deliver all such documentation to the UMEFP no later than termination or expiration of the contract to be prepared for the proposed assignment.