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**Belgium-Brussels: EU Policy Outreach Partnership (EUPOP) – Mexico and Central America
2020/S 153-373775**

**Location – Mexico and 6 Countries in Central America (Panama,
Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua)**

Service Contract Notice

Please note that the awarding of the contract is subject to the condition of the prior adoption of a financing decision, which does not modify the elements of the procurement procedure (this will be the case, for instance, if the budget initially foreseen is different or if the timeframe, the nature or the condition of the implementation are altered). If the precedent condition is not met, the contracting authority will either abandon the procurement or cancel the award procedure without the candidates or tenderers being entitled to claim any compensation.

1. **Publication Reference**

EuropeAid/140606/DH/SER/MULTI

2. **Procedure**

Restricted

3. **Programme Title**

EU Policy Outreach Partnership (EUPOP) – Mexico and Central America – Phase 2

4. **Financing**

Budget Line 19.0501 of the general budget of the European Union for 2020

5. **Contracting Authority**

European Union, represented by the European Commission, Brussels, BELGIUM

Clarifications may be sought from the contracting authority at the following email address delegation-mexico-fpi@eeas.europa.eu at the latest 21 days before the deadline for submission of applications stated at the point 23 below.

Clarifications will be published on the website of DG International Cooperation and Development at the latest 5 days before the deadline

CONTRACT Specification

6. **Nature of Contract**

Fee-based

7. **Contract Description**

The overall objective of the project is to support the fulfilment of the European Union (EU) foreign policy objectives by strengthening its ability to engage meaningfully with target audiences and stakeholders in Mexico and Central America(1) through various public diplomacy channels.

Joint and sustained efforts are needed in order to increase knowledge and understanding of the EU among opinion leaders and decision makers in Mexico and Central America.

(1) The EU and Central America have signed an Association Agreement in 2012. The six Central American countries part of this agreement are Panama, Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua.

8. **Number and titles of lots**

One lot only

9. **Maximum Budget**

EUR 1 800 000

10. **Scope for additional services**

The contracting authority may, at its own discretion, extend the service contract in duration and/or scope subject to the availability of funding up to the estimated amount of approximately EUR 1 800 000 Any extension of the contract would be subject to satisfactory performance by the contractor.

Conditions of Participation

11. **Eligibility**

Participation is open to all natural persons who are nationals of and legal persons (participating either individually or in a grouping – consortium – of tenderers) which are effectively established in a Member State of the European Union or in a eligible country or territory as defined under the Regulation (EU) No 236/2014 establishing common rules and procedures for the implementation of the Union's instruments for external action (CIR) for the applicable instrument under which the contract is financed (see also heading 29 below).

Participation is also open to international organisations.

For UK candidates or tenderers:

Please be aware that following the entry into force of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement* on 1 February 2020 and in particular Articles 127(6), 137 and 138, the references to natural or legal persons residing or established in a Member State of the European Union are to be understood as including natural or legal persons residing or established in the United Kingdom. UK residents and entities are therefore eligible to participate under this call.

* Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community.

12. **Candidature**

All eligible natural and legal persons (as per item 11 above) or groupings of such persons (consortia) may apply.

A consortium may be a permanent, legally-established grouping or a grouping which has been constituted informally for a specific tender procedure. All members of a consortium (i.e., the leader and all other members) are jointly and severally liable to the contracting authority.

The participation of an ineligible natural or legal person (as per item 11) will result in the automatic exclusion of that person. In particular, if that ineligible person belongs to a consortium, the whole consortium will be excluded.

13. **Number of applications**

No more than one application can be submitted by a natural or legal person whatever the form of participation (as an individual legal entity or as leader or member of a consortium submitting an application). In the event that a natural or legal person submits more than one application, all applications in which that person has participated will be excluded.

14. **Shortlist alliances prohibited**

Any tenders received from tenderers comprising firms other than those mentioned in the shortlisted application forms will be excluded from this restricted tender procedure unless prior approval from the contracting authority has been obtained (see practical guide – PRAG – 2.6.3.).

Short-listed candidates may not form alliances or subcontract to each other for the contract in question.

15. **Grounds for Exclusion**

As part of the application form, candidates must submit a signed declaration, included in the standard application form, to the effect that they are not in any of the exclusion situations listed in Section 2.6.10.1. of the PRAG.

Candidates included in the lists of EU restrictive measures (see Section 2.4. of the PRAG) at the moment of the award decision cannot be awarded the contract.

16. **Sub-contracting**

Subcontracting is allowed.

17. **Number of candidates to be short-listed**

On the basis of the applications received, between 4 and 8 candidates will be invited to submit detailed tenders for this contract. If the number of eligible candidates meeting the selection criteria is less than the minimum of 4, the contracting authority may invite the candidates who satisfy the criteria to submit a tender.

Provisional Timetable

18. **Provisional date of invitation to tender**

October 2020

19. **Provisional commencement date of the contract**

March 2021

20. **Initial period of implementation of tasks**

36 months

Selection and Award Criteria

21. **Selection Criteria**

The following selection criteria will be applied to candidates. In the case of applications submitted by a consortium, these selection criteria will be applied to the consortium as a whole unless specified otherwise.

The selection criteria will not be applied to natural persons and single member companies when they are sub-contractors.

1) Economic and financial capacity of candidate (based on item 3 of the application form).

In case of candidate being a public body, equivalent information should be provided. The reference period which will be taken into account will be the last 3 financial years for which accounts have been closed (Reference period: 15 September 2017-15 September 2020).

(a) the average annual turnover of the candidate over the last 3 years must exceed EUR 1 800 000; and

(b) current ratio (current assets/current liabilities) in the last year for which accounts have been closed must be at least 1. In case of a consortium this criterion must be fulfilled by each member.

2) Professional Capacity of candidate (based on items 4 and 5 of the application form). The reference period which will be taken into account will be the last 3 years preceding the submission deadline (Reference Period: 15 September 2017-15 September 2020).

(a) At least 10 permanent staff currently works for the candidate in the fields of public diplomacy and outreach(2) or communication.

(b) At least 50 % staff, as per the previous point, has been employed on a permanent basis during the last 5 years.

3) Technical capacity of candidate (based on items 5 and 6 of the application form). The reference period which will be taken into account will be the last 5 years preceding the submission deadline (Reference period: 15 September 2015-15 September 2020).

(a) The candidate has provided services under at least two contracts, each with a budget of at least EUR 1 800 000 (calculated on the proportion carried out by the candidate) in the field of public diplomacy and outreach or communication.

(b) The candidate has worked on at least two contracts implemented in the countries(3) where this contract will be implemented with a budget of at least EUR 1 800 000 (calculated on proportion carried out by the candidate) which were implemented at any moment during the reference period.

Projects eligible under point 3-a) can be also eligible under 3-b).

The service contract the candidate refers to could have been started or completed at any time during the indicated period but it does not necessarily have to be started and completed during that period, nor implemented during the entire period. Candidates are allowed to refer either to service contracts completed within the reference period (although started earlier) or to service contracts not yet completed. In the first case the service contract will be considered in its whole if proper evidence of performance is provided (statement or certificate from the entity which awarded the contract, proof of final payment). In case of Service contracts still on-going only the portion satisfactorily completed during the reference period although started earlier will be taken into consideration. This portion will have to be supported by documentary evidence.

Documentary evidence is not required at the application stage but will be requested with the invitation to tender.

Previous experience which caused breach of contract and termination by a contracting authority shall not be used as reference.

An economic operator may, where appropriate and for a particular contract, rely on the capacities of other entities, regardless of the legal nature of the links which it has with them.

If the tenderer relies on other entities it must prove to the contracting authority that it will have at its disposal the resources necessary for the performance of the contract by producing a commitment by those entities to place those resources at its disposal. Such entities, for instance the parent company of the economic operator, must respect the same rules of eligibility — notably that of nationality — and must comply with the selection criteria for which the economic operator relies on them. Furthermore, the data for this third entity for the relevant selection

criterion should be included in the tender in a separate document. Proof of the capacity will also have to be provided when requested by the contracting authority.

With regard to technical and professional criteria, an economic operator may only rely on the capacities of other entities where the latter will perform the services for which these capacities are required.

With regard to economic and financial criteria, the entities upon whose capacity the tenderer relies become jointly and severally liable for the performance of the contract.

If more than 8 eligible candidates meet the above selection criteria, their relative strengths and weaknesses must be re-examined in order to rank their applications and identify the 8 best candidates in accordance with point 17 of this contract notice. The only additional comparative criteria that will be taken into consideration during this re-examination, in the order in which they appear below, are:

- 1) the total number of the reference projects found eligible under 21.3 a) and 21.3 b) and in case of equality on this criterion, then
- 2) the value of the eligible part (the proportion carried out by the candidate) of the projects found eligible under 21.3.a) and 21.3.b).

N.B.: additional comparative criterion No 1 shall be applied to all the eligible candidates that meet the selection criteria. If, after applying additional comparative criterion No 1, it is not possible to identify the 8 best candidates because two or more candidates are tied for the 8th position, additional comparative criterion No 2 shall be applied only to these tied candidates.

(2) 'Public Diplomacy refers to the process whereby a country [or an entity] seeks to build trust and understanding by engaging with a broader foreign public beyond the governmental relations that, customarily, have been the focus of diplomatic effort' European Parliament Preparatory Action 'Culture in EU External Relations', European Commission, 2014.

http://www.cultureinexternalrelations.eu/cier-data/uploads/2016/12/Engaging-The-WorldTowards-Global-Cultural-CitizenshipBook-1.5_13.06.2014.pdf

(3) Mexico and the 6 countries in Central America signatories of the EU-Central America Association Agreement, notably Panama, Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua.

22. **Award Criteria**

Best price-quality ratio.

Application

23. **Deadline for submission of applications**

The candidate attention is drawn to the fact that there are two different systems for sending applications: one is by post or private mail service, the other is by hand delivery.

In the first case, the application must be sent before the date and time limit for submission, as evidenced by the postmark or deposit slip(4), but in the second case it is the acknowledgment of receipt given at the time of the delivery of the application that will serve as proof.

Tuesday 15 September 2020 at 16.00 (Mexico City, local time).

Any application sent to the contracting authority after this deadline will not be considered.

The contracting authority may, for reasons of administrative efficiency, reject any application submitted on time to the postal service but received, for any reason beyond the contracting authority's control, after the effective date of approval of the short-list report, if accepting applications that were submitted on time but arrived late would considerably delay the evaluation procedure or jeopardise decisions already taken and notified.

(4) It is recommended to use registered mail in case the postmark would not be readable.

24. **Application format and details to be provided**

Applications must be submitted using the standard application form, the format and instructions of which must be strictly observed. The application form is available from the following Internet address: <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prag/annexes.do?chapterTitleCode=B>

The application must be accompanied by a declaration on honour on exclusion and selection criteria using the template available from the following Internet address: <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prag/annexes.do?chapterTitleCode=A>

Any additional documentation (brochure, letter, etc.) sent with an application will not be taken into consideration.

25. **How applications may be submitted**

Applications must be submitted in English exclusively to the contracting authority in a sealed envelope:

— either by post or by courier service, in which case the evidence shall be constituted by the postmark or the date of the deposit slip, to:

Delegación de la Unión Europea en Mexico, FPI – Finanzas y Contratos, Paseo de la Reforma 1675, Lomas de Chapultepec, C.P. 11000, Mexico City – Mexico.

If these means of sending is used, kindly send the tracking number of the sending to the mailbox delegation-mexico-fpi@eeas.europa.eu

— or hand delivered by the candidate in person or by an agent directly to the premises of the contracting authority in return for a signed and dated receipt, in which case the evidence shall be constituted by this acknowledgement of receipt, to:

Delegación de la Unión Europea en Mexico, FPI – Finanzas y Contratos, Paseo de la Reforma 1675, Lomas de Chapultepec, C.P. 11000, Mexico City — Mexico.

The contract title and the Publication reference (see item 1 above) must be clearly marked on the envelope containing the application and must always be mentioned in all subsequent correspondence with the contracting authority.

Applications submitted by any other means will not be considered.

By submitting an application candidates accept to receive notification of the outcome of the procedure by electronic means. Such notification shall be deemed to have been received on the date upon which the contracting authority sends it to the electronic address referred to in the application.

26. **Alteration or withdrawal of applications**

Candidates may alter or withdraw their applications by written notification prior to the deadline for submission of applications. No application may be altered after this deadline.

Any such notification of alteration or withdrawal shall be prepared and submitted in accordance with Item 25.

The outer envelope (and the relevant inner envelope if used) must be marked 'Alteration' or 'Withdrawal' as appropriate.

27. **Operational language**

All written communications for this tender procedure and contract must be in English.

28. **Date of publication of prior information notice**

2 January 2020

29. **Legal basis(5)**

Regulation (EU) No 236/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 laying down common rules and procedures for the implementation of the Union's instruments for financing external action in

particular Article 2 thereof, Regulation (EU) No 234/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a Partnership Instrument for cooperation with third countries.

Commission Implementing Decision No C (2019) 3277 final of 6 May 2019 on the Partnership Instrument Annual Action Program for cooperation with third countries to be financed from the general budget of the European Union.

(5) Please state any specificity that might have an impact on rules on participation (such as geographic or thematic or long/short term).

30. **Additional information**

Financial data to be provided by the candidate in the standard application form must be expressed in EUR.

If applicable, where a candidate refers to amounts originally expressed in a different currency, the conversion to EUR shall be made in accordance with the InforEuro exchange rate of the month and year corresponding to the deadline for submitting applications, which can be found at the following address: <http://ec.europa.eu/budget/graphs/inforeuro.html>

The electronic version of the application must be included with the printed version. If there are any discrepancies between the electronic version and the original, printed version, the latter has precedence. Candidates are advised to make sure that the email provided in the standard application form is checked regularly as email will be the main means of communication between the contracting authority and the applicant.

Any applicant seeking to arrange individual meetings with the European Commission concerning this contract during the tender period may be excluded from the tender procedure.