Request for Proposals

EIT Water: Securing Europe's water future

Provision of Outsourced IT Services, Licences and Equipment

Type of procedure	Opening date	Closing date	Estimated budget
Open procedure	15/09/2026	25/09/2026	200 000 €

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

https://eitwater.eu/

1. Introduction to EIT Water 3
2. Purpose of the RFP 4
2.1. General objectives and scope 4
2.2. Service request 5
2.3. Detailed tasks 6
2.4. Data Management 9
2.5. Deliverables 9
2.6. Payment terms 10
3. Proposal process 10
3.1. Proposal timeline 10
3.2. Proposal requirements 10
3.3. Submission process 11
4. Evaluation of proposals 12
4.1. Award criteria 12
4.2. Evaluation process 12
4.3. Selection of suppliers 13
5. Conflict of interests 13
6. Suspicion of Fraud or EU breach 14
7. General terms and conditions 14
8. Appeal procedure 16

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

2.1. General objectives and scope

EIT Water is a newly registered Danish Association. It operates entirely cloud-based, built on a Microsoft 365 environment, with a distributed team working from multiple European locations. No on-premises server infrastructure is in place or foreseen. Operations effectively started in 2026 with the support of Aarhus University; EIT Water is now willing to run its own IT infrastructure autonomously.

The objective of this procurement is to appoint a single supplier to act as the outsourced IT department of EIT Water, preferably under a fixed-price managed service subscription. The supplier shall be responsible for the provision and administration of software licences, the management and maintenance of the cloud environment, end-user support, IT security, asset management, and the supply of end-user equipment.

EIT Water is looking for a business partner to support its European funded activities. The contract is therefore to run until 31/12/2028 and shall include flexible terms allowing the relationship to evolve in line with the operational needs of EIT Water, in particular the growth of the user base, the addition or removal of services, and the adjustment of equipment packages, without significant deviation from the unit prices set out in the submitted Pricing Annex.

The estimated budget has been calculated on the basis of a progressive ramp-up of the user base, starting with approximately 10 users at the beginning of the contract and aiming to reach around 60 users by the end of 2028. It is therefore an estimate rather than a commitment, and the actual volume will follow the effective growth of the organisation.

This amount represents the total value of the contract until 31/12/2028, excluding VAT. Tenderers shall indicate in their offer any element of the proposed service that could lead to a significant deviation from this amount, together with the circumstances in which it would arise.

EIT Water intends to remain in control of all options subscribed under the contract, to monitor its budget and maintain clear visibility on future costs. Any addition of licences, services or equipment will be subject to the prior approval of EIT Water, at the unit prices set out in the Pricing Annex.

2.2. Service request

EIT Water is looking for an experienced IT company specialised in outsourcing services. The team of the CFOO (Chief Finance & Operation Officer) will be in contact upon needs and requests to oversee the service delivery:

- Microsoft 365 licensing, with non-profit pricing, licence administration and licence optimisation;
- Completion of the set-up of an autonomous EIT Water Microsoft 365 environment on the domain already owned by the Association, affecting approximately 10 users, with no migration from a legacy environment;
- An unlimited-ticket service desk, device management covering laptops and phones, patching, monitoring and periodic service reporting;
- The full IT security baseline, including endpoint protection, e-mail security, multi-factor authentication, encryption, backup of Microsoft 365 data, filtering, and user awareness training upon request;
- User lifecycle administration (onboarding, offboarding) and asset lifecycle administration (procurement, inventory, warranty, replacement, disposal);
- Supply of laptops and related equipment, for which leasing is the preferred acquisition model (purchase might occur and the supplier shall also be able to facilitate);
- Ad-hoc technical work outside the fixed scope, charged at agreed hourly rates.

The volume of work is determined by the size of the user base, which is expected to grow over the contract period. Tenderers shall price the service for three volume scenarios: 10 users (Scenario A), 20 users (Scenario B) and 60 users (Scenario C), in accordance with the Pricing Annex. The volume scenarios are indicative and do not constitute a commitment by EIT Water to any minimum or maximum number of users.

Pricing shall be expressed as unit prices, excluding VAT, in DKK or EUR, and shall distinguish recurring monthly charges from one-off charges. Please clearly state in your proposal if the pricing is in DKK or EUR.

It is important to note that EIT Water 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.

EIT Water operates fully in English. All communication with EIT Water, whether written or verbal, shall be conducted in English, and all documentation and reporting provided under the contract shall be in English.

2.3. Detailed tasks

Task 1. Licence provision and administration

The selected supplier will be expected to procure, assign and monitor the Microsoft 365 licences, including Copilot licences where requested. The selected supplier will be expected to support EIT Water in its application for non-profit or donation pricing. During the execution of the contract, it should maintain a complete licence inventory and proceed with a periodic review of licence allocation against actual use, with recommendations for reduction or reallocation. EIT Water might request support for other licences, for instance Adobe.

Task 2. Environment set-up and administration

EIT Water has already purchased its domain name. The Microsoft 365 and Exchange Online configuration is not fully completed. The selected supplier shall complete that configuration, including DNS and mail-flow records (MX, SPF, DKIM, DMARC), mailbox provisioning, identity and access management, group and permission structures, as well as the sharing and retention settings. EIT Water shall always remain the sole legal and administrative owner of its cloud environment and domain name.

There is no migration from a legacy environment. Nevertheless, approximately 10 users may need to transfer data from the Aarhus SharePoint. No legacy server, database or line-of-business application is in scope. The supplier's role at start-up is limited to the configuration of the environment and to support to the team during the transition.

Task 3. Service desk and end-user support

The selected supplier will be expected to provide remote support to all users by telephone, e-mail and web portal, within defined coverage hours and response times, and to register and track every request in a ticketing portal accessible to EIT Water. On-site support should also be available at Aarhus (priced either per visit or as a package including a stated number of visits per year) including the configuration of local network and Wi-Fi equipment upon request.

Remote support shall include the capacity to take remote control of a user's device where required to diagnose or resolve an incident. Remote sessions shall be initiated only with the explicit consent of the user concerned. Unattended access shall be possible only for maintenance purposes and shall be

logged. All remote sessions shall be recorded in the ticketing portal and reported to EIT Water in the quarterly report.

Task 4. Infrastructure maintenance and monitoring & IT security

The selected supplier will be expected to monitor devices and cloud services on a continuous basis, to deploy security updates and patches, and to carry out preventive maintenance. It should detect and respond to incidents and maintain up-to-date documentation of the IT environment in a portal accessible to EIT Water.

The selected supplier will be expected to implement and operate the security baseline throughout the contract. This baseline should cover endpoint protection, e-mail filtering and anti-phishing, multi-factor authentication and password management, device encryption, web and DNS filtering, and the backup of Microsoft 365 data at a stated frequency and retention period. The selected supplier will also be expected to perform the initial hardening and baseline configuration of the environment, to draft the associated written security policies, and to organise security awareness training and simulated phishing campaigns upon EIT Water request.

Web filtering shall be enforced to block individual websites and categories of websites on request (for instance non approved AI tools). EIT Water shall have visibility of the categories and sites blocked and shall retain the final decision on the filtering policy applied.

Task 5. User & equipment management

The selected supplier will be expected to manage the onboarding of new users, including account creation, device configuration and delivery, and the offboarding of departing users, including account closure, data retention and device recovery. It should maintain an asset register covering all equipment supplied under the contract and the assigned user.

The selected supplier is expected to supply professional laptops and peripheral equipment upon request of EIT Water, with leasing as the preferred option. As per the pricing annex, every proposal should include the purchase and leasing cost. EIT Water might use both solutions.

In addition, the tenderer should inform about its end-of-life process, specifying whether devices are refurbished, repurposed, resold or destroyed, and confirm the adequate certificate of erasure or destruction will be issued.

The equipment package allocated to each employee may vary according to role, and requests are expected to remain flexible throughout the contract. Tenderers shall therefore propose three laptop models covering distinct performance profiles:

i. ***Standard office use:*** A professional model suitable for Microsoft 365 productivity applications, collaboration tools and web-based systems;
ii. ***Data and financial modelling:*** A model of higher specification than the "standard office", with increased memory and processing capacity, suitable for intensive use of large spreadsheets and financial models;
iii. ***Design and graphics:*** A high-performance model suitable for graphic design, image and video editing, with a dedicated or high-capability integrated graphics processor and a colour-accurate display.

For each type of device, the tenderer shall indicate the model, processor, memory, storage, screen size, warranty terms, and shall price both the lease rate and the purchase price. EIT Water reserves the right to order any combination of the three profiles, and to adjust that combination during the contract, without change to the unit prices submitted.

Apple devices, including MacBook and iPhone, are excluded from the scope of this procurement.

In addition to professional laptops, EIT Water might offer the following equipment:

- A professional phone;
- A case for phone and laptop;
- Wireless keyboard (QWERTY) and mouse;
- A monitor with adjustable height USB-C connectivity;
- A headset with a noise-cancelling microphone;
- A docking station or USB hub where the laptop supplied does not offer sufficient connectivity.

For every item a unit price must be included in the pricing annex.

As a guiding principle, **tenderers shall commit to applying the best value for money principle** in all equipment and licence proposals made under this procedure. Once the contract is awarded, the supplier shall collaborate with the EIT Water operational teams to keep the equipment offer aligned with the most relevant and best-performing devices available and shall propose updated models as they come to market, at prices consistent with those submitted in the Pricing Annex.

Task 6. Service management and reporting

The selected supplier will be expected to designate a named contact person and a named technical escalation point, to organise recurring status meetings, and to report quarterly on service levels, ticket volumes, security incidents, licence position and asset inventory, together with recommendations for optimisation.

Subcontracting of any part of the service shall be disclosed in the tender and shall remain subject to the prior written approval of EIT Water.

2.4. Data Management

The tenderer must confirm that its technical systems and operational practices comply with the applicable European Union regulations, in particular Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR) and Directive (EU) 2022/2555 (NIS2). The proposal must detail where EIT Water's data will be stored and processed, including backups.

2.5. Deliverables

The supplier is expected to provide a quarterly summary report, covering:

- **Service performance**: ticket volumes, response and resolution times against the agreed service levels, security incidents and patch status;
- **Asset management**: the current inventory of equipment supplied under the contract, stating for each item whether it is leased or owned and its assigned user;
- **Licence management**: the current licence position, assignment against active users, and any recommendation for reduction, reallocation or optimisation.

The report shall be delivered on a quarterly basis to ensure full transparency in the IT operations. The expected report is not aiming to be a long text document but rather a monitoring dashboard.

At the end of the contract, the supplier shall provide a hand-over package comprising the full export of EIT Water data, the transfer of administrative rights, the final asset and licence inventory, and the technical documentation of the environment.

In addition, upon request, the selected supplier shall share information on the environmental practices applied to the services and equipment provided under the contract, in particular the lifetime and repairability of the devices supplied, the end-of-life treatment applied, and relevant information available on the energy profile of the hosting and cloud services used (such as water usage and CO2 emissions).

2.6. Payment terms

The supplier is expected to submit its payment terms, EIT Water would like to express flexibility to fit at best its operational cycle, the payment terms might be part of a dedicated discussion once the tender is awarded.

3. Proposal process

3.1. Proposal timeline

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

Procedural item	Date
Publication of the RFP document	15/09/2026
Deadline for the submission	25/09/2026 5 pm CEST
Evaluation of the offers	28/09/2026
Notification of the result	30/09/2026
Standstill period	3 days
Final award notification	05/10/2026
Intended contract signature & start of the service	05/10/2026

3.2. 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:

- Its approach to the service to be delivered, to support at best the EIT Water operations;
- The proposal shall address as a minimum:
    - the location of data storage, processing and back up;
    - the conditions of technician access to EIT Water devices and data;
    - the security incident management procedure, including the notification timeframe to EIT Water;
    - the backup and recovery procedure, including backup frequency, retention period, restoration testing and recovery objectives;

  - confirmation that EIT Water retains full legal and administrative ownership of its Microsoft 365 tenancy, domain names and all data throughout the contract;
  - The proposed specifications for equipment.
- The CV of the team, highlighting their skills and qualities and how they can successfully contribute to support EIT Water;
- The pricing annex filled in, additional pricing information can be submitted to substantiate the pricing;
- The sustainable principles applied and how the tenderer limits its environmental & social impact.

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.

When submitting your proposal please attach the Pricing Annex, the tender submission form and the signed Declaration of Honour.

Please note that no costs incurred by the tenderers in preparing and submitting the proposal are reimbursable. All such costs must be borne by the tenderer.

3.3. Submission process

The proposal should be submitted electronically via email to 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 the designated communication channel, 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

4.1. Award criteria

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

Criterion	Description	Weight
Cost efficiency	Assesses whether the total cost is reasonable and whether the pricing is clear and complete. Consideration is given to the readability of the Pricing Annex, to the absence of hidden or bundled costs, and to the extent to which the structure of the offer allows EIT Water to select the options it needs and to anticipate its future costs.	40%
Technical excellence	Assesses how well the proposed solution meets the tasks set out in this RFP, the clarity of the approach, the proposed service levels and coverage, and the security and data protection arrangements. Particular attention is given to the tenderer's experience of working with small organisations operating fully in the cloud, and to the ability to deliver a solution proportionate to a structure of this size that can grow with it.	35%
Team expertise	Assesses the qualifications and relevant experience of the people proposed, the availability of the team, and the arrangements for day-to-day contact and escalation.	25%

4.2. Evaluation process

The proposals received by the due date and time will be assessed by an evaluation committee composed of 3 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.

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.

4.3. Selection of suppliers

The final selection of the supplier will be based on the best price-quality ratio principle. The tenderer with the highest total average score will be recommended for award.

The final award decision will be made by the CEO upon the recommendation from the evaluation committee (highest ranked proposal).

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 an 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 is 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.

- **Visibility and Funding Acknowledgement:** The Tenderer acknowledges that EIT Water is supported by the EU's Horizon Europe programme and agrees that any future public communication regarding this procurement must accurately reflect this support without implying exclusive EU funding; furthermore, the Tenderer confirms that no EU or EIT logos will be used in their proposal or future deliverables without 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 submit the appeal within 3 days from the result 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 reference number, proposal title, a clear description of the alleged procedural error, and supporting evidence.

- **Step 2: Acknowledgment & administrative check (within 3 days of 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 Appeal 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.