

Request for Proposals

EIT Water: Securing Europe's water future

EIT Water Community & Ecosystem Platform

Type of procedure	Opening date	Closing date	Total Estimated budget
Open procedure	04/09/2026	16/09/2026	140 000 €

For any enquiry, please address it to procurement@eitwater.eu

<u>1.</u>	<u>Introduction to EIT Water</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>2.</u>	<u>Purpose of the RFP</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>a.</u>	<u>General objectives and scope</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>b.</u>	<u>Service request</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>c.</u>	<u>User journey and minimum requirements</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>d.</u>	<u>Timeline and limitations</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>e.</u>	<u>Data Management</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>f.</u>	<u>Deliverables</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>g.</u>	<u>Payment terms</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>3.</u>	<u>Proposal process</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>a.</u>	<u>Proposal timeline</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>b.</u>	<u>Proposal requirements</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>c.</u>	<u>Submission process</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>4.</u>	<u>Evaluation of proposals</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>a.</u>	<u>Award criteria</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>b.</u>	<u>Evaluation process</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>c.</u>	<u>Selection of suppliers</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>5.</u>	<u>Conflict of interests</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>6.</u>	<u>Suspicion of Fraud or EU breach</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>7.</u>	<u>General terms and conditions</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>8.</u>	<u>Appeal procedure</u>	<u>13</u>

1. Introduction to EIT Water

Who we are EIT Water is Europe's innovation community for water, marine and maritime (WMM) sectors and ecosystems. We connect industry, innovators, researchers, educators and policymakers to tackle the most urgent WMM challenges from scarcity, drought and flooding to pollution and ecosystem decline. By bringing together the right ideas, ingenuity and investment, we build real-world solutions that strengthen Europe's water resilience, support the blue economy and protect ecosystems from source to sea.

EIT Water is part of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), a body of the European Union. Together with the EIT Community, Europe's largest innovation network, we strengthen resilience, sustainability and competitiveness.

Our Mission We will accelerate Europe's transition to sustainable, resilient and inclusive water systems by enabling coordinated, place-based systemic innovation across regions and sectors.

Our Vision A Europe where healthy water ecosystems drive economic opportunity, environmental protection and social wellbeing.

Why we exist Europe's water, marine and maritime (WMM) systems face urgent challenges - from ecosystem degradation and pollution to climate risks and resource scarcity. To secure a sustainable future, we must close skill gaps, drive innovation, and scale impactful solutions across sectors. EIT Water connects Europe's best minds to tackle these critical issues and accelerate the transition to resilient, circular and thriving water ecosystems.

How we operate Through a network of 8 strategically located regional hubs across Europe, we build a connected and collaborative community across the WMM sectors and ecosystems that identifies needs, and develops the skills, solutions, and consortia required to respond. Through our diverse programmes, we support WMM sectors and ecosystems skills growth and the development and validation of new ideas, projects and commercial ventures. We then enable their deployment and scaling by connecting them to funding, potential partners, and real-world testing, piloting and implementation opportunities across Europe.

2. Purpose of the RFP

a. General objectives and scope

EIT Water is looking for a Community & Ecosystem Platform ("platform") to welcome its members ensuring seamless exchanges, responsive features and easy engagement. The platform is expected to be delivered following pre-defined milestones (see d. Timeline and Limitations) and must ensure lean future management of Operations.

The total maximum budget of 140 000€ is a total estimated budget for the period 2026-2029, it should include consulting and training support as well as recurring licenses. The tenderers are expected to provide a clear pricing breakdown to avoid future cost deviation that would not be already identified in the original RFP. The expected volume of users is broken-down as follow:

- 2 to 4 EIT Water admin users
- From 10 to 60 EIT Water users' staff (unrestricted access)
- From 130 to 700 Members access

More information is provided for the user access in "c. User journey and minimum requirements".

b. Service request

EIT Water is looking for a platform to deliver high-quality user experience to its partners. EIT Water will oversee the service delivery and is expected from the supplier to deliver:

- Direct hands-on support from the date of the signature until June 2027;
- Functioning platform, with prebuilt functionalities ensuring a rapid development curve;
- A user-friendly interface for end users but also for EIT Water admin users;
- A flexible and secure tool that will guarantee that information exchanged on the platform are protected from malicious exploitation and flexible enough to offer possible development for future functionalities.

The work is expected to be completed fully remotely. Every task is expected to be conducted in close collaboration with the Director of Community & Outreach, who will provide continues feedback and organise working session to review the on-going work, validate or reject the task completed.

It is important to note that the Director of Community & Outreach is committed to remain involved at every stage of the service delivery and is expecting a high degree of transparency from the selected supplier during the task execution.

This service is not a subcontracting task, the supplier is not requested to deliver on its own to achieve the expected results, but rather to collaborate, train and share best practices with the team to co-deliver the final community platform.

c. User journey and minimum requirements

The platform is serving primarily the members of the EIT Water, it is expected to offer them the following minimum functionalities:

Access rights:

- **EIT Water admin users:** access the back office, can activate, deactivate features, add and remove members, create and edit all items in the platform, they can update the member access rights.
- **EIT Water staff users:** Full access to all pages and modules and identified as internal EIT Water staff members.
- **EIT Water members:** They are clustered by type (strategic, cooperation, ecosystem partner) and may access the full platform or only some of the modules based on the type.
- **EIT Water visitors:** external visitors with restricted content access.

The access rights are managed exclusively by the EIT Water admin users.

Registration :

- **Initial registration for a member:** When a member registers he/she is invited to enter the professional email address, select its organisation in a drop-down list and then access (edit mode):
 - Personal profile: job position, name, LinkedIn, location, expertise, publications, certifications
 - Company profile: type of organisation, sector, location, current interests, member type, projects
- **Initial registration for a non-member:** When a non-member registers he/she is invited to enter the email address, and select « Visitor » in the field organisation (drop down list), and fill in a short profile summary: field of interest, why

At registration stage it is important that all users provide their consent for EIT Water to send them email communications, the email communication is managed by a different platform.

Main features:

- **Company profiles & map:** The platform should provide a map to visualise where members are located, filtering should be included to display per type of organisations, sectors and field of interests.
- **Event Management:** Events displayed (past, current, upcoming), admin users and members can post event and interact (comment, like, inform about their presence).
- **Live discussion:** Members and admin users can create discussions, insert links, videos and upload content. Other members can interact, comments. There is an easy search for the discussions, and most important discussions can be pinned for easy access.
- **Knowledge sharing:** Storing documents and content (videos, images, animated files), organised by a set of criteria that can be filtered and cross referenced in the live and forum discussion.
- **Forum discussions:** While live discussions are about short posts, key information for the community, the forum discussion aims to be a dedicated space for more in depth discussions, dialogue and debate. Access to the forum can be tailored based on interests and member status.
- **Innovation showcase & challenges:** Display Innovation & challenges posted by members to explain what they are looking for / what they would like to solve. Live webinars can be organised to present the innovation and/or challenge and invite the community as a pre step for matchmaking.
- **Matchmaking:** Dedicated module to support matchmaking between Corporations, RTOs, Universities, Entrepreneurs, SMEs to seamlessly exchange, build consortium, express interest in innovation showcased and challenges, invite for meetings and private discussions.
- **Job & Opportunities marketplace:** Display jobs and opportunities organised per criteria for members to browse, share with other members, apply, express interest, see past opportunities.

Beyond the main characteristics listed above, the system is expected to integrate online messages, live webinar, payments gateways, html code integration, API with other EIT Water systems (MS365, Mailchimp or KIT, NetSuite, Monday.com, Website (WebFlow CSM)). Please note that EIT Water is building its IT architecture the previously mentioned tools might not be to the final implemented one, the tenderer should demonstrate that their solutions can integrate with a broad range of ERP, CRM, GMS (grant management system) and/or project management tools as well as the day-to-day operational systems: mails, newsletters, text document, etc.

On the longer term EIT Water is expected to use this platform as a key asset of the KIC and to develop communities within communities such as mentors, student alumni, professional alumni, etc. Therefore, the platform, fields and related modules should have the capacity to evolve at a

reasonable cost and time ratio. In addition, EIT Water foresees its platform as an acquisition channel for new members and potentially for new paid services beyond the membership, therefore the platform should allow commercial use and integrate payment gateways.

d. Timeline and limitations

EIT Water is expecting the supplier to support the delivery of the platform through four main milestones:

- **By October 2026:** Event Management, Company's profile and Live discussion
- **By end of November - early December 2026:** Knowledge sharing & Forum discussion
- **Between January & March 2027:** Innovation showcase, challenges & Matchmaking
- **By May - June 2027:** Job & Opportunities marketplace

It is important to note that EIT Water should remain engaged in every development step to learn and become autonomous in managing the system. The selected supplier is expected to provide continuous support to EIT Water staff including:

- User documentation to guide any update to be implemented in the platform
- Direct hands-on support to update the content, create fields, drop-down, events, first content

EIT Water expects to hire a community manager end of 2026, prior to this recruitment the interim staff will support for content deployment.

The above listed features, further defined in the « User journey », form the minimum requirements for EIT Water.

During the execution of the contract the timeline might be reviewed, any deviation of the delivered work should be approved in writing by the Director of Community & Outreach. The above timeline is an ambitious and tentative timeline; tenderers are invited to propose amended timeline if they consider it likely to fall short.

e. Data Management

The supplier must demonstrate that its technical systems, data architecture, and operational practices provide sufficient safeguards to ensure full compliance with all applicable European Union regulations [e.g., EU GDPR, the EU AI Act, Cybersecurity Directive / etc.]. The proposal must detail the security measures, data sovereignty protocols, and risk mitigation strategies implemented to protect EIT Water's data integrity and operational confidentiality throughout the contract lifecycle.

f. Deliverables

The supplier is expected to provide the following list of deliverables:

- Functioning platform;
- User guide & training for internal EIT Water resources;
- SLA terms and hotline support modalities.

EIT Water invites the tenderer to embed the above-mentioned deliverables in their proposal and suggest the optimum roll out to deliver them in accordance with the defined milestones described in « Timeline ».

EIT Water reserves the right to uphold payments if the deliverables are not received and approved by the Director of Community & Outreach.

g. Payment terms

Payment terms will be defined within the contract but are not expected to be less than 30 days after receipt of the invoice.

Please note that if the payment is to be made to a non-EU account further administrative checks might be requested.

3. Proposal process

a. Proposal timeline

All interested parties are invited to answer to the Request for Proposal, following the defined timeline:

Procedural item	Date
Publication of the RFP document	04/09/2026
Deadline for the submission	16/09/2026 5 pm CET
Evaluation of the offers	17/09/2026 - 21/09/2026
Notification of the result	22/09/2026
Standstill period	3 calendar days
Final award notification	25/09/2026
Intended contract signature	28/09/2026

Intended start of the service	28/09/2026
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EIT Water reserves the right to update the above timeline and will update this document accordingly. Proposals submitted after the deadline will not be evaluated.

b. Proposal requirements

The tenderers are expected to submit a proposal to demonstrate how they will address the above listed tasks. Every tenderer must include in its proposal the following:

- The methodology proposed, explaining how the approach proposed will support EIT Water;
- The CV of the team (2 pages max), highlighting their skills and qualities and how they can successfully contribute to support EIT Water;
- A short video of the solution (~5-10min) to assess how the user journey and main functionalities will look like;
- Technical annex A filled in;
- Testimony of clients (at least one professional organisation with strong community building focus), one page maximum;
- The workplan and how they propose to articulate every task to achieve the objective of EIT Water;
- The price in EUR and excluding VAT, (unless the tenderer is VAT exempt) broken down by task. The price (when applicable) should offer non-profit pricing list.

Please note that the offer from the tenderer should not exceed 20 pages excluding Annex A.

Please note that tenderers must explicitly state in their offer if Generative AI tools were used to draft substantive content (e.g., technical methodology, strategic plans, creative concepts). The use of AI for minor administrative or editing tasks (formatting, spell-checking, grammar correction) does not need to be declared.

Tenderers must join to their offer the tender form and declaration of honour.

Please note that no costs incurred by the tenderers in preparing and submitting the proposal are not reimbursable. All such costs must be borne by the tenderer.

c. Submission process

The proposal should be submitted electronically via email at procurement@eitwater.eu. All questions related to the proposal preparation, the submission process, the evaluation or other RFP related topic must be done in writing via this communication channel: procurement@eitwater.eu,

EIT Water will share a QA document for transparency and equal treatment of all tenderers. Please note that questions sent less than 24 hours before the closing date and time will not be answered.

4. Evaluation of proposals

a. Award criteria

The below listed criteria will be used to assess the offer received from the tenderer:

Criterion	Description	Weight
Cost efficiency	Evaluates whether the proposed price is realistic, follows standard market practice, and is proportionate to the expected solution: one off & recurring costs <i>In line with EU procurement rules, EIT Water reserves the right to request formal justification for any tender deemed abnormally low or abnormally high before taking an award decision.</i>	25%
Technical excellence	Assess whether the solution meets or exceeds the requirements set out in Annex A.	25%
Team expertise	Assesses the professional qualifications, relevant past experience, and overall availability of key personnel proposed for delivery.	20%
Scalability & Interoperability	Assesses the robustness, scalability, and interoperability of the proposed software, alongside data protection mechanisms, hosting compliance within the EU/EEA, system safeguards. The proposed solution can be integrated within EIT Water IT ecosystem without creating future risks (connectivity, safety, supplier dependency).	30%

b. Evaluation process

The proposals received by the due date and time will be assessed by an evaluation committee composed with three EIT Water appointed reviewers. Every criterion will be scored individually by every member of the evaluation committee.

- Every criterion will be scored from 0 to 10:
- 0–3 (Poor): Fails to meet requirements or contains severe weaknesses.

- 4–6 (Fair/Satisfactory): Broadly addresses requirements but lacks detail or contains minor weaknesses.
- 7–8 (Good): Demonstrates sound understanding, robust methodology, and minor, non-critical limitations.
- 9–10 (Excellent): Exceptional quality, fully detailed, directly addresses all objectives, and offers clear added value.

Every reviewer proceeds to the evaluation of all proposal received and assigns a score (0–10) per criterion. This score is multiplied by the corresponding criterion's weight percentage (%) to determine the weighted sub-score for that specific criterion.

During the process, the evaluation committee will conduct a meeting to ensure consistency in the application of the award criteria and the scoring methodology and prepare feedback.

The final total score for each proposal is calculated by averaging the overall weighted scores across all individual reviewers. The tenderer achieving the highest total average score (out of 10 maximum possible points) will be ranked first.

c. Selection of suppliers

The final selection of the supplier will be based on the best price-quality ratio principle. The tenderer(s) with the highest total average score will be recommended for award. However, EIT Water reserves the right to award contracts either separately, by service area, or to multiple vendors within the same service area where complementary services or expertise are identified. This approach ensures comprehensive coverage of requirements and allows for the combination of distinct strengths from different providers, as needed.

The final award decision will be made by the ICFO/iCOO upon the recommendation from the review committee.

5. Conflict of interests

The conflict of interest is defined as all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the service could be compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, personal economic interest or any other direct or indirect interest ('conflict of interests').

They must formally notify EIT Water without delay of any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interests and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation.

The tenderers and EIT Water must ensure to collaborate and exchange information respecting fairness, transparency and equal treatment for all parties engaged. It is expected that:

- The tenderer ensures to EIT Water that it is not engaged in a EIT Water funded project, nor engaged in the preparation of an EIT Water proposal;
- The tenderer has no link with any of the person within the EIT Water organisation and cannot access material or information on an exclusive basis;
- The tenderer has no unfair advantage given by a current employee of EIT Water;
- The tenderer will not contact, nor approach any member of the selection committee, nor employee of EIT Water to obtain additional information and/or exclusive information;
- The tenderer will answer the RFP with fairness
- The tenderer, or employee of EIT Water must inform immediately the contact person of the RFP if any irregularity is identified.

6. Suspicion of Fraud or EU breach

EIT Water reserves the right to suspend or cancel the procedure, where the award procedure proves to have been subject to substantial errors, irregularities, or fraud. If substantial errors, irregularities, or fraud are discovered after the award of the Contract, EIT Water may refrain from concluding the Contract.

7. General terms and conditions

- **Confidentiality:**
 - **Proposal Confidentiality:** All proposals, supporting documentation, and data submitted by tenderers will be treated in confidence by EIT Water and will not be disclosed to third parties, except as required for evaluation, audit, or legal compliance.
 - **Procurement Information:** Any information, whether written, verbal, or visual, provided by EIT Water in connection with this procurement procedure are provided solely for the purpose of preparing and submitting a proposal. Tenderers shall not misuse, adapt, or share non-public or proprietary aspects of this material for any other purpose without EIT Water's prior written approval.
- **Data Protection (GDPR):** All personal data (and general data) collected or processed during this procurement procedure and any subsequent contract execution will be handled in full compliance with applicable data protection legislation, including the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation (EU) 2016/679).
- **Sustainability Policy:** EIT Water is dedicated to minimising its environmental footprint. Tenderers must prioritise carbon reduction, eliminate hazardous chemicals, and avoid single-

use plastics. By submitting a Tender, the Tenderer confirms compliance with these baselines and agrees to fulfil all contract-specific green criteria.

- **Standards of Conduct & Good Faith:** Both EIT Water and the tenderer(s) are expected to act in good faith and adhere to the highest standards of fairness, integrity, and loyalty throughout the procurement process and for the entire duration of the contract.
- **Artificial Intelligence:** If AI tools will be used in executing and delivering the final contract outputs, tenderers must explain their approach. AI cannot be the sole author of critical outputs, all final deliverables must be thoroughly reviewed and validated by a human.
- **Audit & Oversight Rights:** The potential or actual supplier acknowledges and agrees that, during contract performance and for five (5) years following its completion, EIT Water reserves the right to transmit the supplier's proposal, contract, and related documentation to internal audit services, the EIT, the European Court of Auditors, the Financial Irregularities Panel, or the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) to safeguard the European Union's financial interests.
- **Contract Negotiation & Execution:** Submission of a proposal does not bind EIT Water to award a contract. The final Agreement may be subject to further clarification or minor negotiation at the sole discretion of EIT Water prior to formal execution.

8. Appeal procedure

Tenderers may submit an appeal request only if they believe there was a procedural error or breach of rules during the procurement evaluation process.

Admissible grounds encompass procedural irregularities, failure to follow the published evaluation criteria, factual errors, or technical failures in the submission system caused by EIT Water. While inadmissible grounds relate to appeals challenging the individual scores, technical merits, or scientific judgment of the evaluators will not be considered.

If the tenderer identifies admissible ground to appeal, they should within 3 days from the award notification.

- **Step 1: Filing the appeal**

The tenderer must submit a formal, written request for redress via email to procurement@eitwater.eu. The appeal must include the procurement title, proposal title, a clear description of the alleged procedural error, and supporting evidence.

- **Step 2: Acknowledgment & administrative check (within 3 days upon receipt)**

EIT Water will acknowledge receipt of the appeal. The Operation Manager overseeing the process will perform a preliminary check to confirm the request meets the deadline and admissible grounds. Late or incomplete submissions will be dismissed without further review.

- **Step 3: Independent Review (within 10 business days)**

If deemed admissible, the case will be submitted to an independent Appeal Committee (comprising designated EIT Water officers not involved in the original evaluation process) to review the case files and evaluation records.

- **Step 4: Final Decision & Outcome (within 15 business days of filing)**

The Redress Committee issues a final binding administrative decision:

- Rejected: The procedure was followed correctly; the original award decision stands.
- Confirmed: A procedural error was identified that impacted the evaluation. EIT Water will re-evaluate the proposal under the correct procedure or take appropriate corrective action.

The decision will be communicated to the tenderer in writing and concludes EIT Water's internal appeal process.