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Request for Proposals: EIT Food's Online Community Platform

EIT Food – Making Food Innovation Happen

Knowledge & Innovation Center on Food,
part of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

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<http://www.eitfood.eu>

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1. Overview of EIT Food

EIT Food is Europe's leading food innovation initiative, working to make the food system more sustainable, healthy and trusted.

The initiative is made up of a consortium of key industry players, startups, research centres and universities from across Europe. It is one of nine Innovation Communities established by the European Institute for Innovation & Technology (EIT), an independent EU body set up in 2008 to drive innovation and entrepreneurship across Europe.

EIT Food aims to collaborate closely with consumers to develop new knowledge and technology-based products and services that will ultimately deliver a healthier and more sustainable lifestyle for all European citizens.

For more information about our company please visit the following website: www.eitfood.eu

2. Scope of work

2.1. General objectives

FoodHIVE is the online community platform of EIT Food and serves as a key engagement hub for its innovation ecosystem.

Through FoodHIVE, members are able to:

- Stay up to date with the latest news, events, and insights from the EIT Food network.
- Connect with experts, innovators, and peers who share a commitment to food system transformation.
- Discover opportunities, resources, and collaborations that support innovation and impact.

EIT Food is seeking a qualified provider for the continuation and further development of its online community platform. This document outlines the functional, technical, and service-related requirements the platform must meet to achieve these objectives.

2.2. GDPR compliance

The platform must be fully compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) by default. The provider must ensure that:

- All current and future platform updates remain GDPR compliant.
- Any configuration changes do not compromise compliance.
- GDPR compliance is maintained without negatively impacting user experience or usability.

2.3. Database & user management

Account Creation and Activation

The platform must support a private, invitation-only configuration.

Account creation, activation, and login processes must be highly user-friendly for both administrators and end users. User profiles may be requested by users or created by administrators, with all processes fully GDPR compliant.

The platform must support the following:

1. Fully customisable sign-up forms, configurable by EIT Food.
2. Manual creation of user accounts by administrators.
3. Import of user accounts via CSV files, with the ability to map and select custom profile fields. User imports must be possible at any stage, both during initial setup and after full deployment.

The platform should allow the creation of multiple sign-up forms and/or invitation links to accommodate the diverse range of EIT Food stakeholder groups.

Account Deletion

Users must be able to delete their own accounts. Upon deletion, a feedback form should be presented to capture the reason for leaving, enabling EIT Food to analyse churn drivers.

User Profiles

The platform must support custom user profile fields. Profile fields should be configurable based on user type or group membership, allowing different stakeholder groups to have tailored profile structures.

2.4. Platform features

Profile Pages

Each user must have a personal profile page that includes, at a minimum:

- Profile picture
- Biography
- Contact details
- Any additional custom fields defined by administrators

Private Messaging

The platform must enable users to send private messages to one another.

Notifications and Privacy Settings

Users must be able to:

- Configure which activities trigger notifications (e.g. mentions, direct messages, weekly digests).
- Select notification channels (e.g. email, in-platform notifications).
- Hide their contact details.
- Disable private messaging if desired.

Member Directory

The platform must provide a searchable member directory, with configurable and custom filters to allow users to easily find relevant members.

Groups / Subcommunities / Spaces

The platform must support the creation of groups or subcommunities with restricted access. Content within these groups should only be visible to group members. Platform-wide features should also be available at the group level where relevant.

Events

The platform must support the creation of event pages that include:

- General event information
- Images
- Location details
- Additional information such as registration links

The platform must allow linking to external websites or tools (e.g. third-party registration systems). An events overview page and/or calendar must be available to users.

Posts and Content Sharing

Users must be able to publish posts containing text, images, links, videos, and documents. The platform should support:

- Text formatting (e.g. bold, italics, underline, bullets, indentations)
- Emojis
- Tagging or mentioning other members
- The ability to place video or images above, below and in the middle of text

Users must be able to categorise their posts and filter posts via overview pages or feeds.

Networking

The platform should actively facilitate networking between members through dedicated features or structured networking functionalities.

Onboarding and Gamification

The platform must support:

- Multiple onboarding email flows tailored to different stakeholder groups.
- Visibility for users into their onboarding completion status (e.g. percentage completed).
- Gamification features designed to increase user adoption, activation, and ongoing engagement.

Resource Library

The platform must provide a central file repository or resource library where documents and materials can be stored and accessed by users based on their permissions. Uploaders must be able to tag these resources for ease of discovery via search and filter.

2.5. Technical requirements

The platform must allow the export of data, with particular emphasis on user profile data and analytics.

An API must be available to enable integration with external systems. The platform must support integration with CRM systems, such as Salesforce.

The provider must supply:

- SLA information, including guaranteed uptime and service desk.
- Documentation on data backup procedures.
- Details on security measures and infrastructure.

Accessibility and Inclusivity

The platform must meet recognised accessibility standards to ensure inclusive access for all users.

At a minimum, the platform should:

- Comply with WCAG 2.1 AA (or equivalent) accessibility standards.
- Support screen readers, keyboard navigation, and sufficient colour contrast.
- Ensure accessibility of core platform features, including content, navigation, and emails.

Performance and Scalability

The platform must demonstrate reliability, performance, and scalability. Proposals should address:

- Expected platform performance and page load times.
- Ability to scale in terms of number of users, content volume, and concurrent usage.
- Measures in place to handle peak traffic (e.g. during events or major launches).
- Monitoring, incident management, and communication procedures in the event of outages or performance degradation.

Data Ownership and Portability

EIT Food will remain the sole owner of all data hosted on the platform. The provider must:

- Clearly confirm data ownership arrangements.
- Support data portability through structured, commonly used export formats.
- Provide guarantees regarding access to data during the contract period and upon contract termination.
- Outline support for data handover and transition at the end of the contract.

Content Moderation and Governance

The platform must provide tools to support effective content moderation and community governance, including:

- Admin and moderator controls to edit, hide, or remove content.
- The ability to suspend or restrict user accounts.
- User-facing mechanisms to report inappropriate content or behaviour.

Administration and Backoffice

The platform must offer a user-friendly administrative backoffice. It must be possible to assign different admin roles and restrict access to specific sections of the backoffice.

User Access Rights

The platform must support granular user access controls, allowing permissions to be tailored per user role or membership level.

Analytics and Reporting

The platform must include a user-friendly analytics dashboard. Metrics should include, but are not limited to:

- Number of users
- Activation rates
- Engagement rates

- Content consumption
- Email analytics and performance metrics
- Login details

Analytics must be filterable over time.

Customisation

The platform must support full branding customisation, including colours, logos, and fonts. It must also allow the creation of custom-built pages, including a customisable landing page.

Payment System and Membership Access

The platform must include a payment system or allow integration with external payment providers (e.g. Stripe). Supported payment methods must include:

- Direct debit
- Debit cards
- Credit cards

The platform must support both one-off and recurring payments. It must be possible to create multiple membership levels and assign different access rights and features to each level.

Automation and AI

The platform should offer automation capabilities to reduce manual workload for the community manager, including but not limited to database management and member support processes.

If AI functionalities are integrated (which is encouraged), they must be secure and ensure that no user data is shared externally or used inappropriately.

Mobile Application

The platform must offer a mobile-optimised experience and provide native mobile applications for both iOS and Android.

Email functionality

The platform must include fully integrated email functionality. Requirements include:

- Automated emails summarising community activity, with configurable schedules and timeframes.
- Automated reminder emails for profile activation and inactive users.
- The ability to send custom-built emails to custom-defined user lists.

2.6. Customer support and services

The provider must offer structured and reliable customer support, including:

- A dedicated account or customer success manager.
- Regular support or check-in calls (e.g. monthly or quarterly) to review platform performance, roadmap updates, and ongoing needs.
- Clear escalation procedures for technical issues.
- Defined response times for support requests, aligned with the agreed SLA.

The provider must also offer access to a comprehensive support and knowledge environment, including:

- A self-service library of resources documenting platform features and functionality (e.g. help articles, tutorials, videos).
- Best-practice guidance and use cases for community management, including insights, examples, or benchmarks from other community platforms or community managers.
- Regularly updated documentation reflecting new features, updates, or changes to the platform.

In addition, the provider must demonstrate transparency and alignment on product development, including:

- Regular sharing of the product roadmap (at least annually), with clear visibility on planned features, improvements, and timelines.
- A process for communicating roadmap changes or delays.
- An explanation of how customer feedback is collected and incorporated into product development.

2.7. Migration and transition services

As EIT Food is currently operating an existing community platform (Hivebrite), the provider must be able to support migration and transition services.

Proposals should clearly outline:

1. Experience with migrating community platforms.
2. A clear description of which data and platform elements can be migrated, such as user data, profiles, groups, content, and resources, including any limitations or exclusions, while ensuring GDPR compliance and data integrity.
3. A proposed migration approach, including timelines, responsibilities, and risk mitigation.
4. Support during the transition phase to minimise disruption for end users and administrators.

2.8. Term

The term of the Framework Legal Services Agreement shall be 1 year from the date of signature, with possible annual extensions, up to a maximum total duration of 4 years.

3. Proposal Process

3.1. Participation

Participation in this proposal procedure is open to all tenderers.

3.2. Submission of proposal

	Date
Sending out RFP invitations to the potential suppliers	6 January 2026
Deadline for requesting clarification from EIT Food	19 January 2026
Deadline for submitting proposals	26 January 2026
Intended date of notification of award	30 January 2026
Intended date of contract signature	5 February 2026

Platform demos with shortlisted providers may take place in the weeks of **19 and 26 January 2026**, depending on needs.

Proposals must be emailed in English with the subject line “Community platform RFP 2025” to the following address:

Contact name: for the attention of Linn Vande Populiere

E-mail: linn.vandepopuliere@eitfood.eu

The proposal shall contain:

- **the technical response to the service requested (point 3)**
- **the financial offer (the price for the services.)** The Financial offer shall be expressed in Euros, VAT shall be indicated separately. The financial offer must clearly specify:
 - Which platform features are included in the proposed price, and whether future developments or new features are included at no additional cost or subject to additional fees.
 - The number of administrator accounts included, the associated access rights, and whether additional administrator accounts can be purchased, including applicable pricing.
 - The number of user accounts included in the proposed price, and whether additional users can be added, including the applicable pricing model and unit costs.

Responses should be concise and clear. The tenderer's proposal will be incorporated into any contract that results from this procedure. Tenderers are, therefore, cautioned not to make claims or statements that they are not prepared to commit to contractually. Subsequent modifications and counter-proposals, if applicable, shall also become an integral part of any resulting contract.

The tenderer confirms that the individual submitting the natural or legal entity's proposal is duly authorized to bind its entity to the proposal as submitted. The tenderer also confirms that it has read the instructions to tenderers and has the experience, skills and resources to perform, according to conditions set forth in this proposal and the tenderers' proposal.

3.3. Validity of the proposals

Tenderers are bound by their proposals for 90 days after the deadline for submitting proposals or until they have been notified of non-award.

The selected winner must maintain its proposal for a further 60 days to close the contract.

Proposals not following the instructions of this Request for Proposal can be rejected by EIT Food.

3.4. Requests for additional information or clarification

In case the tenderers require additional information or clarifications, these should be addressed to the person indicated below. All communication between EIT Food and tenderers is only possible in writing, all requests will be done and answered by e-mail only. All questions should be sent prior to deadline for requesting clarification as specified in Section 3.1. In case of complex or high value procurements, EIT Food may arrange a clarification session of which it will inform all tenderers.

Contact name: for the attention of Mrs. Linn Vande Populiere

E-mail: linn.vandepopuliere@eitfood.eu

EIT Food has no obligation to provide clarification.

3.5. Costs for preparing proposals

No costs incurred by the tenderer in preparing and submitting the proposal are reimbursable. All such costs must be borne by the tenderer.

3.6. Clarification related to the submitted proposals

After submission of the proposals, they shall be checked if they satisfy all the formal requirements set out in the proposal dossier. Where information or documentation submitted by the tenderers are or appears to be incomplete or erroneous or where specific documents are missing, EIT Food may request the tenderer concerned to submit, supplement, clarify or complete the relevant information or documentation within an appropriate time limit. All communication between EIT Food and tenderers is only possible in writing, all requests will be done and answered by e-mail only.

3.7. Negotiation about the submitted proposal

After checking the administrative compliance of the tenderers, EIT Food reserves the right to negotiate the contract terms with the tenderers. In this negotiation EIT Food may ask all tenderers to adjust the proposal or specific sections of the proposal within an appropriate time limit. In case of negotiation, EIT Food shall provide further information about the proceedings and timing.

3.8. Evaluation of proposals

The quality of each proposal will be evaluated in accordance with the below mentioned award criteria. The award criteria will be examined in accordance with the requested service indicated in Section 2 of the document.

Ability to meet functional and technical requirements The extent to which the proposed solution meets the functional, technical, compliance and operational requirements outlined.	30 points
User experience, usability and design Quality of the user experience for both end users and administrators, including ease of onboarding, navigation, accessibility, and overall usability of the platform. Flexibility of design, branding options, and the intuitiveness of the backoffice will be considered, as well as the platform's ability to support adoption and engagement.	20 points
Reliability and support Demonstrated reliability of the platform and quality of customer support, including uptime commitments, incident management and responsiveness. Transparency and credibility of the product roadmap, quality of documentation and best-practice resources will be evaluated.	10 points
Value for money Lowest offered price shall receive the highest score; the score for other offers shall be calculated in relation to that in linear equation.	40 points

Total maximum score: 100 points

The results of the award procedure will be communicated in writing (via e-mail) to the successful and unsuccessful tenderers.

3.9. Appeals/complaints

Tenderers believing that they have been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may file a complaint. Appeals should be addressed to EIT Food. The tenderers have 3 calendar days to file their complaints from the dispatch of the award notification e-mail.

3.10. Signature of contract

Please refer to Annex 1 for the template contract that shall apply to this procedure. Any changes desired by the tenderer in the provisions contained in the body of this Service Agreement must be communicated to EIT Food as part of the proposal of such tenderer. Any such changes will be considered as part of the evaluation of the proposal of each tenderer

Within 5 days of receipt of the contract from EIT Food, the winning tenderer shall sign and date the contract and return it to EIT Food. Upon receipt, EIT Food shall countersign and return one signed copy of the contract to the winning tenderer.

3.11. Cancellation of the proposal procedure

In the event of cancellation of the procurement procedure, EIT Food will notify tenderers of the cancellation. In no event shall EIT Food be liable for any damages whatsoever including, without limitation, damages for loss of profits, in any way connected with the cancellation of a proposal procedure, even if EIT Food has been advised of the possibility of damages.

3.12. Ethics clauses / Corruptive practices

EIT Food 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 Food may refrain from concluding the Contract.

The supplier shall take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the contract is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests'). The supplier should immediately inform EIT Food if there is any change in the above circumstances at any stage during the implementation of the tasks.

3.13. Annexes

Annex 1: Contract Template. The Contract Template is provided for information purposes only and might be subject to considerable modifications.

Annex II: Declaration of Honour