PREPar-ED

Call for Tender for Expert Researcher

PREPar-Ed

Preparedness and Resilience Planning for Education: Empowering Employers to Build Institutional Capacity in Times of Crisis

Deadline to respond:	**9 April 2026**
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Description

The European Federation of Education Employers is pleased to launch a call for a subcontractor to provide research expertise in the framework of the implementation of the 2-year project '*Preparedness and Resilience Planning for Education: Empowering Employers to Build Institutional Capacity in Times of Crisis,* supported by the European Commission under the European Social Fund+ (ESF+) Social Prerogatives and Specific Competencies Lines (SocPL).

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Background

The organisation – EFEE

The European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE) is a recognised European social partner organisation for education employers. EFEE represents in total 53 education employer organisations from all sectors of education, from pre-school to higher education, research, and VET, in 24 European countries. EFEE's membership includes ministries of education, local government associations, school boards' and school heads' associations, non-public and private school associations, conferences of university rectors, and networks of private universities.

Our mission is to improve the quality of teaching and school management through European cooperation and dialogue. On the basis of the European Pillar of Social Rights, we raise awareness of and increase commitment to the European policy agenda and influence European policy by making the voices of our members heard. As an officially recognised European social partner in education, we are, thereby, in constant dialogue with EU institutions as well as other European partners such as trade unions and various educational networks. Against this background, one of our declared core tasks is project management. EFEE continuously runs a great number of projects throughout the year. The aim of these projects is to foster mutual learning and exchange on current challenges and opportunities in the education sector. There are two core features characterising our projects: firstly, their transnational character; and secondly, their strong evidence base. Regarding the former, participants are provided with the opportunity to travel to other European countries and to have exchanges with our members from all over Europe. Regarding the latter, an external expert is hired for every project to ensure the high scientific quality of our project results (please find a more detailed description of the expected tasks of an expert in section 'Tasks to be performed by the successful candidate' of this document – page 11).

EFEE is responsible for the day-to-day management of the project. This includes the project coordination (organisation of activities), supervision related to the project objectives (producing outcomes), and the administrative and financial tasks that come with it. EFEE will also draft policy recommendations based on the outcomes of the project. EFEE's General Secretary, Daniel Wisniewski, will be the project coordinator, and he will be assisted with the implementation of the project by EFEE Project Manager Axelle Day.

The project – PREPar-Ed

Purpose of the project

This 2-year project, in which a diverse range of education stakeholders will participate, is an education employers' capacity-building project oriented to strengthen the position of this social partner in the European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education with regard to the topic of '*preparedness*'. The objective of this project is for education employers to acquire a greater understanding of the

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role of governance, leadership and institutional planning for strengthening preparedness and resilience in educational institutions. In addition to this, PREPar-Ed aims to explore how education employers and school leaders can support educational staff and institutions in anticipating, responding to and recovering from crises that may disrupt education systems. As a result of the findings obtained from this project, education employers will be better supported in engaging in informed discussions at national and European levels with trade unions.

This project will provide data on preparedness and resilience in the education sector through the exploration of existing governance approaches, leadership practices and institutional strategies across different contexts in Europe. As education systems face an increasing range of crises and disruptions, education employers, policymakers, educators, and school leaders must work together to ensure that institutions are able to respond effectively while maintaining the continuity and quality of education. Strengthening preparedness and resilience within educational institutions is therefore essential for safeguarding learning environments and supporting staff and students during times of uncertainty. In the long term, by equipping teachers to embed preparedness into teaching practice, the project fosters intergenerational knowledge transfer and broader societal awareness, contributing to a culture of resilience beyond the education system. Moreover, the wellbeing of educators in resilience strategies will be central to this project.

Summary of the project

The need for preparedness and resilience in the education sector is becoming increasingly relevant worldwide. Education systems are exposed to a wide range of crises, including health emergencies, climate-related disasters, technological disruptions and geopolitical conflicts. There is, however, an ongoing debate and discussion around the capacity of educational institutions to respond effectively to these disruptions while maintaining the continuity and quality of education. The project aims to identify the skills gaps related to emergency preparedness, risk governance, and resilience in both school leaders and educational staff.

The need to ensure that education institutions are able to anticipate, respond to and recover from crises, while maintaining the continuity of education and supporting students and staff, calls for important conversations between education employers and teachers. Both social partners must be prepared, open and willing to cooperate to ensure that education systems remain resilient and capable of responding to future challenges.

This research-oriented project, therefore, intends to prepare education employers by analysing their role in 1) developing and implementing preparedness and resilience strategies in educational institutions; 2) supporting school leaders, teachers and educational staff in strengthening institutional readiness and crisis response; and 3) promoting a culture of preparedness within education systems.

Moreover, the project will support the mapping and a comparative analysis of crisis preparedness frameworks, governance models and leadership practices in

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education across Europe. In addition, it will explore how education employers can strengthen institutional resilience through literature review, data collection and practical knowledge generated during the in-person peer learning workshops.

Main objectives of the project

- To explore and define the role of education employers in developing crisis-ready learning environments by enhancing governance capacities, leadership skills and institutional planning for preparedness.

- To enhance institutional capacity for crisis preparedness by identifying professional development needs and supporting the facilitation of relevant, accessible training for school leaders, teachers, and staff.

- To strengthen awareness and understanding of preparedness responsibilities within educational institutions supporting education employers, school leaders and staff in anticipating, responding to and recovering from crisis situations.

- To empower education employers to strengthen institutional resilience by exploring the possibilities of:

    - Collaboration and partnerships among governments, educational institutions, civil protection authorities, public health services and other relevant stakeholders who can facilitate the provision of expertise, resources and coordination mechanisms.
    - Policy and governance support to prioritise preparedness and resilience planning in education systems, including initiatives that strengthen institutional planning, risk management and crisis response capacities.

- To explore the best ways to strengthen institutional preparedness strategies in education systems in order to safeguard the continuity and quality of education in times of crisis.

Outputs of the project

The PREPar-Ed project will produce:

Two **comparative analysis reports** synthesising findings from the online questionnaires and identifying the commonalities and differences across European countries and education levels concerning preparedness frameworks and employers' needs and good practices; and teachers' and school leaders' perceptions concerning preparedness training and access to resources.

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A first **peer learning workshop** on the topic of '*crisis-resilient school management'* is to be held in Slovenia by consortium member ZRVS (Pre-school principals national associations of Slovenia). The event will focus on exploring how education employers can effectively support schools in becoming crisis-resilient through strategic governance planning, strategic leadership, resource allocation and infrastructure preparedness. Participants will discuss the different needs and institutional responsibilities of school managers and leaders to build inclusive, effective, and adaptable guiding paths regarding school management and risk analysis strategies for times of crisis.

A second **peer learning workshop** on '*staff training and professional development*' to be held in Romania by consortium member ASP. The aim of this workshop will be to examine the implications of preparedness strategies for educational staff and identify how education employers can ensure appropriate training, support and recognition. This workshop will identify key dimensions and priorities for the design of effective and context-sensitive training programmes that foster individual and institutional resilience, while also contributing to staff well-being and motivation.

A third and last **peer learning workshop** on the topic of '*cross-sectoral cooperation for preparedness'* to be held in Finland by consortium member SIVISTA. It will centre around fostering collaboration between education employers and external actors such as civil protection, health, cybersecurity, emergency services and digital safety agencies. The workshop will provide a space for participants to map effective collaboration practices, identify institutional gaps, and define the role of education employers in establishing and sustaining intersectoral preparedness partnerships

A **final dissemination conference** will take place in Belgium. It will bring together consortium partners, policymakers, researcher and EU-level institution representatives to present the findings, showcase outcomes and foster future cooperation.

Guidelines for education employers and school leaders. A set of operational and strategic recommendations will be addressed to education employers, administrators, and school leaders to guide them on the design of preparedness strategies in their educational institutions. They will advise on institutional preparedness planning, professional development and CPD models for resilience and self- assessment and benchmarking for crisis readiness.

A final research report produced by the expert researcher to consolidate all project findings, answering the research question "What is the role of education employers in strengthening institutional preparedness and resilience?". The report will identify systemic gaps, common challenges, promising practices, and opportunities for scaling resilience, while highlighting country-specific insights. This comprehensive document will serve as the basis for the development of the project's guidelines and policy recommendations.

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Policy recommendations based on the findings of the project will be developed by the project coordinator (EFEE) with the input from consortium members.

A final movie for promotional and dissemination purposes.

Timeline of the project

In order to deliver on the project's objectives, we will organise four in-person events in the timeframe of 2026-2028. The workshops, taking place in Slovenia, Romania, and Finland, will have a duration of 1,5 days each. A final conference will take place in Belgium, with a duration of 1 day.

In addition, the Project Advisory Group and selected expert researcher will meet five additional times online to steer the direction of the project.

Please find the preliminary timeline below:

Date	**Activity**	**Location**
Mid-April 2026	Kick-off Advisory Group meeting	Online
September 2026	1st Advisory Group meeting	Online
November 2026 (tbc)	1st Workshop	Slovenia
February 2027	2nd Advisory Group meeting	Online
April 2027 (tbc)	2nd Workshop	Romania
June 2027	3rd Advisory Group meeting	Online
October 2027 (tbc)	3rd Workshop	Finland
December 2027	4th Advisory Group meeting	Online
February 2028	Final dissemination Conference	Belgium
February 2028	5th Advisory Group meeting	Online
February/March 2028	Publication of outputs and dissemination period	Online

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Advisory Group meetings

The Advisory Group meetings will bring together representatives from all the official consortium partners to provide guidance, monitor the project developments, and promote active involvement in the project meetings and dissemination actions among their affiliates, and the expert researcher. The focal point of these meetings is to agree on general concepts, set concrete goals, select specific peer learning topics, and prepare the groundwork for project events. In total, four advisory group meetings will take place during the course of the project.

Workshops

The objective of the peer learning workshops, which will each last one day and a half, is to provide Advisory Group Members, other education employer representatives, and education stakeholders with a platform to exchange, peer learn, and discuss the topics identified during Advisory Group meetings in greater depth. The workshops will also include local school visits, allowing participants to gain in-depth practical on-site knowledge on preparedness and resilience practices in educational institutions, and the related governance and crisis-management challenges by engaging in dialogue with school representatives.

The expert researcher

In order to ensure that our project has a strong evidence base, we deem it crucial to invite an external expert researcher to assist us with the desk research and with the development and analysis of a comprehensive study on preparedness and resilience in education systems across European countries. The expert researcher is expected to write a substantial research report and outcome document analysing and comparing the theoretical framework from the literature study with the practical knowledge gained through the questionnaire and workshops. By investigating preparedness frameworks, governance approaches and resilience strategies among formal education providers and comparing this with the knowledge gained through hands-on experience in the host countries, the research report will aim to develop a concrete and well-covered outline for all the relevant stakeholders. This research report will feed into the final guidelines and policy recommendations.

Therefore, we expect the expert researcher to have proven research experience and extensive knowledge of the topics at stake. Preferably, the expert researcher will furthermore showcase a significant understanding of social dialogue structures in education in order to identify the most pressing challenges and opportunities accordingly. The total budget for subcontracting these tasks is €45.000 based on previous experience with external experts.

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Tasks to be performed by the successful candidate

The expert is expected to perform the following tasks in the time framework from April 2026 to March 2028:

1. **Participate** in a pre-project meeting with EFEE (online), five meetings with the Project Advisory Group (online) and four in-person events.

2. **Conduct** desk research reviewing existing literature, policies and practices related to crisis preparedness and resilience in education systems across Europe. The research will focus on identifying the expected role of educational institutions in national preparedness strategies and the key elements required to strengthen institutional preparedness.

3. **Analyse** governance models and institutional practices that contribute to crisis-resilient education systems, including institutional risk governance, crisis-resilient leadership, staff professional development and cross-sector cooperation.

4. **Develop**, with the input from the project advisory group, an online questionnaire targeted at education employers and consortium member organisations to map preparedness frameworks and governance programmes in education systems across Europe.

5. **Develop,** with the input from the project advisory group a second questionnaire targeted at school leaders, teachers and other educational staff in order to assess preparedness awareness, crisis-related responsibilities and training needs.

6. **Scientifically accompany** the peer learning activities in Slovenia, Romania and Finland and draft reflection reports analysing the findings from each workshop, particularly regarding institutional governance, staff training and cross-sectoral preparedness strategies. These reports will be presented to the Advisory Group for feedback.

7. **Draft** a final project research report (including Executive Summary), outlining the outcomes of all project activities (incl. survey, desk research, workshops) and providing an analysis of the role of education employers in strengthening institutional preparedness and resilience in education systems across Europe.

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8. **Support the drafting** of practical guidelines for education employers, school leaders and administrators to guide them on the designing of preparedness strategies in their educational institutions.

Requirements to be a successful candidate

EFEE requires the expert researcher (hereafter, Contractor) to provide an objective and scientific perspective along with expertise on the issue at stake while carrying out the tasks outlined above. Therefore, the Contractor is expected to display the following competences:

- Proven (research) experience and extensive knowledge of crisis preparedness, resilience or governance in the education sector.
- Significant understanding of social dialogue structures in education is preferable in order to identify the most pressing challenges and opportunities accordingly.
- Experience in conducting surveys/interviews in the education sector.
- Understanding of the role of employers and social partners in the education sector as well as an overall understanding of the education sector (both on the European and national level).
- Ability to communicate fluently verbally and in writing in English (at least C1 level). Additional European languages such as French, Dutch, Finnish, Slovenian and Romanian will be considered an asset.

The Contractor will contribute to the successful development of the project as a whole by actively participating in various project activities and meetings. The Advisory Group is the body entitled to guide the project/research implementation as concerns its organisation and evaluation.

Payments and standard contract

The contract signed between EFEE and the Contractor is subject to the Grant Agreement signed between EFEE and the European Commission for this project initiative. Payment of the fees defined in the contract will be made in three instalments dependent on the Contractor carrying out the relevant stages of work as listed above.

1. A first instalment amounting to 30%, issued after signature of the contract during the second month of the action.

2. A second instalment amounting to 30%, during the 13th month of the action, having presented reasonable outputs of work.

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3. A third instalment for the remaining payment issued after completion, delivery and approval by EFEE of the final outcome.

Payments will be done by bank transfer to a bank account for which the Contractor will communicate the full details.

The contractual agreement is based upon and regulated by the European Commission's rules, provisions and requirements as set out in the project agreement with the European Commission, DG EMPL and applicable Belgian law. The Contractor is obliged to fulfil the described tasks and duties of work to receive the final payment according to the contract.

EFEE has the right, based on Belgian Law, to terminate the contract when the Contractor cannot perform the agreed tasks and duties accordingly. Any conflicts of interests or disputes concerning the validity of this arrangement, the construction of its terms, and the interpretation of the rights and duties of the parties in the contract shall be governed by Belgian Law.

The contract may not be transferred without the parties' written agreement.

Price

Agreed amount

Subject to the final Grant Agreement established between the European Commission and EFEE for the purpose of this project, the total amount available for the tasks described here above during the project lifetime (01/04/2026 – 31/03/2028) will be of maximum of €45.000 (including all taxes, such as VAT). The final amount will be based on an evaluation of the bid, alongside the time and cost planning presented.

Other arrangements

Expenses: The Contractor is a subcontracted member of the project. Travel and accommodation for the four in-person events are included in the fee paid to the Contractor. That is to say, the subcontractor will need to arrange their own travel and accommodation for each event.

Processing personal data: The contracting party accepts that the Contractor is free to use the data collected and the reports written in this project as part of their own academic reports and articles, as long as they include the relevant references to the project.

However, in order to fulfil or respect the modernised Convention 108 (the regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000) and EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) on the

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protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data:

1. The Contractor must process personal data under the agreement in compliance with applicable EU and national law on data protection (including authorisations or notification requirements);
2. The Contractor may grant its personnel access only to data that is strictly necessary for implementing, managing and monitoring the agreement;
3. The Contractor must adopt appropriate technical and organisational security measures having regard to the risks inherent in the processing and to the nature of the personal data.

Selection criteria

Aside from the above stated requirements, the selection process will be based 1) on acceptance of the tender offering the best price-quality ratio and 2) on the availability during the duration of the project for the requested tasks. The Contractor is selected according to the standards of selection that have been developed by EFEE. Main selection criteria are the expertise and capacity to deliver the work tendered for, the price-quality relation, the methodological quality and the tenderer's work experience.

It should be noted that the contract will not be awarded to a tenderer who meets less than 70% on the award criteria.

Award criteria

The contract will be awarded to the tenderer whose offer represents the best value for money, taking into account the following criteria:

1. Evidence and a track record of proven research experience and extensive knowledge of preparedness, resilience or crisis governance in the education sector (and preferably of social dialogue structures in education as well).
2. Proficient capacity in the English language (additional European languages such as French, Dutch and Romanian, Slovenian, Finnish will be considered an asset).
3. Understanding of the nature of the assignment.
4. Capacity to work in a team project.
5. Ability to meet deadlines.
6. Ability to meet budget allowances.
7. Availability to attend activities and meetings.

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Content and presentation of the bids

Content of the bids

The bids should contain a detailed explanation of the qualifications and the expertise of the potential contractor, e.g. information on references from the contractor on similar projects already handled, to demonstrate their experience and capability to succeed in performing the tasks as set out in section 2 of this tender.

The bids should include a detailed description of the **methodology and tools** applied to implement a project plan with **detailed time and cost planning**. The potential contractor is also requested to send a budget listing the costs by task including a fair estimation of the number of working days and the number of people participating in the tasks.

Presentation of the bids

Replies have to be presented by **9th April 2026 at the latest** to axelle.day@educationemployers.eu and iris.antonie@educationemployers.eu

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