

Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Tender on the Selection of the External Quality Auditor

ERASMUS-EDU-2024-CBHE-STRAND-1 Project No: 101179642 Digital Transformation in Language Study and Education of the Western Balkans (DiLanEdu-WB)

1. Introduction This document outlines the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the selection of an external quality auditor to assess and ensure the compliance, efficiency, and effectiveness of our organization's quality management systems.

2. Background and general objectives The selection of an external quality auditor aligns with the broader objectives of digital transformation and quality assurance in education and training. This initiative is particularly relevant in the context of the DiLanEdu-WB project, which is centered on the Digital Transformation priority of the Call and also contributes to Sustainable Growth and Jobs by fostering digital skills development. Digital transformation plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality and inclusiveness of education worldwide, particularly within the European Union (EU) and its neighboring regions. The project aims to leverage digital technologies to bridge the digital divide and promote equitable access to quality education. Specifically, it supports:

- The development and adoption of digital skills to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive digital transformation.
- Digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and gender-sensitive programs, especially for remote and rural areas.
- The integration of innovative technologies to provide equitable access to language education resources.
- The enhancement of digital skills and competences among educators and students to improve teaching and learning outcomes.

This initiative aligns with the European Union's Neighbourhood and Enlargement policies, which emphasizes digital transformation and information management as key priorities. Furthermore, it contributes to the broader objectives of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) by promoting access to education, equity, inclusion, and lifelong learning through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). The initiative also aligns with the European Commission's commitment to enhancing digital-age learning through structured frameworks that support governance, teaching practices, professional development, and infrastructure improvements.

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By selecting an external quality auditor, this project aims to ensure that digital transformation efforts are effectively implemented, evaluated, and continuously improved to meet international quality standards.

3. Objectives of the audit: The primary objectives of the external quality audit are:

- To assess the compliance of the organization's quality management system with applicable standards, policies, and regulatory requirements.
- To evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of implemented quality control measures.
- To identify areas for improvement and recommend corrective actions.
- To provide an independent and objective assurance regarding quality processes.

4. Scope of work: The selected external quality auditor will be responsible for conducting an independent audit, which includes but is not limited to:

- Reviewing quality management documentation, policies, and procedures.
- Conducting on-site inspections and interviews with key personnel.
- Assessing risk management practices related to quality control.
- Evaluating compliance with national and international quality standards, including ISO 9001¹, an internationally recognized standard for quality management systems that ensures organizations meet customer and regulatory requirements while continuously improving their processes.
- Providing a detailed audit report with findings, recommendations, and action plans.

5. Eligibility criteria: Interested audit firms or individual auditors must meet the following criteria:

- Proven experience in conducting quality audits in similar industries.
- Accreditation and certification as a qualified external auditor.
- Familiarity with relevant quality standards such as ISO 9001 or equivalent.
- Demonstrated independence and impartiality in auditing processes.
- Strong analytical and reporting skills.
- Academic qualifications at least at a graduate level.
- Experience in Higher Education shall be considered an advantage.
- Beyond academic qualifications, any professional certifications in areas related to the project (e.g., in Project Management, Lead Implementation, IT Service Management or others) will be considered an asset

6. Deliverables: The external auditor shall deliver the following:

- A comprehensive audit plan, including methodology and timeline.

¹ International Organization for Standardization (ISO). (2015). *ISO 9001:2015 - Quality management systems – Requirements*. Geneva, Switzerland: ISO. Retrieved from <https://www.iso.org>

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- Periodic updates during the audit process.
- Audit reports for the project's deliverables and periodic reports with recommendation for improvements, where necessary.
- A final audit report with detailed findings, gaps, and recommendations.
- A follow-up action plan for continuous improvement.

7. Duration and timeline: The audit process is expected to be completed within 30 November 2027 starting from the date of contract signing. The detailed timeline will be agreed upon with the selected auditor.

8. Contract and Remuneration: A fixed lump sum at the rate of 5,000 € (before taxes and bank commissions) has been allocated for this service. A three-partite contract will be signed with the selected candidate that will involve the HEI supervising the project's Evaluation Quality Assurance Work Package 5, the project's lead institution to cover the remuneration entitlements of the selected candidate and the selected candidate. Remuneration entitlements are payable in three instalments, the first upon selection of the successful candidate (at the rate of 40% of the remuneration entitlements); the second upon successful completion of the project's interim periodic report (at the rate of 30% of the remuneration entitlements); and the third, upon successful completion of the project's final report (at the rate of 40% of the remuneration entitlements).

9. Application process Interested candidates should submit the following documents:

- CV
- Copies of academic credentials.
- Evidence of experience in Higher Education.
- A technical proposal outlining the quality auditing approach and methodology.
- Proof of qualifications and experience in external quality auditing.
- A declaration of independence and absence of conflict of interest.

10. Evaluation criteria: Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- 50% evaluation of candidate's relevance of profile, expertise and experience;
- 50% evaluation of technical proposal submitted;

11. Application: Qualified candidates are invited to express their interest by 31 May 2025 by way of an e-mail addressed to arlinda.beka@uni-pr.edu (c/c marinela.pane@kulogos.edu.al) quoting code "DiLanEdu-WB: External Quality Auditor"

12. Deadline for submission: All proposals must be submitted by 31 May 2025. Late submissions will not be considered.

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