



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE GENERAL
ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS
Directorate Economies of the Member States I
The Director

OPEN CALL FOR TENDERS

N° 2015 ECFIN 010/E

Ref. OJEU 2015/S 248-450625 of 23.12.2015

**STUDY ON FIRM-LEVEL DRIVERS OF EXPORT PERFORMANCE
AND EXTERNAL COMPETITIVENESS IN ITALY**

TENDER SPECIFICATIONS

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ANNEXES

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Annex 2 Declaration on honour on exclusion and selection criteria

Annex 3 Simplified copy of the balance sheet and income statement

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Legal entity form

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/legal_entities/legal_entities_en.cfm

Financial identification form

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/index_en.cfm

1. INFORMATION ON TENDERING

1.1. Participation

Participation in this tender procedure is open on equal terms to all natural and legal persons coming within the scope of the Treaties and to all natural and legal persons in a third country which has a special agreement with the Union in the field of public procurement on the conditions laid down in that agreement. Where the Multilateral Agreement on Government Procurement¹ concluded within the WTO applies, the participation to the call for tender is also open to nationals of the countries that have ratified this Agreement, on the conditions it lays down.

1.2. Contractual conditions

The tenderer should bear in mind the provisions of the draft contract (see **Annex 5**) which specifies the rights and obligations of the contractor, particularly those on payments, performance of the contract, confidentiality, checks and audits, ownership of the results of the study, and intellectual property rights.

1.3. Joint tenders

A joint tender is a situation where a tender is submitted by a group of economic operators (consortium). Joint tenders may include subcontractors in addition to the joint tenderers.

In case of joint tender, all economic operators in a joint tender assume joint and several liability towards the Contracting Authority for the performance of the contract as a whole. Nevertheless, tenderers must designate a single point of contact for the Contracting Authority.

After the award, the Contracting Authority will sign the contract either with all members of the group, or with the member duly authorised by the other members via a power of attorney.

1.4. Subcontracting

Subcontracting is permitted in the tender but the contractor will retain full liability towards the Contracting Authority for performance of the contract as a whole.

Tenderers must give an indication of the proportion of the contract that they intend to subcontract.

Tenderers are required to identify subcontractors whose share of the contract is above 20%.

During contract execution, the change of any subcontractor identified in the tender will be subject to prior written approval of the Contracting Authority.

¹ See http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/gproc_e/gp_gpa_e.htm

1.5. Content of the tender

The tenders must be presented as follows:

Part A: Identification of the tenderer (see section 1.6)

Part B: Evidence for exclusion criteria (see section 4.2)

Part C: Evidence for selection criteria (see section 4.3)

Part D: Technical offer (see section 4.5)

Part E: Financial offer (see section 4.6)

1.6. Identification of the tenderer: legal capacity and status

The tender must include a cover letter presenting the name of the tenderer (including all entities in case of joint offer) and identified subcontractors if applicable, and the name of the single contact person in relation to this tender. In addition, the tenderer must complete the administrative reply form (**see Annex 1**).

In case of joint tender, the cover letter must be signed by a duly authorised representative for each tenderer, or by a single tenderer duly authorised by other tenderers (with power of attorney).

Subcontractors must provide a letter of intent stating their willingness to provide the service foreseen in the offer and in line with the present tender specification.

In order to prove their legal capacity and their status, all tenderers must provide a signed **Legal Entity Form** with its supporting evidence. The form is available on: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/legal_entities/legal_entities_en.cfm

Tenderers that are already registered in the Contracting Authority's accounting system (i.e. they have already been direct contractors) must provide the form but are not obliged to provide the supporting evidence.

The tenderer (or the single point of contact in case of joint tender) must provide a **Financial Identification Form** and supporting documents. Only one form per offer should be submitted (no form is needed for subcontractors and other joint tenderers). The form is available on: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/index_en.cfm

Tenderers must provide the following information if it has not been included with the Legal Entity Form:

- For legal persons, a legible copy of the notice of appointment of the persons authorised to represent the tenderer in dealings with third parties and in legal proceedings, or a copy of the publication of such appointment if the legislation which applies to the legal entity concerned requires such publication. Any delegation of this authorisation to another representative not indicated in the official appointment must be evidenced.
- For natural persons, where applicable, a proof of registration on a professional or trade register or any other official document showing the registration number.

2. TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

2.1. Background

Italy's external competitiveness and export performance has been a much researched and widely debated topic in recent years.² Also the European Commission has been analysing these matters, in particular in the context of the EU's macroeconomic surveillance framework. In particular, in its yearly in-depth reviews³, the Commission has concluded that Italy is experiencing a macroeconomic imbalance related to its weak external competitiveness and export performance.

The existing body of literature has however not resulted in a shared diagnosis of Italy's external competitiveness and export performance as well as its potential policy implications. One view is that since the adoption of the euro, Italy's external competitiveness has eroded significantly and that its export performance has lagged behind that of its European peers. Supporters of this view show that the country's export market share has decreased strongly. This would be mainly due to the deterioration of cost competitiveness indicators such as unit labour costs or the real effective exchange rate based on them, driven by a misalignment between rising wages and a dismal productivity trend⁴ related to structural rigidities in the economy in a context of euro appreciation. Other weaknesses often referred to include Italy's unfavourable sectoral and geographical export specialisation patterns, the high share of small and inefficient firms and their subordinate positions in global value chains. This alarming view contrasts with another, more optimistic view that despite increasing competitive pressure from globalisation, Italy has been able to hold up relatively well. Proponents of this milder assessment state that the Italian manufacturing industry – the country's main source of exports – continues to rank among the largest worldwide, while specialised Italian firms continue to be leaders in a wide range of industries, including some traditional ones characterised by lower technological intensity. They show that price-based indicators (e.g. the real effective exchange rate based on a producer price index) suggest a smaller loss of competitiveness than cost-based indicators, and question the relevance of the latter given the increasing importance of global value chains (countries' diverging participation in global value chains may make cross-country comparisons of external competitiveness on the basis

² See for instance: Tiffin A. (2014), *European productivity, innovation and competitiveness: the case of Italy*, IMF Working Papers, no. 14/79; Giordano C., Zollino F. (2015), *Exploring price and non-price determinants of trade flows in the largest euro-area countries*, ECB Working Paper Series, no. 1789; Codogno L. (2009), *Two Italian puzzles: are productivity growth and competitiveness really so depressed?*, MEF Working Papers, no. 2/2009; Algieri B. (2014), *Price and non-price competitiveness in export demand: empirical evidence from Italy*, *Empirica*, Volume 42, Issue 1, pp. 157-183; D'Aurizio L., Cristadoro R. (2015), *The Italian firms' international activity*, Bank of Italy Occasional Papers, no. 261; Confindustria (2015), *L'export italiano vince nella qualità ma è penalizzato dai costi*, Note dal Centro Studi Confindustria, no. 15-6; De Nardis S. (2014), *Polvere e altare*, Scenario, Nomisma.

³ European Commission – DG ECFIN (2012), *Macroeconomic Imbalances – Italy*, Occasional Papers, no. 107, July 2012; European Commission – DG ECFIN (2013), *Macroeconomic Imbalances – Italy*, Occasional Papers, no. 138, April 2013; European Commission – DG ECFIN (2014), *Macroeconomic Imbalances – Italy*, Occasional Papers, no. 182, March 2014; European Commission – DG ECFIN (2015), *Macroeconomic Imbalances / Country Report – Italy*, Occasional Papers, no. 219, June 2015.

⁴ In relation to Italy's productivity issue, DG ECFIN has contracted out a separate study titled "Capital misallocation and skill mismatches in Italy: the productivity conundrum" (ref. ECFIN 2014 017/H)

of cost-based indicators misleading). Finally, they also refer to Italy's ability to increase the quality of its exports (e.g. on the basis of export unit values rising over time).

The vague and multi-faceted nature of the concept 'competitiveness' may to some extent explain the fact that views diverge on the extent of the erosion of the Italian corporate sector's ability to become active and compete internationally and participate in global trade. Most existing studies only consider broad macroeconomic competitiveness indicators (i.e. relating to a whole economy or a whole sector), some of which suffer from non-negligible caveats. Moreover, such macro-level indicators are by definition averages, which neglect firm-level heterogeneity and thereby could lead to so-called aggregation and dispersion biases. They make abstraction of the fact that a country's external competitiveness and export success are ultimately driven by the performance of individual firms. Consequently, they tend to mostly lead to the formulation of generic and potentially suboptimal policies that enhance the competitiveness of the 'average firm' instead of tailoring policies to the existing diversity.⁵

The above-mentioned drawbacks could be partially overcome by complementing the existing literature with more granular insights at the microeconomic level. The research of external competitiveness at micro-level has been attracting increasing activity⁶ – for instance the EFIGE project⁷ or the European Central Bank's Competitiveness Research Network (CompNet)⁸ – notwithstanding still significant challenges related to the scarcity of firm-level datasets, the restricted access to such datasets and obstacles to the computability of microeconomic competitiveness indicators.⁹ An in-depth study into the relevant microeconomic underpinnings of Italy's external competitiveness and export performance would support the existing momentum in this field of research, and add significant value to the understanding of Italy's competitive position as well as result in more tailored and better policy recommendations.

2.2. Objectives and tasks

The overall objective of the study envisaged by this tender is to provide insight in the microeconomic underpinnings of Italy's external competitiveness in recent years. This will help to enhance the Commission's knowledge and understanding of Italian firms' competitive position, with particular attention to export performance, and to refine its policy recommendations to Italy in this field. The study's results will be used as input for various

⁵ Altomonte C., Aquilante T., Ottaviano G. (2012), *The triggers of competitiveness: the EFIGE cross-country report*, Bruegel Blueprint Series, no. 17; Altomonte C., Barba Navaretti G., Di Mauro F., Ottaviano G. (2011), *Assessing competitiveness: how firm-level data can help*, Bruegel Policy Contributions, issue 2011/16; Bentivogli C., Oddo G., Pellegrini V. (2014), *Geography of internationalization statistics*, Bank of Italy Occasional Papers, no. 239.

⁶ For an overview, see for example the bibliography of Mayer T., Ottaviano G. (2007), *The Happy Few: The internationalisation of European firms. New facts based on firm-level evidence*, Bruegel Blueprint Series, no. 3.

⁷ <http://www.bruegel.org/datasets/efigedataset/>

⁸ https://www.ecb.europa.eu/home/html/researcher_compnet.en.html

⁹ For an in-depth investigation of these challenges related to the use of firm-level datasets for analysing external competitiveness as well as recommendations to overcome these challenges, refer to the MAPCOMPETE project: <http://mapcompete.eu/>

policy frameworks, notably: (i) future assessments of Italy in the context of the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure (MIP); (ii) future country-specific recommendations to Italy in the context of the European Semester.

To this end, the study should as a minimum cover the following elements (the contractor may propose additional or alternative elements, as long as these fall within the scope of the study's overall objective):

- a. **Literature review.** Review of recent policy-oriented academic literature on firm-level drivers of external competitiveness, with particular attention to Italy and its peer economies in the euro area;
- b. **Microeconomic drivers of external competitiveness.** Comparative analysis of descriptive statistics relating to firm-level characteristics of Italian firms that export most of their production abroad versus Italian firms that are mainly oriented domestically. The descriptive statistics should in addition to the total, (un)weighted average and median also include higher moments such as variance and skewness on the basis of which the distributions of the related variables can be approximated. Using econometric techniques, the study should analyse the relationship between measures' of firms' external competitiveness and/or export performance (as dependent variables) and a series of firm-level characteristics (as explanatory variables), reporting on the statistical significance of the latter, investigating the direction of causality and explaining the findings with economic arguments. If possible, control variables reflecting specific policy settings – stand-alone and interacted with other explanatory variables – could be included in the econometric regressions as well. Relevant firm-level characteristics could include: firm age, firm size by number of employees, labour productivity, total factor productivity, capital intensity, main sector of activity (using the intermediate 38-sector NACE Rev. 2 / ISIC Rev. 4 classification), Italian region or province in which a firm is mainly active, size of turnover, R&D investment, share of high-skilled employees, technological intensity, financial leverage, share of bank loans in total debt, presence of foreign capital, being family-owned, type of management (i.e. family or external managers), being part of an industrial cluster etc. This list of firm-level characteristics potentially relevant to external competitiveness is not exhaustive and the contractor is encouraged to expand it, *inter alia* on the basis of the findings from the review of academic literature.
- c. **Demography of Italian exporting firms.** Analysis of descriptive statistics relating to additional firm-level characteristics of Italian firms that are able export abroad. The descriptive statistics should in addition to the total, (un)weighted average and median also include higher moments such as variance and skewness on the basis of which the distributions of the related variables can be approximated. The additional firm-level characteristics considered may include: value of exports, value of imports, export propensity, share of turnover generated by exports, being engaged in international outsourcing, being engaged in foreign direct investment, being a participant in an international value chain, share of exports within and outside the EU, number of export markets, number of export products etc. This list of additional firm-level characteristics is not exhaustive and the contractor is encouraged to expand it according to own insight.
- d. **Impact of the recent crisis.** Analysis of whether the set and the relative importance of microeconomic drivers of external competitiveness – as investigated under point b – and of how the demography of Italian exporting firms – as investigated under point c – have changed in the context of the recent crisis period (2008-2014) compared to the period before and explanation of such changes with economic arguments. The analysis should

provide insights into which types of firms were best positioned to survive throughout the crisis and enable an assessment of the crisis' impact on Italian firms' export potential.

- e. **Policy recommendations.** Formulation of policy conclusions to improve the external competitiveness and export performance of Italian firms on the basis of the literature review and the analyses conducted under points b-d. The policy conclusions should also allow for a clear prioritisation of policy actions.

2.3. Methodology

The contractor is expected to build on the frontier of firm-level research and apply statistical and econometric techniques. The contractor is fully responsible for identifying, evaluating, selecting, obtaining access to and (if necessary) combining the firm-level dataset(s) enabling it to fulfil the objectives of the study, with no responsibility nor extra charges to the Commission. Given the relative scarcity and restricted access to firm-level datasets, the contractor is encouraged to seek partnerships with institutions or organisations which may collect, manage or have access to firm-level data (e.g. Bank of Italy, Istat, Confindustria, Cerved, Bureau Van Dijk). The contractor should ensure the representativeness of the firm-level dataset(s) used for the population of Italian firms to the maximum extent possible.

In their offer to the Commission candidates should guarantee that access to the envisaged dataset(s) will be put into place at the latest at contract signature in order not to endanger the timely submission of the deliverables under the contract (see also second award criterion in Section 4.4).

2.4. Timeline, meetings and deliverables

The contract's total duration shall not exceed 12 months.

An **initial meeting** will be held in Brussels one month after contract signature. The objective of this meeting is to discuss the envisaged methodology – in particular the selection of the firm-level dataset(s) – and the expected results. To this end, the contractor shall submit a draft annotated outline two days before the initial meeting. The draft annotated outline should describe the structure of the report and detail the constituent elements of each section. Within two weeks after the initial meeting, the contractor shall revise the draft annotated outline based on the comments received during the initial meeting and resubmit it.

An **inception report** will be submitted by the contractor to the Commission no later than ten weeks after contract signature. The inception report should include: (i) a thorough review of policy-oriented academic literature and its policy implications; (ii) a description of the firm-level dataset(s) which the contractor will use, discussing the way the datasets are constructed, their representativeness, their coverage in terms of time and variables, and major trade-offs, caveats, gaps or other limits; (iii) details on the envisaged statistical and econometrical approach; (iv) a proposed structure for the final report. Within two weeks after receipt of the inception report, the Commission will send in written its observations to the contractor which the contractor will address in a revised version of the inception report within two weeks after receipt of the Commission's observations. The revised version will reflect the final agreement on the choice of the firm-level dataset(s) and the methodological approach.

An **interim study report** will be submitted by the contractor to the Commission no later than 5 (five) months after contract signature. The interim report shall present the contractor's progress during the first months after contract signature. In particular, the interim report

should include: (i) descriptive statistics related to the firm-level dataset(s), highlighting any facts or trends that could be relevant; (ii) preliminary findings of the work done so far; (iii) an account of envisaged next steps. Furthermore, the interim report shall discuss the feasibility of the envisaged approach and highlight any major difficulties encountered as well as propose ways to address those difficulties. After submission of the interim report, a meeting will be held in Brussels to discuss it within two weeks after receipt of the interim report. Within one month after receipt of the interim report, the Commission will send in written its observations to the contractor which the contractor will address in a revised version of the interim report within 30 days after receipt of the Commission's observations.

A **draft final study report** will be submitted by the contractor to the Commission no later than 9 (nine) months after contract signature. The draft final report shall present in full the results of the study, fulfilling all envisaged objectives as set out in Section 2.2. It shall also include a draft abstract and draft executive summary (both in English and in French). After submission of the draft final report, a meeting will be held in Brussels to discuss it within two weeks after receipt of the draft final report. Within one month after receipt of the draft final report, the Commission will either inform the contractor that it accepts the draft final report or will send in written its observations to the contractor which the contractor will address in the definitive final report.

The **definitive final study report** will be submitted by the contractor to the Commission no later than 11 (eleven) months after contract signature. The final report shall include all parts of the study, fulfilling all envisaged objectives as set out in Section 2.2 as well as address any observations which the Commission had on the draft final report. The final report shall also include a final version of the abstract and executive summary (both in English and in French), a bibliography and all annexes (if any). The contractor shall submit to the Commission the annotated dataset(s) used in Excel format (any other format should be pre-agreed with the Commission), unless restrictions apply to the sharing of the dataset(s) which – if not respected – would make it impossible to use the dataset(s) (e.g. privacy-related restrictions imposed by the institution(s) or organisation(s) from which the contractor obtained access to the data). In this respect the contractor shall respect the provisions of article I.8.2 of the draft contract in annex.

A **concluding seminar** will be organised in Brussels within 1 (one) month after submission of the final report and no later than 12 months after contract signature, on a date mutually agreed between the Commission and the contractor. During the seminar, the findings of the final report will be discussed. The seminar will be organised by the Commission and will be open to a limited number of Commission officials and Member State representatives.

The contractor shall remain accessible to the Commission for the duration of the entire contract to answer questions and receive comments and suggestions on the work in progress.

All deliverables shall be submitted to the Commission in electronic format (Word and/or PDF, unless otherwise indicated) to a dedicated Commission mailbox which will be determined in the contract. Any deliverables which for any reason cannot be sent via e-mail should be submitted through alternative electronic means (e.g. CD, DVD, USB stick).

The language for all deliverables shall be English. The abstract and executive summary shall be drafted both in English and in French.

The Commission expects the contractor to adhere to the highest scientific and professional standards in the carrying out of the research and the drafting of the various reports. In particular, in all reports the methodology and the techniques applied to fulfil the objectives of the study shall respect the accepted standards of the profession. All reports shall thoroughly

document the research carried out, starting from the objectives and ending with the conclusions. The reports shall be original in their content and innovative compared to existing studies. The Commission reserves itself the right to refuse a study that does not meet those standards.

3. CONTENT, STRUCTURE AND GRAPHIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE FINAL DELIVERABLES

All studies produced for the European Commission and Executive Agencies shall conform to the corporate visual identity of the European Commission by applying the graphic rules set out in the European Commission's Visual Identity Manual, including its logo¹⁰.

The Commission is committed to making online information as accessible as possible to the largest possible number of users including those with visual, auditory, cognitive or physical disabilities, and those not having the latest technologies. The Commission supports the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0](#) of the W3C.

For full details on Commission policy on accessibility for information providers, see: http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/standards/accessibility/index_en.htm

PDF versions of studies destined for online publication should respect W3C guidelines for accessible PDF documents. See: <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>

3.1. Content

3.1.1. Final study report

The final study report shall include:

- an abstract of no more than 200 words and an executive summary of maximum 6 pages, both in English and French
- the following standard disclaimer:

“The information and views set out in this [report/study/article/publication...] are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Commission. The Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this study. Neither the Commission nor any person acting on the Commission’s behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.”

- specific identifiers which shall be incorporated on the cover page provided by the Contracting Authority.

3.1.2. Publishable executive summary

The publishable executive summary shall be provided in both in English and French and shall include:

¹⁰ The Visual Identity Manual of the European Commission is available upon request. Requests should be made to the following e-mail address: comm-visual-identity@ec.europa.eu

- the following standard disclaimer:

“The information and views set out in this [report/study/article/publication...] are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Commission. The Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this study. Neither the Commission nor any person acting on the Commission’s behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.”

- specific identifiers which shall be incorporated on the cover page provided by the Contracting Authority.

3.2. Structure

The structure of the final report will be agreed between the contractor and the Commission on the basis of a proposal of the contractor included in the inception report.

3.3. Graphic requirements

For graphic requirements please refer to the template provided in **Annex 6**. The cover page shall be filled in by the contractor in accordance with the instructions provided in the template. For further details you may also contact comm-visual-identity@ec.europa.eu.

4. EVALUATION AND AWARD

4.1. Evaluation steps

The evaluation is based on the information provided in the submitted tender. It takes place in three steps:

- (1) Verification of non-exclusion of tenderers on the basis of the exclusion criteria
- (2) Selection of tenderers on the basis of selection criteria
- (3) Evaluation of tenders on the basis of the award criteria

Only tenders meeting the requirements of one step will pass on to the next step.

4.2. Exclusion criteria

All tenderers shall provide a declaration on their honour (**see Annex 2**), duly signed and dated by an authorised representative, stating that they are not in one of the situations of exclusion listed in the aforementioned annex.

The declaration on honour is also required for identified subcontractors whose intended share of the contract is above 20%.

The Contracting Authority reserves the right to verify all information contained in the declaration by requiring the supporting documents listed in annex 2.

4.3. Selection criteria

Tenderers must prove their economic, financial, technical and professional capacity to carry out the work subject to this call for tender. All tenderers and identified subcontractors whose intended share of the contract is above 20% shall provide a declaration on their honour (**see Annex 2**), duly signed and dated by their authorised representative.

The evidence requested should be provided by each member of the group in case of joint tender and identified subcontractor whose intended share of the contract is above 20%. However a consolidated assessment will be made to verify compliance with the minimum capacity levels.

The tenderer may rely on the capacities of other entities, regardless of the legal nature of the links which it has with them. It must in that case prove to the Contracting Authority that it will have at its disposal the resources necessary for performance of the contract, for example by producing an undertaking on the part of those entities to place those resources at its disposal.

4.3.1. Economic and financial capacity criteria and evidence

In order to prove their economic and financial capacity, the tenderer (i.e. in case of joint tender, the combined capacity of all members of the consortium and identified subcontractors) must provide the following evidence:

- A simplified copy of the balance sheet and income statement of the last two years for which accounts have been closed, by means of the compulsory Excel sheet (see Annex 3), which must be duly completed by the candidate
- In addition, a certified copy of the balance sheets and income statements of the last two years for which accounts have been closed
- Failing the above, recent bank statements indicating the candidate's creditworthiness
- Failing the above, evidence of professional risk indemnity insurance

If, for some exceptional reason which the Contracting Authority considers justified, a tenderer is unable to provide one or other of the above documents, he or she may prove his or her economic and financial capacity by any other document which the Contracting Authority considers appropriate. In any case, the Contracting Authority must at least be notified of the exceptional reason and its justification in the tender. The Commission reserves the right to request any other document enabling it to verify the tenderer's economic and financial capacity.

4.3.2. Technical and professional capacity criteria and evidence

a. Criteria relating to tenderers:

Tenderers (in case of a joint tender the combined capacity of all tenderers and identified subcontractors) must comply with the following criteria:

- The tenderer must prove experience in the field of international macroeconomics and microeconomics, with at least two projects of a similar size delivered in this field with.
- The tenderer must prove experience of working and drafting reports in English with at least two projects delivered in the last three years showing the necessary language coverage.
- The tenderer must prove experience in survey techniques, data collection, statistical and econometric analyses and drafting reports and recommendations.

b. Criteria relating to the team delivering the service:

The team delivering the service should include, as a minimum, comply with the following criteria:

- The team should be led by a project manager with at least five years of experience in project management, including overseeing project delivery, quality control of the delivered service, client orientation and conflict resolution experience in projects of a similar size, with experience in managing and coordinating a small team of researchers and managing relationships with subcontractors or other parties involved in the project.
- The main project team members (which includes the project manager) should have a doctoral degree in economics and have academic and/or professional experience in the theoretical and empirical analysis of the external competitiveness and the participation and performance of firms in international trade – ideally of which some in the context of the Italian economy – with collectively at least three peer-reviewed publications over the last six years.
- At least one member of the project team should have experience in collecting, managing, analysing and applying statistical and econometric analyses to firm-level data.
- The main project team members should be able to work both in English and Italian, and in particular be able to deliver high-quality policy-oriented reports on economic topics in English.

c. Evidence:

The following evidence should be provided to fulfil the above criteria:

- The names, educational qualifications and professional experience (in curriculum vitae format) of the envisaged project team, and an indication of the role(s) which each team member would take up
- Overview of relevant publications, service contracts, consultancy work or other work carried out in the past three years, indicating (where applicable) dates, institutions or contracting authorities, contract values, project teams and used languages; where available, certificates of satisfactory execution of projects should

be added, specifying that they have been carried out in a professional manner and have been fully completed.

4.4. Award criteria

The tender will be awarded according to the best-value-for-money procedure. The quality of the tender will be evaluated based on the following criteria. The maximum total quality score is 100 points.

1. **Choice of firm-level dataset(s)** (20 points – minimum threshold 50%)

This criterion will assess the appropriateness of the choice of the firm-level dataset(s) to fulfil the objectives of the study as set out in Section 2.2. The choice of the firm-level dataset(s) should be justified on the basis of a comprehensive description of how the dataset(s) have been constructed, how representative they are, what their coverage is in terms of time and variables, and which major trade-offs, caveats, gaps and other potential limits are related to the choice of dataset(s) made.

2. **Access to firm-level dataset(s)** (20 points – minimum threshold 50%)

This criterion will assess the extent to which the access to firm-level dataset(s) has already been obtained or can be guaranteed to be in place at the latest at contract signature.

3. **Quality of the proposed project team** (20 points – minimum threshold 50%)

This criterion will assess the adequacy of the proposed project team for the tasks to be executed. Both the composition of the team as well as the relevance in the context of the envisaged study and the quality of the team members' previous publications will be assessed.

4. **Organisation of the work** (15 points – minimum threshold 50%)

This criterion will assess how the roles and responsibilities of the proposed team and of the economic operators (in case of joint tenders, including subcontractors if applicable) are distributed for each task. It also assesses the global allocation of time and resources to the project and to each task or deliverable, and whether this allocation is adequate for the work. The tender should provide details on the allocation of time and resources and the rationale behind the choice of this allocation.

5. **Quality and feasibility of the proposed methodology** (15 points - minimum threshold 50%)

This criterion will assess the envisaged statistical and econometrical approach applied to the data in order to fulfil the objectives of the study as set out in Section 2.2.

6. **Quality control measures** (10 points – minimum threshold 50%)

This criterion will assess the quality control system applied to the service foreseen in this tender specification concerning the quality of the deliverables, the language quality check, and continuity of the service in case of absence of the member of the

team. The quality system should be detailed in the tender and specific to the tasks at hand; a generic quality system will result in a low score.

Tenders must score minimum 50% for each criterion and sub-criterion, and minimum 60% in total. Tenders that do not reach the minimum quality thresholds will be rejected and will not be ranked.

After evaluation of the quality of the tender, the tenders are ranked using the formula below to determine the tender offering best value for money. A weight of 60/40 is given to quality and price.

$\begin{aligned} \text{Final score of tender X} = & \\ & (\text{cheapest price among retained tenders} / \text{price of tender X}) * 40 \\ & + \\ & (\text{total quality score of tender X}/100) * 60 \end{aligned}$
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4.5. Technical offer

The technical offer must cover all aspects and tasks required in the technical specification and provide all the information needed to apply the award criteria. Offers deviating from the requirements or not covering all requirements may be excluded on the basis of non-conformity with the tender specifications and will not be evaluated.

4.6. Financial offer

The price for the tender must be quoted in euro by means of the compulsory financial reply form (see **Annex 4**). Tenderers from countries outside the euro zone have to quote their prices in euro. The price quoted may not be revised in line with exchange rate movements. It is for the tenderer to assume the risks or the benefits deriving from any variation.

Prices must be quoted free of all duties, taxes and other charges, including VAT, as the European Union is exempt from such charges under Articles 3 and 4 of the Protocol on the privileges and immunities of the European Union. The amount of VAT may be shown separately.

The quoted price must be a fixed amount which includes all charges (including travel and subsistence). Travel and subsistence expenses are not refundable separately. Tenderers must also fully cover themselves any costs related to obtaining access to the firm-level datasets needed.

The Contracting Authority's budget for this project is in the range of EUR 75 000 – EUR 80 000.