



ANNEX II: TERMS OF REFERENCE

Enhancing Digital Education in the Mediterranean - 13 - PRO505HER-2024

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1. Partner country

N/A

1.2. Contracting Authority

The Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)

1.3. Relevant background

Created by the Euro-Mediterranean Heads of State and Government meeting in Paris on 13 July 2008, the UfM Secretariat is a multilateral partnership composed of 43 countries (27 EU Member States and 16 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries) with the mandate of enhancing regional cooperation and integration between both shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

The Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean is the first permanent structure dedicated to the intergovernmental Mediterranean partnership. It is the platform to operationalize, and follow-up decisions taken at political level with a view to monitoring the progress in the implementation of Ministerial Declarations' commitments and promoting initiatives, programmes and projects intended to foster cooperation in the region.

Its multi-partner approach is crucial for seizing opportunities through the exchange of best practices, sharing of experiences, identifying new and innovative methodologies, and developing regional and sub-regional networks, following the principles of co-ownership and variable geometry, and in collaboration with other key stakeholders in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

The activities of the UfM Secretariat on Higher Education and Research aim at contributing to the implementation of SDG 4 *"Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"*, and also SDG 8.6 *"Reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training (NEETs)"*. Furthermore, questions related to gender equality and women empowerment (SDG 5), reducing inequalities (SDG 10), environment (SDG 15) and climate action (SDG 13) are mainstreamed throughout the UfM Secretariat action. Gender equality is highlighted in all the events and studies fostered by the UfM Secretariat, and bridging the gender gap on the STEM careers, for example, is a constant concern.

In line with the conclusions set by the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research ([Cairo, 2007](#)), the Ministerial Declaration of the UfM Employment and Labour Ministers ([Cascais, 2019](#)), the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Research and Innovation ([Paris, 2022](#)), as well as the recommendations of the Joint Communication *"Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood - A new Agenda for the Mediterranean"* ([2021](#)), supporting skills development and the employability of researchers and students of the region are key priorities of the UfM.



1.4. Current situation in the sector

In view of preparing a First UfM Ministerial Conference on Higher Education, a Public Consultation¹ was launched in January 2023, targeting the main Euro-Mediterranean academic stakeholders. One of the key topics of the Consultation was joint action on digital education. The report on the Consultation highlights some major challenges: there are limited resources to invest in digital education, limited infrastructure and qualified personnel, and limited digital literacy among staff and students. An issue that was also emphasized by many respondents is that some Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in UfM member countries do not yet recognise digital education diplomas or titles. Critically, to take steps forward, respondents acknowledged that proper strategic planning for digital education is often missing, and that the pandemic taught that strategic plans for distance-learning are essential for times of crises.

Some key proposals were brought forward in the Report on the Consultation:

- Investing in and adapting to new technologies and improving infrastructure for digital education.
- Building capacity through regular training of staff on digital education and digital transformation.
- Sharing online tools and platforms for peer-learning and sharing of resources and information.
- Supporting digital readiness for the future by promoting digital skills training for faculty, staff and students as well as integrating digitisation in university pedagogy.
- Establishing joint online programs for digital education.
- Increasing access to programs and curricula and internationalisation at home through distance learning and virtual exchange programs.
- Enhancing development of student digital skills by integrating digital education in teaching, as well as creating an enhanced learning and teaching experience.
- Developing clear strategies and policies for integrating digital education into curricula.
- Avoiding competition between online and on-site, as the future is hybrid.

Considering the current situation in the sector, and the conclusions of the Public Consultation, the UfM Secretariat is willing to organise online trainings and to publish a guidebook aimed at mapping the current situation of digital education in HEIs in the Mediterranean region, with best practices and recommendations. This is seen as a starting point to work jointly in a systematic way to improve the use of digital tools in education, to develop digital skills, and to promote cooperation in general among UfM Members States in the field of higher education.

The UfM Ministerial Declaration on Research and Innovation (2022) calls “on the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean to continue fostering linkages on research, innovation, education and skills in the Mediterranean region, fully utilising available tools promoting a level-playing field in researchers’ career, skills and mobility, supporting capacity building, coordination and joint actions, including on innovation and employability of Mediterranean students, graduates and researchers”.

Digital education has also been considered as a key driver for employability and innovation in the

¹ https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/UfM-Public-Consultation-Report_final.pdf



UfM Handbook “Reinforcing the Innovation-Employability Nexus in the Mediterranean”², in terms of digital skills, digital innovation and economy.

2. OBJECTIVE, PURPOSE & EXPECTED RESULTS

2.1. Overall objective

The overall objective of the project of which this contract will be a part is to support regional dialogue on the enhancement of digital education in higher education by designing and implementing two online regional training workshops and preparing and delivering an outcome document which will summarise the results of the workshops and showcase best practices, ready to be published on the UfM website, but also in a printed version.

2.2. Purpose

The purpose of this contract is to deliver two work packages consisting of (1) two online regional training workshops which will lead the way towards (2) drafting and publishing an outcome document (guidebook). The aim and details of both work packages are specified hereunder.

Regional Training Workshops:

- Two Online Trainings: the first one in October, and the second one in November 2024 (both dates TBC).
- The purpose of the trainings is to explore, in a Webinar format, how to enhance digital education in HEIs, with a special focus on improving the quality of eLearning in the Mediterranean region.
- The first training (October) is set to be oriented towards the institutional level, having as beneficiaries administrative (leadership and mid-level management), as well as teaching staff, and should help to develop the skills necessary to develop comprehensive and efficient digital education strategies.
- The second training (November) target especially teaching personnel (scholars, professors, researchers) from all shores of the Mediterranean. This training will be oriented at enhancing the quality of eLearning through capacity building in digital education.
- Both trainings should serve as a platform for gathering teaching materials, best practices and recommendations that will allow to further draft the outcome document (guidebook).
- The recommendations, as a result of the trainings, should be aimed at addressing those areas of digital education that present shortcomings in their functioning and, therefore, must be improved or further developed.
- The preparation of workshops should count on the participation of all the relevant stakeholders: staff from HEIs and ministries, career centres, non-governmental institutions, and experts in the field of Higher Education.

² Volles, N. & Switzer, C. (2020). Reinforcing the Innovation-Employability Nexus in the Mediterranean - A Handbook for Academia, Industry and Policymakers. Barcelona: Union for the Mediterranean https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/UfM_Handbook_Innovation-Employability-Nexus_2020_for-online-20201210.pdf



- Logistical costs for the online workshops shall be covered by the Contractor: interactive video platform, interpretation in English and French, any digital material needed (agendas, concept notes, video contents, additional readings and any preparatory material envisaged).
- Both trainings should contain 3 or 4 sessions each, on the same day or on consecutive days (two half days).
- Participants will be entitled to receive learning materials covering the content of the courses.

Outcome document:

- The purpose of the final Guidebook is to give a general view of digital education in the Mediterranean, especially the Southern and Eastern shores, with a focus on good practices adopted in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Spain.
- Its aim is also to provide recommendations oriented at enhancing the quality of digital education by tackling the most pressing issues. It will pay particular attention to the improvement of eLearning within the curricula of Mediterranean HEIs.
- The Guidebook will contain a compendium of good practices and teaching tools and materials presented during the trainings.
- To be delivered both in editable (PDF) and ready-to-print format following UfM's graphic guidelines. Visual aids should present the main findings.
- The Contractor will formulate a proposal regarding its structure and content (around 100 pages), which will be discussed during an online Steering Committee meeting. Modifications requested by the UfM Secretariat should then be taken into consideration. Final format subject to approval and validation by UfM Secretariat.
- The logistical, graphic, and content costs shall be covered by the Contractor.
- The Contractor shall also print and deliver 150 copies of the publication, covering the costs.

2.3. Results to be achieved by the Contractor.

- Result 1: two online workshops aimed at exploring how to enhance digital education in Higher Education Institutions in the Mediterranean region.
- Result 2: an outcome document in English, with a graphically attractive layout, which should be available on the UfM website and printed and delivered in 150 copies.
- Result 3: a PowerPoint presentation to be used by the UfM Secretariat, aimed at presenting, and promoting the topic, the work performed, and its potential for the region.

3. ASSUMPTIONS & RISKS

3.1. Assumptions underlying the project

- The Contractor can identify and engage relevant partners, circulate information appropriately, and adopt an inclusive approach.
- The degree of cooperation and willingness of the various partners involved is high.
- The local authorities are willing to continue developing efforts to enhance digital education and to improve eLearning in academic curricula.
- The Contractor is able to organise conferences, meetings, interviews, steering committees, and roundtables, both digital and physical format.



3.2. Risks

- Ineffective coordination of the activities.
- Lack of responsiveness or loss of interest of partners.
- Political instability in the region.

4. SCOPE OF THE WORK

4.1. General

4.1.1. Description of the assignment

The Contractor will be:

- a) Preparing a working methodology based on a **Kick-off Meeting** with the UfM Secretariat.
- b) Discussing a finalised work plan to be agreed by UfM Higher Education and Research Division through an **Inception Report**.
- c) Doing a preliminary assessment of policy tools, stakeholders, and initiatives from Higher Education Ministries, Higher Education Institutions, Public Research Institutes, as **Desk Research**, mapping, or interviewing, identifying available opportunities, and niches for regional action.
- d) Following agreement on composition by the UfM Secretariat, the Contractor shall establish and animate a **Steering Committee** for recommendations on methodology, content, and approach.
- e) After approval of structure and topics by the Steering Committee, developing the **final structure of the trainings** to be performed with accompanying materials, including by performing desk research and interviewing local stakeholders, gathering inputs, discussing and co-defining with counterparts the final structure, analysis and policy recommendations that could be discussed during the trainings, under supervision by the UfM Secretariat.
- f) Preparing an **Interim Report** which will include the final training proposal and the draft synthetic outcome document (guidebook).
- g) Supporting the organization of and implementing **two trainings**, including preparing presentations and concept notes for the UfM Secretariat as relevant, event reports, minutes, and similar support activities. The Contractor shall provide an online interactive video platform. English and French interpretation should be available.
- h) Collecting **feedback** during and after the trainings to finalise the synthetic outcome document.
- i) Based on the recommendations of the Steering Committee, and the structure of the trainings, drafting an **outcome document** aimed at promoting the topic among Mediterranean stakeholders. Producing a final document in printable format of around 100 pages (in English), taking into consideration the Steering Committee remarks, and the UfM Secretariat's requests for modifications. The final document shall include useful feedback and lessons learned from the two trainings at regional level, highlight blockages, needs and tailored recommendations for enhancing quality digital education in HEIs. The document should propose ideas for structured follow-up at regional level.
- j) Printing and delivering to the UfM Secretariat Headquarters 150 copies of the outcome document.
- k) Accompanying the reports with a **PPT presentation** to be used by the UfM Secretariat to present the topic in conferences and meetings as appropriate.



- l) **Supporting the UfM Secretariat** on the topic of the project through minutes, brief articles, speeches, slides, or further required inputs aimed at supporting and promoting the initiative; and
- m) Preparing a **Final Report** with all the required annexes.

4.1.2. Geographical area to be covered

UfM region, especially the Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean, with a focus on good practices adopted in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Spain.

4.1.3. Target groups

Representatives from the academic sector, especially teachers and administrative staff (e.g., professors, researchers, staff from HEIs and ministries, career centres, non-governmental institutions).

4.2. Specific work

The assignment consists of two work packages:

Work Package 1: designing and implementing two **Regional Online Workshops**; and

Work Package 2: preparing and delivering an **Outcome Document** highlighting practical ways, policy tools and actionable instruments for HEIs to enhance the quality of digital education.

The main working language will be English, with the possibility of using French in the contact with local HEIs and partners. Selected participants will be speaking either English or French, but they will not be required to speak both languages.

Below are provided detailed minimum requirements from work packages. The Contractor is invited to develop and improve the proposal and suggest additional and complementary components to both services.

Work Package 1- Regional Online Workshops

Objective: To actively support the UfM Secretariat by developing and implementing two regional trainings on how to enhance the quality of digital education in Higher Educations Institutions in a transversal manner, with a particular focus on how to improve eLearning.

Language: The main languages will be English, with some interventions in French.

Expected Outputs: Visuals and documents used for the trainings - list of participants, information materials on best practices and possible instruments to be replicated, participants' evaluation forms. Social media cards.

Proposed frame: The workshops will discuss enhance the quality of digital education on HEIs, identifying best practices to be developed and enriched by the Contractor after guidance from the UfM Secretariat and the Steering Committee. Some questions that may be addressed in the trainings are:



- Which tools for inclusion and exclusion are needed to ensure the integration of students with difficult economic backgrounds? What kind of support must be present at the institutional and training level?
- How teachers training and digital literacy must be fostered?
- How to strengthen pedagogic innovation on digital education? How to foresee incentives and rewards for teachers that include digital tools and methods into teaching?
- How to accelerate plans that promote inclusion of digital education into teaching practices?

Based on the terms of reference and the kick-off meeting, the Contractor will develop a draft proposal, and will operate based on the recommendations provided by the Steering Committee, under the guidance and coordination of the assigned Project Manager and the general responsibility of the Higher Education and Research Division of the UfM Secretariat. The format of the trainings will allow for discussion and debate with invited stakeholders. Training parts delivered by the Contractor and the outcomes will contribute to the outcome document.

While the first training should aim at developing the skills necessary to design efficient digital education strategies and be oriented towards the institutional level (administrative and teaching staff), the second training should focus on enhancing the quality of eLearning through capacity building in digital education, especially targeting teaching personnel. Participants will be scholars, professors, and researchers from all shores of the Mediterranean.

The main topic of the two workshops proposed are the definition of efficient digital education strategies and the improvement of eLearning quality in academic curricula in the region. The Steering Committee may decide to better define subtopics, which can include developing mechanisms of support to students at institutional and training level, fostering digital literacy, strengthening pedagogic innovation on digital education, introducing new digital tools and methods into teaching, promoting the inclusion of digital education into teaching practices, but also more transversal one such as tools of inclusiveness and integration of students with difficult economic backgrounds, and the inclusion of the gender dimension into digital education strategies.

The contractor will design the training methodology, and help managing registrations, communicational campaign, also by contacting perspective participants and additional speakers as needed.

The Contractor will also prepare social media cards with accompanying text to present the main topics (e.g., with key quotes from participants).

Work Package 2 – Outcome Document

Objective: Presenting the importance of enhancing the quality of digital education in HEIs of the Mediterranean region through a synthetic document with professional layout according to the UfM Secretariat standards, up to 100 pages.

Language: English



Expected Outputs: A study in ready-to-be-printed format, ready for being distributed digitally and 150 copies printed by the Contractor and shipped as requested. Presentations summarising the main role of universities in enhancing the quality of digital education. Social media cards.

Proposed frame: The document will synthetically and in graphically attractive way present definitions, policies, strategies, programmes, key projects, and recommendations on the importance of enhancing the quality of digital education in the Mediterranean, presenting the role of universities. The document will promote the importance of fostering digital skills.

Possible subtopics will include eLearning, tools of inclusiveness and integration of students with difficult economic backgrounds, mechanisms of support to students at institutional and training level, fostering digital literacy, strengthening pedagogic innovation on digital education; initiatives to foster digital tools and methods into teaching, plans to promote inclusion of digital education into teaching practices.

Emphasis will be given to policies and key projects aimed at enhancing digital education and improving the quality of eLearning in academic curricula in the Mediterranean region. Useful feedback will be provided by the inputs and discussions reached during the two trainings, enriching the final product.

The Contractor will ensure that the final version of the Guidebook will have an appropriate layout for being readily distributed and disseminated, in accordance with the editorial guidelines of the UfM Secretariat and its partners.

The document will be available in English. Layout, printing, and shipping costs shall be borne by the Contractor.

Once finalised and validated by the UfM Secretariat, the final version will be professionally printed by the Contractor in 150 copies and shipped to the UfM Secretariat Headquarters in Barcelona, or also to some selected partners as to be indicated (e.g. the Steering Committee members).

A digital version will also be prepared by the Contractor for being uploaded on the UfM website.

Furthermore, the Contractor will prepare social media cards (graphics with text) for presenting the topic to a broader community of stakeholders (e.g. supporting a communicational campaign).

The contractor will also be requested to prepare at least one presentation, with talking points, for the UfM Secretariat to detail synthetically the document/trainings and more generally the contributions of universities to effort of enhancing the quality of digital education. A more in-depth finetuning will have to be finalised through discussions with UfM.

A Steering Committee will give guidance and ensure overall soundness.

After the kick-off meeting, the Contractor will be invited to update the methodology and proposal with inputs/discussions with the UfM Secretariat, and a general discussion with a Steering Committee to be animated by the Contractor.

Upon indication of the UfM Secretariat, the Steering Committee will meet online at least twice to discuss about the trainings and the document proposal as presented by the Contractor. The final decisions rest with the UfM Secretariat, which may require modifications at every stage.

The Contractor will be responsible for organising digitally the work and logistics of the Steering Committee, including preparing and keeping an operational list, issuing invitations, organising the digital platform, and preparing drafts and minutes. The Steering Committee will count with participation of a small group of stakeholders/experts active in enhancing the quality of digital education in academia, including the European Commission and the main regional networks of universities.

4.3. Project management

4.3.1. Responsible body

The project will be managed by UfM Higher Education and Research Division.

All issues related to the technical elements in relation to this contract, mainly the specific activities as outlined in sections 4.1 and 4.2. of these Terms of Reference, shall be taken by the project manager nominated by the contracting authority pursuant to special conditions of contract Article 2.1. The project manager will ensure these tasks in accordance with UfM internal rules and procedures.

5. LOGISTICS AND TIMING

5.1. Location

Project management and training activities shall be carried out in the Contractor's premises or any other premises at the expense of Contractor. Any missions in the UfM Member States will be performed by the Contractor at his own expenses and cannot be subjected to expense claims to the UfM Secretariat.

Steering Committee (online); 1st Online Training (October 2024), 2nd Online Training (November 2024).

5.2. Start date & Period of implementation of tasks

The intended start date is 15 July 2024 and the period of implementation of the contract will be till 31 December 2024, including preparations for trainings and reporting.

Proposed timeline, to be finalised in the Inception Report subject to approval by the UfM:*

Beginning of Technical Assistance	15 July 2024
Delivery of Inception report with updated	Two weeks from the start of implementation



methodology	
Delivery of final training methodology	One week prior to each training
1st Online Training	October 2024 TBC
Delivery of interim report with draft outcome document	October 2024 TBC
2 nd Online Training	November 2024 TBC
Delivery of final outcome document	December 2024
Final report of the activities	December 2024

* dates are provisional and to be finalised.

6. REQUIREMENTS

Tenders deviating from the requirements or not covering all minimum requirements described below may be rejected on the basis of non-compliance with the tender specifications and will not be further evaluated.

6.1. Staff

Note that civil servants and other staff of the public administration, of the partner country or of international/regional organisations based in the country, shall only be approved to work as experts if well justified. The justification should be submitted with the tender and shall include information on the added value the expert will bring as well as proof that the expert is seconded or on personal leave.

6.1.1. Experts

Expert in Digital Education

Role in the project: coordination of the trainings, management of the process, trainer.

Qualifications and skills

University degree in political science, business, information and communication technologies.
General professional experience: at least 8 years of experience in digital education, innovation, skills development, employability with universities, career centres, or similar topics, at both national and international levels.

Specific professional experience

Involvement in cooperation with universities, business accelerators, research centres, international institutions or relevant stakeholders for identifying, training and/or supporting projects and best practices in more Mediterranean countries, in the education, research, innovation, academic mobility, employability, start-ups.

Language skills

Fluent in English. Working knowledge of French is a plus.

Support expert

Role in the project: leading in the finalisation of outcome documents and training material, management of steering committee, trainer.



Qualifications and skills

University degree in digital education, IT, political science, economic, or graphic fields. General professional experience: At least 4 years of experience in digital education, innovation, skills, employability and sustainability with universities, career centres, or similar topics, at both national and international levels.

Specific professional experience

Experience in designing processes, documents, or trainings.

All experts must be independent and free from conflicts of interest in the responsibilities accorded to them.

6.1.2. Other experts, support staff & backstopping

The costs for backstopping and support staff, as needed, are considered to be included in the tenderer's financial offer.

6.2. Office accommodation

Office accommodation for trainers and team leader working on the contract is to be provided by the Contractor.

6.3. Facilities to be provided by the Contractor

The Contractor shall ensure that the Contractor is adequately supported and equipped. In particular, it must ensure that there is sufficient administrative, secretarial and interpreting provision to enable the Contractor to concentrate on his/her primary responsibilities. It must also transfer funds as necessary to support their work under the contract and to ensure that its employees are paid regularly and in a timely fashion.

6.4. Equipment

No equipment is to be purchased on behalf of the UfM Secretariat nor the Contractor as part of this service contract or transferred to the UfM Secretariat at the end of this contract.

7. REPORTS

7.1. Reporting requirements

The Contractor will submit the following reports in English in one original and 2 copies:

Name of report	Content	Time of submission
Inception Report	Analysis of existing situation and work plan for the project. Based on the kick-off meeting and preliminary desk research, it will contain as annex an updated methodology for the trainings	15 July 2024
Final training methodology	Based on the recommendation, proposals and selection by the Steering Committee, and under approval by UfMS, the Contractor will elaborate a complete methodology and describe the design of the two trainings, proposed	One week prior to each training



	format and training materials, and a list of 3-4 suitable topics. UfMS keeps right to require revisions and improvement on the training material and presentation. Additionally, the Contractor will provide the full training materials for the trainings.	
Training reports	After the trainings, the Contractor will submit complete reports full with updated agendas, methodology, training materials and videorecording (if applicable), detailing participants and outcomes.	No later than 2 weeks after each training.
Interim report	Presentation of the ongoing activities, including any adjustment, with full minutes and agendas of all meetings, draft outcome document, and training report for the first training. Slides and talking points produced so far as annex. Additional annexes: Final training methodology, Training report and data collection template of first training.	15 October 2024 (TBC)
Outcome document	Ready-to-print document, in both editable and readable formats, in digital and printed copies, in English. 150 printed copies.	December 2024, or in any case by four weeks before the end of the contract.
Final report on the activities	Short description of achievements including problems encountered and recommendations. Slides, talking points, social media cards with engagement data, and any document not included in the inception and the interim reports as annex. Proof of mission attendance (e.g., photos, invoices). Additional annexes: Synthetic outcome document, Training report and data collection template of second training.	December 2024, or in any case by four weeks before the end of the contract.

The UfM Secretariat will keep the rights of reuse and of translation and adaptation of each report and videorecording.

7.2. Submission and approval of reports

The reports referred to above must be submitted to the Project Manager identified in the contract. The Project Manager is responsible for approving the reports.