

Call for Researcher(s)

Development of the SALTO PI Quality Indicators Framework for the Participation Priority in Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps

[SALTO Participation and Information Resource Centre](#) (SALTO PI) is looking for a researcher, research team, institution or company to provide expert input and technical support for the identification and design of a set of actionable indicators relating to the cross-sectoral, horizontal priority “**Participation in Democratic Life, Common Values and Civic Engagement**” (hereafter, the participation priority) within the Erasmus+ (E+) and European Solidarity Corps (ESC) programmes. Applications are open until **2 August 2026, end of day**, and the full conditions of the assignment are set out below.

Context

SALTO PI supports the implementation of the E+ and ESC programmes in relation to the participation priority. It does so by developing a wide range of tools and publications, available on the [Participation Resource Pool](#), and by organising trainings and events for the stakeholders and beneficiaries of the two programmes as well as for the wider public. SALTO PI, hosted by the Estonian Education and Youth Board (HARNO), is one of the European Commission’s SALTO Resource Centres supporting the horizontal priority in E+ and ESC.

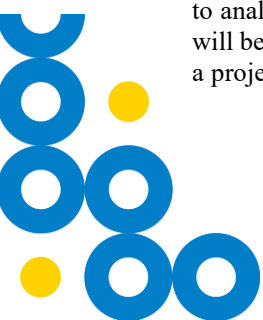
Understanding whether and how funded projects address the participation priority in a meaningful way requires a shared, actionable reference that the programmes currently lack. For this reason, SALTO PI is launching a research-driven project to identify and design a set of actionable indicators for the priority, developed through a cross-sector participatory approach spanning the Youth field, the Education and Training field (School Education, Vocational Education and Training, Higher Education and Adult Education) and the Sport field. The process is built around an Expert Input Group (EIG) of 10 to 25 members, convened by SALTO PI and composed of stakeholders or beneficiaries representing all five sectors of the two programmes. The service provider selected through this call will act as the research team of the project, providing the expert input and technical support that carries this participatory process from its first phase to the final publication.

Summary of key dates

- Submission deadline: 02 August 2026, end of day;
- Evaluation and selection: 03-06 August 2026 (only selected candidates will be contacted);
- Working period: 6 to 13 weeks from the signing of the contract;
- Maximum completion deadline: 08 of November 2026 (final version incorporating SALTO PI and EIG revisions and feedback, ready for proofreading and design);
- Presentations: two presentations of the work within six months of completion and publication, in a format to be agreed after the call.

The assignment

Through this call, SALTO PI intends to contract a service provider to act as the researcher or research team supporting the development of the **SALTO PI Quality Indicators Framework for the Participation Priority**. The framework will be a comprehensive and wide-ranging set of indicators covering the various dimensions of the participation priority, compiled into a short, practical resource guide to be published by SALTO PI. It will comprise an indicator bank of an estimated **30-40 unique indicators and accompanying guidance** on their use to analyse the extent to which a project addresses the participation priority in a meaningful way. Each indicator will be a binary categorical variable identifying the presence or absence of a characteristic or phenomenon within a project (for example, “participants are involved in setting the aims of the project” as an indicator of the use of



participatory methodologies). The indicators will follow the logic of **participation as a topic, as a process and as an activity** during an E+ and ESC project life cycle.

The indicators will be categorised discretely into three dimensions, with no indicator repeated between them. The **Topic dimension** (an estimated 10-13 unique indicators) identifies whether a project addresses a topic or theme relevant to the participation priority and is likely to deliver related learning outcomes for participants. The **Process dimension** (an estimated 10-13 unique indicators) identifies whether a project uses participatory methodologies and enables participants to take leadership roles in project design, implementation and follow-on. The **Outcome dimension** identifies whether a project provides opportunities for participants to engage in democratic life during the project itself, either through engagement in public decision making (an estimated 5-7 unique indicators) or through engagement in civic activism and volunteering (an estimated 5-7 unique indicators); this dimension does not relate to learning outcomes.

The framework will also include a **minimum criterion** for a project to be considered as addressing the participation priority. Under the draft criteria, as way of example, a project would qualify by meeting at least 1 indicator in the Topic category (where meeting more than one would not indicate greater quality), and/or at least 6 indicators in the Process category, and/or at least 3 indicators relating to engagement in public decision making. To enable comparative assessment between projects beyond the minimum criteria, the framework will further include a scoring system, with a suggested design of 1 point per indicator met, capped at 1 point in the Topic category, 10 points in the Process category and 10 points in the Outcome category. The details of both the minimum criteria and the scoring system will be reviewed within the project based on the final indicators.

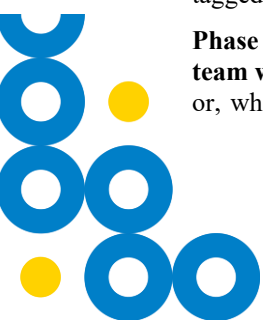
The project uses a **cross-sector participatory approach and unfolds in six phases**, in which the research team works alongside the EIG and SALTO PI as follows:

Phase I: Selection of the Expert Input Group. SALTO PI, with the support of the research team, will identify and invite candidates for the EIG based on their expertise in participation and/or monitoring and evaluation in E+/ESC projects. The group of 10 to 25 members will be cross-sectoral, representing all five sectors of the two programmes, and composed of stakeholders and beneficiaries. The output of this phase is the selected and constituted EIG.

Phase II: Development of a long list of potential indicators. The EIG, together with the research team and SALTO PI, will collate a long list of potential indicators for inclusion in the framework. EIG members will submit suggestions through an online submission form, drawing on their own knowledge and experience and especially on tools their organisations already use in practice, while the research team will submit suggestions based on desk research on existing indicators in the participation field. Eligible submissions are variables with the potential to identify the presence or absence of participation as a topic or theme, the use of participatory methodologies, involvement in public decision making, or the enabling of civic activism or volunteering. Social indicators, or indicators and criteria that address participation in broader civic and political life rather than in a project setting, will be excluded. The research team will lead the collection and organisation of the submissions into a **consolidated database recording**, for each entry, the indicator, its participation type (Topic, Process or Outcome), a short summary, the source, author or institution, date and related fields, and will clean the database by removing duplicates, tagging and linking near duplicates, and reviewing the categorisation for consistency. A briefing and introductory online workshop with the EIG will support this phase. The output is the database of the long list of indicators, with source, description, type and scope.

Phase III: Evaluation of the long list by the EIG. The EIG will participate in evaluation workshops conducted by the research team, with the database and evaluation methodology sent in advance. Each **EIG member will independently score each indicator** through a six-point mechanism based on the C.R.E.A.M principles, extended with an additional criterion: Clear (precise, unambiguous and easily understood), Relevant (directly linked to the objectives and measuring what matters), Economic (data obtainable at reasonable cost), Adequate (providing a sufficient basis for assessing performance), Monitorable (amenable to independent validation and tracking) and Discrete (acting within one participation dimension only). Results will be recorded in a spreadsheet and a mean score calculated for each indicator. Inter-rater reliability will be calculated using Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance, and indicators scoring below 0.61 will be further reviewed through discussion with the EIG, with an alternative reviewed score assigned by the research team, amendments made where necessary, and the indicator tagged as potentially unreliable. The output is the evaluation scoring added to the long-list database.

Phase IV: Selection and revision into an initial short list. Using the results of the EIG evaluation, the **research team will select at least 10 indicators per category** (Topic, Process, Outcome), based on the highest mean score or, where relevant, the alternative reviewed score. Among near duplicates, the highest-scoring version will be



selected, and the inclusion of more than 10 indicators per category will be considered where indicators are tagged as potentially unreliable, where clear subcategories exist, or where key topics would otherwise be omitted. The research team will then redraft all selected indicators to ensure a harmonised style and share the initial short list with the EIG for discussion and feedback in an online workshop, using a consensus-based decision-making methodology with the C.R.E.A.M. matrix as the reference framework; evaluator rating is not envisaged at this stage. The output is the database of the initial short list, including the revised and amended indicators and the recorded EIG comments.

Phase V: Finalisation and validation of the short list. Based on the EIG feedback, the research team will further revise and amend the short-listed indicators. The revised indicators will then be independently reviewed by two team members not involved in their drafting, applying the same C.R.E.A.M. scoring and inter-rater reliability measures as in Phase III. Indicators scoring below 5.0, or with a Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance below 0.61, will be **reviewed, revised and resubmitted to the independent reviewers** until they meet the necessary scoring for validation. The resulting final short list will be presented to the EIG in a feedback workshop. The output is the final database of indicators, reviewed and validated.

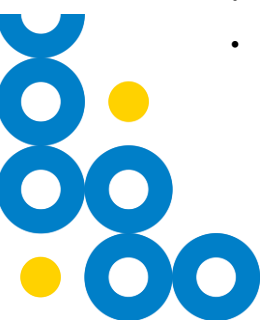
Phase VI: Drafting of the Quality Indicators Framework. The research team will draft the **short, practical framework, including the selected indicators and the accompanying guidance**, the minimum criteria and the scoring system outlined above. The EIG will be invited to give input on the draft through written comments before its submission to SALTO PI for final comments and revision, with finalisation carried out by SALTO PI. SALTO PI will also be responsible for proofreading, graphic design and dissemination. The output is the final Quality Indicators Framework for the Participation Priority.

Summary of the assignment

- Development of the **SALTO PI Quality Indicators Framework for the Participation Priority**, including the design, research and validation of a cross-sector framework for assessing the quality of participation in Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps projects.
- Identification, review and refinement of an indicator bank comprising approximately **30–40 quality indicators** across the **Topic, Process and Outcome** dimensions of the participation priority.
- Coordination and facilitation of a **cross-sector Expert Input Group (EIG)** throughout the development and validation process, including online workshops and consultations.
- Development and validation of the framework's **minimum eligibility criteria** and **scoring methodology**, enabling both the identification of projects addressing the participation priority and the comparative assessment of project quality.
- Preparation and maintenance of the supporting indicator database and all accompanying working materials produced throughout the assignment.
- Drafting of a **practical Quality Indicators Framework**, including methodological guidance on the application and interpretation of the indicators for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps projects.

In line with the phases above, the assignment comprises the following deliverables:

- Support to SALTO PI in the selection and constitution of the Expert Input Group;
- The consolidated database of the long list of potential indicators, with source, description, type and scope;
- The evaluation scoring of the long list, with mean scores and inter-rater reliability results, added to the database;
- The database of the initial short list of indicators, including the revised and amended indicators and the recorded EIG comments;
- The final database of indicators, reviewed and validated through the independent internal review;
- The SALTO PI Quality Indicators Framework, comprising the indicator bank, the accompanying guidance, the minimum criteria and the scoring system, ready for SALTO PI finalisation, proofreading and design.



Throughout the phases, the research team will also prepare and facilitate the online workshops with the EIG, from the introductory briefing to the evaluation, short-list discussion and final feedback workshops. Alongside these outputs, the researcher will hand over all materials created in the course of the work, including all databases and files produced. Once the work is completed and published, the researcher will also co-host two presentations of the results, in physical, hybrid or webinar format, within six months of publication. These may address SALTO PI members or external actors, and their format, timing and audiences will be agreed together after the call is completed. The full concept note and methodology will be shared with the selected service provider at the start of the assignment.

Timeline and working arrangements

Applications close on **2 August 2026, end of day**. Evaluation and decisions will follow between 3 and 6 August 2026, after which applicants will be notified of the outcome and a contract will be signed with the selected service provider. From the moment of signing, the work should be finalised within 6 to 13 weeks, with a maximum completion deadline of **08 November 2026**.

Completion here means the final version of all outputs, ready to be submitted to proofreading and design, and therefore already incorporating SALTO PI and EIG's revisions and feedback. In special circumstances, and only with SALTO PI's approval, this deadline can be extended by a maximum of two additional weeks. During the working period, SALTO PI (independent of EIG) will provide between **one and five rounds of revision** and feedback on the documents, and these must be incorporated into the text before the outputs are considered complete.

The working language is **English**, and all work is carried out **remotely** and completed online. While in-person meetings in Tallinn may be arranged where appropriate, any travel, accommodation, or other related expenses shall be borne by the service provider. When needed, and upon agreement, sync communication and meetings with the SALTO PI team will take place during office hours (10:00-18:00 EEST/EET), while regular updates are expected in written format or through meetings across the agreed service period.

Once the final versions are delivered, SALTO PI will organise and conduct the proofreading and graphic design of the publications, as well as the assignment of ISBN/ISSN and DOI. The service provider is expected to remain available to review the final edits and designs, to ensure they accurately convey the intended meaning. Payment will be provided, no later than 15 working days, as a single instalment, at the end of the contract period, after all the necessary materials have been provided to SALTO PI as publication-ready materials (including the accommodation of the revision/feedback rounds).

Credit, copyright and publication

The author or authors, whether individuals or institutions, receive full credit for the work, with retention of authorship and fair acknowledgement. The copyright of the outputs, however, passes to SALTO PI, which holds the rights of translation, publication and adaptation of the work so that it can be disseminated across Europe, with the standard publication operating under a Creative Commons Licence and Open Access. Throughout the assignment, the selected applicant will adhere to SALTO PI's accessibility, inclusivity, AI usage, ethical data and related guidelines and frameworks, which will be shared at the start of the work.

Who can apply

The call is open to individuals, institutions and companies alike, with no geographical limits. Any taxation incurred throughout the service will be paid by the applicant.

Applications may also be submitted by a team or consortium. In that case, the lead person or coordinator applies on behalf of the team, submitting all the application documents together with the CVs and contact details of the co-authors. The work statement of such applications must mention that the work is a **co-contribution** and briefly highlight how the tasks are split among the members.

Regardless of the form of application, applicants are expected to demonstrate, through their documents, a solid knowledge of the E+ and ESC programmes and their functioning, including an understanding of the main programme actors and stakeholders. They should show proven experience in similar research and evaluation



activities, combining quantitative and qualitative methods, with experience in facilitating expert or stakeholder groups counting as an advantage. Experience in producing policy-relevant conclusions, recommendations or foresight is equally expected, and previous work in European contexts, public institutions or similar programmes is an advantage. Finally, applicants should be fluent in English, both written and verbal, understood as C1 level or above.

SALTO PI encourages and welcomes applications from individuals, teams, institutions and companies from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, including persons with disabilities or other special needs. We are committed to ensuring an inclusive and fair selection process, and all applications will be evaluated equally and exclusively against the published selection criteria, without discrimination on any grounds.

How to apply

Interested parties are requested to submit the following documents, in English:

- **An updated CV** (maximum 10 pages);
- **A list of publications, policy contributions, articles and similar outputs** (maximum 5 pages);
- **A work statement** (maximum 5 pages), consisting of a brief workplan and an obligatory financial statement expressing the **total cost** for the entire work, including VAT, expressed in euro. A breakdown of costs is welcomed but optional, and team or consortium applications should include here the co-contribution mention and the task split described above;
- **Examples of one to three previous works** similar to the current task. Links can be provided in a separate Word document, while attachments can be provided directly, and works in progress, works in submission or academic theses are also acceptable if no other options are available.

Financial proposals should be reasonable, proportionate and aligned with the scope of work described in this call, taking into account comparable assignments commissioned by European institutions and programmes.

The use of AI in preparing the application is permitted, as long as it takes place under human oversight and serves only to inform the applicant and to support drafting, rephrasing, formatting and similar non-substantial interventions. If any application is entirely made using AI, SALTO PI reserves the right to reject it.

Applications submitted by other means, as well as incomplete or late submissions, will not be considered. For any inquiries, please contact the same address with the subject line “Participation Indicators - Inquiry”.

The documents should be sent to christopher.radovici@harno.ee with the subject line “Participation Indicators Framework” by 2 August 2026, end of day.

Evaluation and selection

Submitted applications will be evaluated by SALTO PI against four criteria, each individually assessed on a scale of 1 to 10 and then weighted, with 100 being the maximum total score:

- **Financial costs** (15% of the total score);
- **Previous experience** (35% of the total score), as presented in the CV;
- **List and history of publications, policy work and contributions** (25% of the total score);
- **Work statement and examples of previous publications** (25% of the total score), assessed for the relevance, clarity and feasibility of the proposed approach and the quality and relevance of the submitted examples.

Total scores will be calculated by adding up the weighted scores of the four categories, and the winner of the evaluation will be notified of the results. Due to the large number of applications, only selected service providers might be contacted, if we haven't provided an answer within 2 weeks of the deadline, please consider your application unsuccessful.

