

Subject: Remote assessment of English language skills

**Terms of Reference
Annex II to invitation to tender
no Frontex/OP/961/2019/AH**

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1.BACKGROUND

Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, supports EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries in the management of EU's external borders and fighting cross-border crime. The agency is a centre of excellence for border control activities at the EU's external borders, sharing intelligence and expertise with all EU Member States, as well as neighbouring non-EU countries affected by migratory trends and cross-border crime. Among its many tasks, the agency coordinates the deployment of border and coast guards, along with boats, airplanes, patrol cars and other equipment, to EU countries facing exceptional pressure at their external borders.

For more information refer to www.frontex.europa.eu.

The present contract shall be governed by Frontex Training Unit.

Frontex develops common training standards for border and coast guard management, to harmonise border and coast guard education and training in EU and Schengen Associated Countries. This is intended to ensure that wherever travellers cross an external EU border, they will encounter uniform border-control standards. It also enables border and coast guards from different countries to work together efficiently while deployed in Frontex operations.

One of Frontex training main tasks is to provide a coherent, integrated and centralised education and training system aimed at preparing staff to be deployed in operational activities as well as specialized training for the Member States and third countries in the context of the implementation of the Agency's mandate.

Throughout each operational year the key factor, in terms of communication, is the practical knowledge of the English language of operational staff, learners and trainers participating in Frontex activities.

Currently, there is no formal way of English assessment of participants in Frontex training activities, in order to verify English skills. This means that English knowledge of participants is assumed to be at adequate, communicative level, which is based on trust, or honor system.

There is a need to assess, in a standardized way, the level of English language of participants in Frontex activities to ensure that they possess the necessary English language to fulfil their tasks successfully.

2.DESRIPTION OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The aim of this Call for Tender is to contract English language testing services for the European Border and Coast Guard officers to be deployed in Frontex operational activities as well as for the candidates who want to become learners and trainers in Frontex training activities. The service may also be used for the purpose of standard recruitment.

Frontex Training Unit establishes an English language requirement that the prospective operational staff members, learners and trainers need to evidence. One way to satisfy this requirement is to demonstrate proficiency in reading, writing, listening and spoken English through passing an approved language test. The Candidates are expected to demonstrate English skills at B2 level or higher. Therefore the online tests shall be adapted in order to thoroughly verify the actual level of language competence and, ideally, enable providing Frontex and the users with comprehensive feedback. These tests shall aim at maximum equivalence (contents, duration, methodology, etc.) with the exams resulting in internationally recognizable certificates. British English standard shall be applied.

3.REQUESTED SERVICES

The service provider shall be required to perform the following tasks:

- Provide a solution for a remote assessment of all general English language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing at a B2 level CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).
- The proposed solution must be a computer based online method for assessing all English language skills from the user's own location and on demand.
- The proposed solution must provide remote automated proctoring/monitoring services.
- A designated administration system and support desk.
- A comprehensive online support and a user friendly registration and administration system to users and Frontex.
- The English assessment results must be aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).
- The Contractor must undertake rigorous analysis and assurance measures to identify and manage risks in relation to administrative errors, plagiarism, misconduct, improper access to test content, identification discrepancies, among others, and reporting these to Frontex.
- The Contractor must maintain a name-based database of users that is shared with Frontex for the duration of the contract. This database must be updated regularly to include the most recent (max. delay of 2 working days) results.
- Learning resources in the form of practice and mock tests and test guides to aid in the preparations for the test.

4.DELIVERABLES/EXPECTED RESULTS:

- Approximately 12,000 computer based tests in measuring the proficiency level in reading, writing, listening and spoken English, aligned to CEFR, delivered on demand, remotely online during the prospective contract duration of max. four years.
- Test reports provided to Frontex for each user detailing the percentages and the proficiency level of each English skill (reading, writing, listening and spoken English) mapped to CEFR.
- A name-based, searchable database of users with their results, together with the test dates, in electronic format, importable to MS Excel, delivered to Frontex
- Administration and monitoring of the registrations of users indicated by Frontex

5.SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

- Separate administration system including users' records performance indicators.
- Support desk for users and Frontex.
- Availability of registration for the test online, by mail or by phone by the individual users, based on the list provided by Frontex.
- The testing system must be capable of verification of the user's identity through automated monitoring/proctoring to prevent possible malpractice
- Technical support and advice, including a list of hardware and software requirements (if applicable).
- The test must be offered on demand.

- The English assessment process of all skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing to take place, ideally, within one assessment session. There is a possibility to have the speaking skills assessed separately.
- English language proficiency to be assessed by tests that are mapped to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the international standard for describing language ability.
- Positive independent assessment by a designated authority of the mapping of the tests to Council of Europe's CEFR's proficiency levels.
- Capability of yielding individual results within two working days after the English assessment is finished.
- Sufficient collection of test questions in order to increase variability of the tests. The pool of questions/tasks must include at least 10 variables per each activity/question.
- Compliance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC).

6.LOCATION AND DURATION

- Starting period: first round of tests within two weeks after the signature of the contract
- Foreseen finishing period or duration: 4 years from the signature of the contract
- Location(s) of assignment: remote delivery

Resources and logistic arrangements to be provided by Frontex: Frontex will provide the necessary documentation/information within the agreed timeline. Contractors communicate with Frontex via phone, video conference, email and attend the meetings requested, subject to mutual agreement.

Contract management: For the implementation of this contract and performing the tasks to achieve the expected results, the Contractor will consult and communicate on a regular basis with Frontex dedicated activity manager(s) allocated for the purpose of this project.

7.DATA PROTECTION

The Contractor must be compliant with the EU General Data Protection Regulation and will be processing personal data on behalf of Frontex, therefore a specific processing agreement between Frontex and the Contractor will be required.

8.IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FWC

8.1 Ordering process

Based on needs and its best estimate Frontex shall issue orders indicating the maximum number of tests, as a rule twice per calendar year. During the order implementation phase the Contractor shall receive from Frontex testing requests with the users' data comprising first and family name and e-mail address and a phone number. The Contractor shall send the invitation to the test to the users. This invitation shall contain the instructions, link to the mock test as well as contact details to be used in case the users need assistance. Acknowledgement of receipt shall be sought and obtained by the Contractor. The users shall be allowed to take the test only once per invitation but the time span when they can do that shall not be limited to less than two weeks and allow for flexibility.

8.2 Reporting to Frontex

Reporting back to Frontex on the number of invitations, tests taken, test results and other relevant issues shall be made on regular, weekly basis to dedicated contact point(s). This shall include update of the shared database.

8.3 Team designated for Frontex

The Contractor shall designate a team comprising at least three persons in relation to this contract:

- coordinator (single contact person for Frontex)
- linguistic specialist
- methodology specialist

The payment shall be made for the services actually executed, the cases where a test was offered but not performed by the user shall be paid at 50% of the unit price.

9.ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA

Timeliness in responding

Presentation, completeness and timely update of the database

Administration of the tests

Communication with Frontex and users

Contents and viability of the tests

10. SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

The Contractor shall outline the standards related to the provision of the services offered, including the response time, quality assurance measures foreseen under the prospective contract.