



## **Invitation to Tender for the Provision of a Case study of the NATO StratCom COE and media discourse during COVID-19**

You are kindly invited to submit a tender to provide an analysis of the role of communication strategies and media discourse in 3 NATO countries during the COVID-19 crisis 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 via e-mail safe receipt of this letter 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 LCol Yves Desbiens. You should not contact other NATO StratCom COE personnel unless directed 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: [yves.desbiens@stratcomcoe.org](mailto:yves.desbiens@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 to receiving your response.

Yours Sincerely,

LCol Yves Desbiens  
Project Officer, Operational Support Branch  
E-mail address: [yves.desbiens@stratcomcoe.org](mailto:yves.desbiens@stratcomcoe.org)

Whilst care and attention has been exercised in the preparation of this document, it remains subject to contract and all warranties whether express 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.

## **Table of Contents**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Background**
- 3. Requirements**
- 4. Reporting**
- 5. Deliverables**
- 6. Timetable**
- 7. Respondent Instructions**
- 8. Tender Assessments**
- 9. Briefing for Unsuccessful Participants**
- 10. Contract Details**

## **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 for a research study on crisis management by authorities and media in three NATO countries (Italy, Poland, and Netherlands) about the COVID-19 outbreak, and how it was received, understood and used by the public. The product should provide a comparative analysis of the impacts of information/communication strategy and misinformation on populations of various cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, and important lessons that could be applied to future public information campaigns.
- 1.3. The winner will be announced no later than one month after the final response date. The contract shall be completed by the end of 2021.

## **2. Background**

This NATO StratCom COE's project aims to contribute to a better understanding of how information is delivered by authorities and media during the COVID-19 crisis in order to develop effective communications approach and mitigate negative narratives. The NATO StratCom COE together with experts from the above-mentioned NATO countries will be available to answer questions to help achieve the project's aim.

## **3. Requirements**

### **3.1. State of knowledge.**

- 3.1.1. Conduct a literature review to synthesize existing literature about communication during COVID-19 crisis management.

### **3.2. Develop the methodology on how to research audience in the countries of analysis.** The methodology should employ modern quantitative and/or qualitative research methods and should address the following elements:

- 3.2.1. Analyse, compare and contrast across these three countries, through interviews and document review, Government and/or public authorities communication activities during COVID-19 crisis management. Access to authorities and key documents will be facilitated by the Centre's Project Officer.
- 3.2.2. Analyse, compare and contrast across these three countries the nature and the evolution of the media discourse (news media and social media) about the COVID-19 crisis and its influence on people's understanding and reactions.
- 3.2.3. Explain how the population of the above mentioned three countries with different governance modes and sociocultural contexts understands and reacts to the COVID-19 crisis;
- 3.2.4. Before signing the contract, basic principles of methodology for data gathering, analysis and research will be discussed and agreed upon between the Bidder and the Centre's Project Officer.

### **3.3. Conduct the audience research in the countries indicated in the tender.** The Bidder should demonstrate:

- 3.3.1. Organisational and logistical capabilities, as well as cultural and language knowledge to conduct audience research in all three countries of analysis;
- 3.3.2. Capability to apply both quantitative and qualitative research methods in all three countries of analysis.

- 3.3.3. Within a week following the announcement of the winning Bidder, an online meeting among authorities from the above mentioned NATO countries, the Bidder and the Centre's Project Officer should be set to discuss the research project methodology.
- 3.4. **Develop report (in English language)** that would provide comparative analysis, based on the results of the audience and media research in the above mentioned countries, including important lessons that could be applied to future public information campaign.
- 3.5. **Cooperation with COE.** The Bidder should be ready to:
  - 3.5.1. Coordinate and discuss all relevant aspects of the research project with the representatives of NATO StratCom COE;
  - 3.5.2. Conduct presentation findings:
    - 3.5.2.1. There is a requirement to delivering an oral presentation of the main findings during four different events to take place in Italy, Latvia, Netherlands and Poland;
    - 3.5.2.2. The location, date and time of the presentations will be specified in the final contract.

#### 4. **Timeline and 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 video conference or other means).
- 4.2. We would like to receive and conduct:
  - 4.1.1. A conceptual presentation of the methodology by 30 April, 2021.
  - 4.1.2. A monthly progress report beginning May 2021.
  - 4.1.3. The initial draft of the report by the end of November 2021.
  - 4.1.4. The final draft of the report (including raw data) by the end of December 2021. Considering the restrictions imposed by state authorities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the extension of the deadline is possible. However, it should not exceed the end of February 2022.

#### 5. **Deliverables**

- 5.1. The tender submission should consist of:
  - 5.1.1. A written proposal for the delivery of the work as listed above (See Section 3.Requirements).
  - 5.1.2. Detailed budget for the delivery of the work (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:
    - Methodology development;
    - Quantitative and/or qualitative methods proposed for the audience research for each country;
    - Development of final report;
    - Delivery of research findings.
  - 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 audience studies and information influence activities of at least two similar projects in the last five years;
    - 5.1.4.2. The evidence of experience conducting traditional and social media content analysis;
    - 5.1.4.3. The evidence of 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 time each of them are planning to spend for this work.
- 5.1.6. At least two references from former customers (can be in email form with visible contact details, date and time when issued and recipient's address to whom the reference was emailed).
- 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 (like company registration number, website address, contacts, etc), and a short company profile or person's biography).

## 6. Timetable

General	
Confirmation of bid	Please confirm you have submitted your bid by notifying <a href="mailto:yves.desbiens@startcomcoe.org">yves.desbiens@startcomcoe.org</a>
Deadline for submission	<b>23:59 hrs (Eastern European Time zone: UTC +02:00) on 05 APRIL, 2021</b>
Contract implementation date	<b>Upon agreement</b>
Questions	Questions arising from this document should be given to LCol Yves Desbiens until 01 APRIL 2021
Full contact details	LCol Yves Desbiens, <a href="mailto:yves.desbiens@stratcomcoe.org">yves.desbiens@stratcomcoe.org</a> , +371 25604245

## 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](mailto:tender@stratcomcoe.org)  
**by 23:59 hrs (Eastern European Time zone: UTC +02:00) on 05 APRIL, 2021.**
- 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 apply both quantitative and qualitative audience research and media analysis methods in all three countries indicated in ITT;
    - 8.2.2.2. Previous experience with conducting similar projects;
    - 8.2.2.3. Previous experience with developing comparative data analysis;
    - 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, 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).