



NATO STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

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INVITATION TO TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF RESEARCH IN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND INFLUENCE OPERATIONS IN THE ARCTIC

To be supplied to the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (NATO StratCom COE)

Revision	Version 1
Release Date	21 JAN 2022
Issuer	Ms. Elina Lange-Ionatamishvili
Suppliers Response date	February 10, 2022 submitted via e-mail tender@stratcomcoe.org by 23:59 hrs (Eastern European Time zone: UTC +02:00).

Invitation to Tender for the Provision of Research in Strategic Communications and Influence Operations in the Arctic

You are kindly invited to submit a tender to provide research in strategic communications and influence operations in the Arctic for the NATO StratCom COE's project.

By participating in this tender you are indicating your acceptance to be bound by the guidelines set out in this letter. We provide below the key details of the NATO StratCom COE requirements, which you should take into account in your response. Please acknowledge safe receipt of this letter via e-mail within two working days together with your confirmation of your intention to tender.

To simplify exchange of information regarding this Invitation to Tender (ITT) please nominate a Bid Manager and relevant contact details: phone and e-mail address.

Please direct any questions regarding the ITT content or process to Ms. Elina Lange-Ionatamishvili. You should not contact other NATO StratCom COE personnel unless asked to do so by the appointed NATO StratCom COE representative. The NATO StratCom COE reserves the right to disqualify and reject proposals from suppliers who do not comply with these guidelines. All questions should be submitted in writing to the e-mail: elina.lange@stratcomcoe.org.

As part of this tender process the NATO StratCom COE makes no obligations in any way to:

- (i) pay any supplier for an ITT response; or
- (ii) award the contract with the lowest price proposal or any Bidder; or
- (iii) accept any ITT information received from suppliers; or
- (iv) include suppliers responding to this ITT, in any future invitations; or
- (v) any other commitment to suppliers whatsoever.

Looking forward receiving your response.

Yours Sincerely,

Ms. Elina Lange-Ionatamishvili
Senior Expert, Doctrine Concept and Experimentation Branch
E-mail address: elina.lange@stratcomcoe.org.

Whilst care and attention has been exercised in the preparation of this document, it remains subject to contract, and all warranties, whether expressed or implied by statute, law or otherwise, are hereby disclaimed and excluded.

These limitations are not intended to restrict continued business discussions between the NATO StratCom COE and suppliers.

Any proposal received by the NATO StratCom COE is subject to contract with the NATO StratCom COE.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (NATO StratCom COE), based in Riga, Latvia, contributes to the improved strategic communications capabilities within the Alliance and Allied nations. The NATO StratCom COE designs programmes to advance StratCom doctrine development and harmonisation, conducts research and experimentation to find practical solutions to existing challenges, identifies lessons from applied StratCom during operations, and enhances training and education efforts and interoperability.
- 1.2. NATO StratCom COE is running a tender to conduct research of strategic communications and influence operations in the Arctic.
- 1.3. The contract will be awarded within two weeks after the announcement of the winner. The contract shall be executed by 15 November 2022.

2. Background

Since 2018 the NATO StratCom COE has been conducting research to better understand the strategic communications by different actors vis-à-vis the Arctic. Several analytical reports have been developed in the framework of this project. This project looks to update its previous research concerning narratives and political values, and to embark on new research concerning influence operations.

3. Requirements

3.1. The end product will provide an output covering two research directions:

- First, research of official (public) narratives and political values communicated by the Arctic Council member states, China, and NATO. This report will serve as an update to NATO StratCom COE's 2020 publication¹ and will address the period July 2019 – July 2022. In addition, the European Union should be included as a new actor, covering the entire period of previous and new analysis (January 2012- July 2022). This research will be published by the NATO StratCom COE on its website and possibly in printed form.
- Second, research of influence operations (including disinformation) concerning the Arctic: an overview of general trends and actors over the past 10 years (2012 until mid-2022). This research will **not** be published by the NATO StratCom COE. It will be provided directly to the nations participating in the NATO StratCom COE.

3.2. NATO StratCom COE is looking to contract one successful applicant to implement both research directions.

3.3. For the **research on official/public narratives and political values** communicated concerning the Arctic by the Arctic Council member states, China, and NATO, we seek the following:

- 3.3.1. Review of the previously conducted research by the NATO StratCom COE in order to become acquainted with the methodology.
- 3.3.2. Conduct an update to the NATO StratCom COE's 2020 publication, covering the period from 1 July 2019 to 1 July 2022.
- 3.3.3. Include the European Union in the analysis, covering the period from January 2012 to July 2022.
- 3.3.4. In order to ensure continuity and comparability of the findings, application of the same methodology used in the previously conducted research shall be applied. The NATO StratCom COE is open to receiving suggestions of improvement that would not affect the comparability of

¹ The 2020 publication can be accessed here: <https://stratcomcoe.org/publications/arctic-narratives-and-political-values-arctic-states-china-and-nato/44>

the findings or the continuity of the research. Any changes should then be clearly indicated in the application, explaining the necessity and benefits.

- 3.3.5. Finalisation of a report including a section focusing on a more detailed analysis of the discourse surrounding Russia's presidency of the Arctic Council.
- 3.4. For the **research of influence operations (including disinformation)** concerning the Arctic, we seek the following:
 - 3.4.1. Provision of an overview of general trends and actors participating in influence operations vis-à-vis the Arctic over the past 10 years (2012 until mid-2022).
 - 3.4.2. Detailed analysis of influence operations concerning the Arctic over the past 3 years (2019 until mid-2022).
 - 3.4.3. Using expert interviews as one of the research methods.
- 3.5. Successful applicant should be prepared to travel (or connect virtually depending on the pandemic situation) in order to present the outcomes of the research at an event organised by the NATO StratCom COE either at the end of 2022 or in early 2023. Exact details will be clarified during Contract negotiations.
- 3.6. Submit research results in academic English language, providing appropriate referencing, following NATO StratCom COE's style guide. The successful applicant should ensure that the output is edited and the language corrected before submission. The NATO StratCom COE is responsible for the layout of the publication.
- 3.7. Provision of relevant data sets that were produced in the research process (for example, data set of documents, publications, interviews).

4. Reporting

- 4.1. We would like to hold an initial meeting to clarify the methodology and delivery process as soon as the tender has been awarded (via videoconference or other means).
- 4.2. We would like to receive:
 - 4.1.1. detailed methodology by April 4, 2022. Detailed methodology will include a list of the main documents and publications to be included in the analysis, as well as list of main interviewees.
 - 4.1.2. initial draft of the report (including raw data), by 30 September 2022.
 - 4.1.3. the final draft of the report by 15 November, 2022.

5. Deliverables

- 5.1. The tender submission should consist of:
 - 5.1.1. A written proposal for the delivery of the work (See Section 3. Requirements).
 - 5.1.2. Detailed budget for the delivery of the work in EUR currency (amount of VAT or any other kind of tax must be clearly specified for each budget position and marked as zero where not applicable). It should indicate the budget estimates for both researches separately, indicating the costs for:
 - Methodology development;
 - Conduct of the research;
 - Development of final report.
 - 5.1.3. Copy of Bidder's Certificate issued by the national Commercial Register. If that is not applicable (for example, the Bidder is an individual), please provide an explanatory statement and a different form of a document confirming your identity and, if possible, permit to engage in a commercial activity.
 - 5.1.4. Evidence of the work experience with similar projects and Statement of previous work experience. The following experience is required for the Bidder to be eligible for selection:

- 5.1.4.1. The evidence of the development of at least two similar research projects (national or international level) in the last 3 years;
- 5.1.4.2. The evidence of sound knowledge of Arctic affairs;
- 5.1.4.3. The evidence of sound understanding of strategic communications;
- 5.1.4.4. The evidence of the experience with working with international customers or participation in international projects.
- 5.1.5. Profile of the key personnel to be working on the Contract delivery providing evidence of skills, knowledge and experience (for example, a CV). The Bidder should also indicate the roles of the personnel working on the Contract delivery and the approximate percentage of time each of them will spend for this work.
- 5.1.6. At least two references from former customers (can be in the form of an email with customer's contact details, date and time when issued, sender's and recipient's email addresses).
- 5.1.7. Information about any persons or entities that the Bidder may choose to sub-contract for work on the Contract delivery (company or person's name, other relevant credentials (such as company's registration number, website address, contacts), and a short company's profile or person's biography).

6. Timetable

General	
Confirmation of bid	Please confirm you have submitted your bid by notifying elina.lange@startcomcoe.org
Deadline for submission	23:59 hrs (Eastern European Time zone: UTC+02:00) on February 10, 2022
Contract implementation date	Upon agreement
Questions	Questions arising from this document should be addressed to Ms. Elina Lange-Ionatamishvili until February 8, 2022.
Full contact details	Ms. Elina Lange-Ionatamishvili, elina.lange@stratcomcoe.org , +371 26401466 (also available via WhatsApp and Signal).

7. Respondent Instructions

- 7.1. This section provides detailed instructions to be followed in responding to this ITT.
- 7.2. Response Guidelines:
 - 7.2.1. You will be required to submit a written proposal that complies with the indicated requirements (see Section 5. Deliverables). The proposal should be submitted electronically in PDF format.
 - 7.2.2. **Please deliver the electronic copy to:**
tender@stratcomcoe.org
by 23:59 hrs (Eastern European Time zone: UTC+02:00) on February 10, 2022.
 - 7.2.3. The NATO StratCom COE will disregard any response submitted after the timetable deadline.
 - 7.2.4. Bidders are expected to supply all required information, or clearly state the reasons for being unable to do so.
 - 7.2.5. Any assumptions used in preparing responses should be clearly stated. Any appropriate supporting documents e.g.: brochures, demo videos, presentations, should be included.
 - 7.2.6. If any of the requested documents in the Section 5. Deliverables is not submitted, the Contract Award Committee shall have the right to exclude the applicant from further participation in the procurement.
- 7.3. Questions relating to clarification of the ITT will only be accepted in writing to NATO StratCom COE representative. Likewise, all responses from the Centre will be written and may also be made

available to other suppliers (subject to confidentiality). In the event that any answer materially affects the ITT specification, an amendment of the original requirements will be escalated to all suppliers. The NATO StratCom COE will attempt to answer any questions within one working day of receipt of that request; otherwise it will respond within that timescale notifying you of the estimated time to obtain the information.

- 7.4. The NATO StratCom COE reserves the right to modify the provisions of this ITT at any time prior to the scheduled date for written responses. Additional scope and requirements can be added. Notification of such changes will be provided to all suppliers.
- 7.5. Should you wish to propose a deviation from the specification please ensure that you clearly identify and highlight where appropriate in your response.
- 7.6. All information supplied in this tender to date, any further information supplied during the tender process will remain confidential and available only to the Contract Award Committee members.

8. Tender Assessments

- 8.1. Evaluation Criteria and Process. A set of evaluation criteria has been prepared by the NATO StratCom COE for the evaluation of every Submission. Within each stage an initial evaluation will consider whether or not every instruction and requirement contained within the ITT has been fulfilled.
- 8.2. The evaluation criteria will be based all of the following aspects of the Bidders' proposals (not in order of significance):
 - 8.2.1. Commercial
 - 8.2.1.1. Clarity of price (in EUR with VAT and w/o VAT);
 - 8.2.1.2. Competitiveness of price.
 - 8.2.2. Service capability:
 - 8.2.2.1. Capacity to conduct the research to high standards, based on previous experience and recommendations;
 - 8.2.2.2. Composition of the research team members and the percentage of time they will devote to implementation of the Contract;
 - 8.2.2.3. Previous experience with Arctic and strategic communications research projects;
 - 8.2.2.4. Quality of previously delivered service (based on the evidence provided);
 - 8.2.3. Previous experience in cooperation with national government institutions and international organisations;
 - 8.2.4. Level of compliance with the Requirements, Reporting and Deliverables of the ITT.
- 8.3. You are reminded that through the process the NATO StratCom COE will continually assess all contact with the Bidders' organizations including compliance to the process and presentation. The NATO StratCom COE reserves the rights at its sole discretion to disqualify without further consideration any submission that does not satisfy this basic requirement.

9. Briefing for Unsuccessful Participants

The NATO StratCom COE reserves the right to control the format and content of any such briefing, and to limit it in any way believed by the NATO StratCom COE to be appropriate (which includes, in exceptional circumstances, the right to refuse a briefing without giving any reasons for doing so).

10. Contract Details

- 10.1. Contractual and payment details will be subject to negotiation with the selected supplier.
- 10.2. The NATO StratCom COE reserves the right to modify the scope of this tender, after receiving the bids (including price estimates).