

Request for Proposals

Proposal Submission and Grant Management System

Type of procedure	Opening date	Closing date	Total estimated budget
Open procedure	08/10/2026	30/10/2026	50 000 EUR

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

<https://eitwater.eu/>

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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 and Scope of the RFP

2.1 General Objectives

EIT Water will be launching calls for proposals (funded projects) on a regular basis, starting in early 2027. It will be soliciting proposals for innovation projects, business creation activities and educational programmes, selecting proposals on the basis of reviews by independent experts, monitoring the execution of the selected activities, and report achievements towards its funding body, the European Institute of Innovation (EIT).

To support this core business process, a long-term IT strategy and subsequent implementation is currently in the planning stage. However, about 9 calls will be launched already in 2027. Therefore, there is the need for a quick to implement solution for a **dedicated, integrated Grant Management and Proposal Submission System**. This will be an interim **solution for 1 year with the possibility to renew for 1 more extra year** under the same terms and conditions, or, depending on the functional scope, integration capabilities, and ease of use, a permanent component of the overall IT landscape of EIT Water. The maximum estimated budget of 50,000 EUR includes both the initial one-year term and the potential renewal period.

The system must support key aspects of the full grant lifecycle, ensure compliance with EIT and EU rules, and provide an efficient, transparent experience for both internal (around 15 EIT Water staff) and external users (expected up to 1000 submitted proposals and around 50 evaluators). Key objectives are to:

- Provide a single, secure online portal for **application submission, evaluation, award, contracting, reporting, and monitoring**.
- Reduce administrative burden, ensure data quality, and enable robust **monitoring** and **reporting** for internal management and EIT oversight.
- Ensure scalability to handle **hundreds of applications per call** and multiple concurrent calls.

2.2 Functional Scope

EIT Water is looking for an integrated, secure, and scalable SaaS solution covering at least the following functional areas of its core grant management process, as detailed below. EIT Water is committed to be involved at every stage of the initial system configuration and is expecting a high degree of transparency from the selected supplier during the configuration, onboarding, and maintenance phases.

2.2.1 Programme and Call Management

- Configuration of multiple **programmes and instruments** (e.g. innovation actions, start-up grants, applications for education programmes, etc.)
- Management of **calls for proposals**, including:
 - Publication of call information including links to downloadable documents
 - Support for **single-stage and multi-stage** processes (e.g. short proposal → full proposal)
 - Support for call with cut-off dates (draft proposals not submitted by the cut-off continue to be editable and can be submitted to a later cut-off)
 - Configurable submission deadlines, extensions, and proposal rework periods.

2.2.2 Online Application and Proposal Submission

- Secure **applicant portal** with role-based access and visibility rules (applicant, consortium coordinator, partner, member organisation representative, etc.).
- Online registration of organisations and users, with verification workflows and audit trail.
- Dynamic, configurable **electronic application forms** supporting:
 - Text, numbers, dates, budgets, attachments, and conditional logic.
 - Validation rules based on formal criteria (e.g. minimum consortium composition, country eligibility, etc.).
- Electronic proposal submission with:
 - Time-stamped submission and automatic enforcement of deadlines (e.g. 17:00 CET).
 - Acknowledgement receipts and submission history for applicants.
 - Ability to withdraw and resubmit before deadline (configurable per call).
- Consortium applications:
 - Coordinator–participant model, optionally separate forms sections per partner.
 - Consolidated budget and work plan at consortium level.
 - Management of partner roles and contributions, e.g. submission allowed only by coordinator.

2.2.3 Proposal Evaluation and Selection

- Management of external expert evaluators including:
 - Interface for a call of experts or continuous declarations of interest by potential external experts.
 - Interface for eligibility assessment and scoring of experts per thematic area (e.g. expert has a relevant CV for education but not for innovation).

- Tracking of past evaluation assignments and performance (per expert).
- Assignment of experts to review panels.
- Accessibility and visibility rules of proposals and evaluation results for special expert roles (e.g. rapporteur).
- Configurable **evaluation workflows** per call:
 - Admissibility and eligibility checks.
 - Assignment of proposals to evaluation panels.
 - Conflict-of-interest declarations and management.
 - Scoring templates (criteria, sub-criteria, weights, thresholds) aligned with evaluation criteria (excellence, impact, implementation, etc.).
- Management of **multi-stage evaluation**:
 - First/short proposal screening by remote evaluators.
 - Invitation to full proposal for shortlisted applicants, or new screening stage of original proposals according to additional criteria.
 - Panel evaluation and possible online hearings/interviews.
- Automatic calculation of scores and rankings according to configured rules.
- Generation of evaluation summary reports prepared by a rapporteur, based on the individual evaluation reports compatible with internal governance and EIT reporting needs.

2.2.4 Award, Grant Agreement and Post-Award Management

- Automated sending of evaluation results to applicants based on EIT Water templates, with attachment of corresponding Evaluation Summary Reports.
- Management of:
 - Multiple beneficiary types (HEIs, research organisations, SMEs, large companies, public bodies).
 - Different funding models (classical sub-grants, lump-sum funding, blended finance, equity-free support, etc.).
 - Amendments (approval workflows for budget changes, partner changes, project extensions, etc., incl. audit trail of changes).
- Workflows for:
 - Contract management and signature of grant agreements, integration with e-signature solutions preferred.
 - Amendments (approval workflows for budget changes, partner changes, scope modifications, etc., incl. audit trail of changes).
- Post-award functionalities (project management):

- Management of milestones, deliverables, KPI evidence & reported values, and other documents.
- Automation of reminders of project deadlines but also monitoring deadlines (reporting timeframe).
- Submission and review of periodic/final reports by beneficiaries.
- Dedicated workflow to approve deliverables, KPIs and payment to be executed by the Finance team.
- Budget tracking, cost claims, and payment requests.
- Audit trail and document management for all communications.
- Access and visibility rules for EIT Water programme managers for projects allocated to them.

2.2.5 Financial Management, Monitoring and Reporting

- Once available, integration or interface with the organisation's **financial/ERP system** for payment instructions and status updates.
- Configurable financial rules (eligible costs, co-financing rates, ceilings, etc.).
- Standard and ad-hoc **reports and dashboards**, including:
 - Calls overview (number of proposals, success rates, budgets by thematic area).
 - Programme and instrument statistics (multi-annual plans, innovation actions, etc.).
 - Beneficiary-level data (payments, outstanding obligations, corrections).

2.2.6 User Management, Security and Compliance

- Role-based access control with fine-grained permissions for:
 - Internal users (**grant managers / case officers**, plus IT system administrators, finance, legal, and management).
 - External users (applicants, partners, evaluators, etc.).
- Full **audit logging** of user actions, data changes, and workflow transitions.
- Compliance with:
 - **GDPR** and EU data protection requirements.
 - EU cybersecurity requirements for public sector systems.
- Hosting in the **EU/EEA**, with clear data residency, backup, and disaster recovery provisions.

2.2.7 Accessibility, Usability and Scale

- Compliance with **WCAG 2.1 AA** (or higher) for all user-facing interfaces.
- Responsive design for desktop and mobile devices.
- Intuitive user experience for applicants.

- Proven ability to scale to:
 - **Hundreds of applicants per call.**
 - Multiple concurrent calls and evaluation cycles.

2.3 Non-Functional Requirements

2.3.1 Technical and Integration Requirements

- **Architecture:** Modern, scalable, multi-tenant capable architecture; SaaS preferred.
- **Availability:** Minimum 99.5% uptime during business hours; defined maintenance windows.
- **Performance:** Ability to support peak loads during call deadlines and evaluation periods.
- **Integration:**
 - RESTful APIs for data exchange with internal systems (ERP, CRM, document management, e-signature).
 - Support for standard data formats (JSON, XML, CSV).
- **Data migration:** Tools and services to import and export data (CSV, Excel, PDF, APIs) for data exchange with internal and external systems, with filtering and optionally custom export data structures (e.g. in XML format)
- **Backup & Disaster Recovery:** Regular backups, tested disaster recovery plan, defined RTO/RPO.

2.3.2 Implementation, Training, and Support

- A detailed **implementation plan**, including:
 - Project governance, roles, and responsibilities.
 - Milestones, timeline, and critical path.
 - Risk management and mitigation measures.
- **Configuration** and limited customisation to match the organisation's EIT-aligned processes.
- **Training:**
 - Role-based training for grant managers, finance/legal staff, and IT administrators.
 - User guides, video tutorials, and knowledge base for applicants, partners, and KIC staff.
- **Support:**
 - Helpdesk with defined service levels (response and resolution times).
 - Support in English during European business hours (CET time zone), with escalation procedures.

2.4 Implementation Timeline

The supplier is expected to meet the following deadlines:

Functions Group	Go live date for external users
Proposal submission, revisions	End of Jan 2027
Expert reviewer registration, selection and contracting	End of Jan 2027
Expert review and scoring	Mid-February 2027
Evaluation reports and decision feedback, proposal reporting	Early April 2027
Grant agreement management	Mid-May 2027
Project management, change request management	Mid-May 2027
Project deliverable submissions and review, project closure reporting	End of August 2027

In addition, EIT Water staff onboarding and training should be planned for January 2027, unless anticipated in December 2026.

During the execution of the contract the timeline might be reviewed, any deviation of the delivered work should be approved in writing.

2.5 Methodology

The supplier is expected to demonstrate proven knowledge, practical expertise, and a robust execution methodology. The proposal must outline a clear work plan that illustrates how the supplier's technical approach addresses EIT Water's objectives and operational requirements.

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.

3 Proposal Process

3.1 Proposal Timeline

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.

The suppliers are invited to answer to this Request for Proposals following the defined timeline:

Procedural item	Date
Publication of the RFP document	08/10/2026
Deadline for the written proposal	30/10/2026 5 pm CET
Invitation for online demonstration*	04/11/2026 - 13/11/2026
Evaluation of the offers	16/11/2026 - 20/11/2026
Notification of the result	23/11/2026
Standstill period	3 days
Final award notification	26/11/2026
Intended contract signature	30/11/2026
Intended start of the service	01/12/2026

*Applicants that did not submit a complete application by the deadline (30/10/2026 5pm CET) will not be invited to the online demonstration.

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.

3.2 Proposal Requirements

The suppliers are expected to submit a proposal to demonstrate how their solution implements the above listed functions and how they will meet the non-functional requirements. No costs incurred by the suppliers in preparing and submitting the proposal are reimbursable. All such costs must be borne by the supplier.

Submitted proposals **must** include the following:

- **Description** of the offered solution
- **Work plan**, including:
 - Project governance, roles, and responsibilities.
 - Solution implementation milestones, timeline, and critical path.
 - Risk management and mitigation measures.
- **Functional annex** (checklist format);
- The **price** in EUR, excluding VAT, stating one-time and recurring costs for year 1 and for subsequent years, and preferably broken down by functional group (e.g. core proposal system, evaluation support, post-grant agreement management, optional components not explicitly mentioned in this RfP).

AI functionality

- In the event the solution offered includes AI features, please provide your internal AI policy and the safeguards in place to protect the data of EIT Water. It is important to note that sensitive and competitive information will be uploaded through the platform, therefore EIT Water does not allow the platform to access its data and use it for training purposes. Transparency is required from the tenderer in the submitted proposal.
- EIT Water reserves the right to stop the collaboration, even after the award, and without notice if the proposal submitted is revealed to be non-accurate. In such event, EIT Water will consider the procedure as null.

Please note that suppliers 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.

The proposal must be accompanied by the tender form and the signed declaration of honour.

3.3 Proposal Submission

The proposal should be submitted electronically via email to procurement@eitwater.eu. The latest proposal received by a supplier before the deadline will be considered to be the final one of the supplier, earlier versions will be disregarded.

4 Evaluation of Proposals

4.1 Award Criteria

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

Criterion	Description	Weight
Cost efficiency	Evaluates whether the proposed price is realistic, follows standard market practice, and is proportionate to the expected solution (neither underpriced nor overpriced). 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.	25%
Technical excellence	Assesses the quality, clarity, and feasibility of the work plan, proposed technical methodology, risk management, and the unique value proposition. The online demonstration will be assessed as part of the technical excellence criteria.	35%
Team expertise	Assesses the professional qualifications, relevant past experience, and overall availability of key personnel proposed for delivery.	20%

Scalability and data protection	Assesses the robustness, scalability, and interoperability of the proposed IT systems/software, alongside data protection mechanisms, hosting compliance within the EU/EEA, system safeguards, and adherence to EU cybersecurity standards	20%
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4.2 Evaluation Process

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

The final total score for each proposal is calculated by averaging the overall weighted scores across all individual reviewers. The supplier 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 supplier 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 suppliers, as needed.

The final award decision will be made by the CEO 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').

The supplier 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 supplier 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 supplier 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 supplier has no link with any of the person within the EIT Water organisation and cannot access material or information on an exclusive basis;
- The supplier has no unfair advantage given by a current employee of EIT Water;
- The supplier 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 supplier will answer the RFP with fairness
- The supplier, 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 suppliers 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. Suppliers 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. Suppliers must prioritise carbon reduction, eliminate hazardous chemicals, and avoid single-use plastics. By submitting a Tender, the Supplier confirms compliance with these baselines and agrees to fulfil all contract-specific green criteria.
- **Standards of Conduct & Good Faith:** Both EIT Water and the supplier(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, suppliers 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

Suppliers 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.

Inadmissible grounds include appeals challenging the individual scores, technical merits, or scientific judgment of the evaluators, and will not be considered.

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

- **Step 1: Filing the appeal**
The supplier 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 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 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 supplier in writing and concludes EIT Water's internal appeal process.