Terms of Reference (ToR)

Technical audit, hosting, maintenance and technical support for the RFSC website and online tool

1. About CEMR

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is the first and most comprehensive European association of local and regional governments. Established in 1951, CEMR empowers cities, municipalities and rural areas to address global challenges, foster sustainable transitions and engage communities in achieving collective goals.

For more information: https://ccre-cemr.org/

2. Objectives

CEMR is seeking proposals from qualified web agencies or independent developers to assess, maintain and improve the website and online tool of the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC).

The RFSC consists of two separate digital platforms:

- **RFSC website:** https://rfsc.eu/, developed using WordPress.
- **RFSC online tool:** http://app.rfsc.eu/, developed using a customised programming environment.

CEMR wishes to ensure that both platforms remain operational, secure, accessible and fit for purpose, while addressing existing technical issues and ensuring their long-term sustainability.

The selected service provider will be expected to carry out an initial technical audit, identify the necessary interventions and propose different technical solutions and pricing packages. Based on the audit findings, CEMR will decide which interventions to prioritise and which package or combination of services to commission.

The assignment will also include the transfer or migration of hosting services to a suitable provider, as well as the transfer or confirmation of domain management arrangements, where necessary.

CEMR must retain full ownership and control of the RFSC website, online tool, domain name, source code, databases, content and all associated digital assets. CEMR must also

have appropriate administrative access to the relevant hosting, domain management and technical accounts.

3. Deliverables

The assignment is divided into three phases. Proposals should clearly distinguish the costs associated with each phase, allowing CEMR to select and commission services according to its priorities and available budget.

Phase 1 – Technical audit of the website and online tool

The service provider will conduct a technical audit of both the RFSC website and the online tool to assess their current condition, identify issues and establish priorities for intervention.

The audit should cover, as applicable:

- The technical architecture, programming languages, frameworks, software versions and dependencies used by each platform.
- The status of the WordPress installation, themes, plugins and other website components.
- The functionality and performance of the online tool, including its key features, user journeys, forms and administrative interfaces.
- Existing bugs, compatibility issues and technical limitations.
- Hosting infrastructure, server configuration, database management and resource requirements.
- Cybersecurity risks, software vulnerabilities and access management.
- Backup arrangements, recovery procedures and business continuity.
- Website performance, availability, accessibility and compatibility with current browsers and devices.
- GDPR-related technical considerations and other relevant compliance requirements.
- The technical feasibility, risks and estimated costs of maintaining, upgrading or rebuilding the platforms.

The audit must consider the website and the online tool separately, recognising that they have different technical requirements and may require different hosting environments and maintenance approaches.

Expected deliverables:

1. A technical audit report covering both platforms.
2. An inventory of identified issues, vulnerabilities and technical limitations, prioritised according to their severity and urgency.
3. Recommendations for immediate fixes, medium-term improvements and longer-term technical sustainability.
4. An assessment of hosting requirements and a proposed hosting and migration strategy, including separate hosting arrangements for the website and the online tool.
5. An initial estimate of the costs, resources, implementation time and risks associated with the proposed interventions.

Phase 2 – Technical solutions and pricing packages

Based on the findings of the audit, the service provider will propose different technical solutions and pricing packages to address the identified issues.

The purpose is to allow CEMR to compare possible approaches, from essential corrective measures to more substantial technical upgrades or redevelopment.

For each proposed package, the contractor must provide:

- A description of the proposed work and services.
- The technical issues addressed and the expected results.
- A clear distinction between one-off implementation costs and recurring costs.
- An estimated timeline and required resources.
- The annual cost of hosting, maintenance and support, where applicable.
- Any additional costs, exclusions, dependencies or limitations.
- An assessment of the risks and long-term implications of the proposed solution.

The proposals should clearly distinguish between essential interventions, recommended improvements and optional developments.

CEMR may select individual packages or combine elements from different proposals. The audit and proposed solutions must therefore be sufficiently detailed to allow CEMR to make informed decisions without committing to the full scope of work at the outset.

Reference example: The *Twinning.org Technical Audit* prepared by Morris & Chapman in December 2021 provides an example of the expected approach. It identifies technical issues and compares three solutions, ranging from restoring existing functionality to upgrading the underlying technology and undertaking a more comprehensive redevelopment. The options are compared according to their scope, expected results and estimated costs.

Read more here: https://ccre-cemr.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/TWINNING.org-Front-end-issues-Report-2021-002.pptx

Phase 3 – Implementation, hosting, maintenance and technical support

Following the audit and approval of the selected packages, the contractor will implement the agreed solutions and provide the corresponding ongoing services.

The services may include the following, depending on the packages selected by CEMR.

A. **Hosting and infrastructure**
B. **Domain name management**
C. **Website maintenance**
D. **Online tool maintenance**
E. **Cybersecurity, backups and recovery**
F. **Technical support and reporting**
G. **Coordination and reporting**
H. **Expertise required**

The assignment is expected to begin in December 2026.

4. Coordination

The selected contractor will work continuously in coordination with CEMR's communication and project and programme teams, with a proper coordination set up in place to create a space of exchange and feedback for this deliverable.

5. Expertise required

It is expected that the contractor demonstrates:

- Proven experience in WordPress website maintenance and support.
- Experience in website hosting and domain name management.

- Strong expertise in website security, cybersecurity monitoring and vulnerability management.
- Experience implementing backup and disaster recovery solutions.
- Ability to provide ongoing technical support and troubleshooting.
- Knowledge of GDPR and website compliance requirements.
- Excellent project management, communication and reporting skills.
- Previous experience working with public institutions, associations, NGOs or international organisations would be considered an asset.
- Experience with coding languages, Ubuntu strong asset.

6. Submission process

Interested agencies and independent developers are invited to submit a proposal containing the following information, compiled into a single PDF document or provided through a link to the relevant documentation:

1. **Company or developer profile:** An introduction to the organisation or individual, including relevant experience and technical expertise.
2. **Portfolio and references:** Examples of websites and online tools developed, maintained or upgraded, including relevant client references or testimonials.
3. **Proposed methodology:** An explanation of the approach to the initial technical audit, the assessment of the website and tool, and the preparation of alternative solutions.
4. **Indicative technical packages:** An outline of the potential solutions and levels of intervention that could be proposed following the audit, including examples of how these could be structured.
5. **Financial proposal:** An indicative estimate of the audit cost, potential implementation costs and recurring hosting, maintenance and support costs, excluding VAT. Costs should be itemised separately for the website and the online tool wherever applicable.
6. **Hosting proposal:** An indication of the proposed hosting providers or infrastructure, explaining how the website and online tool would be hosted separately.

7. **Proposed timeline:** An indicative schedule for the audit, presentation of solutions and implementation of selected services.
8. **Legal and administrative information:** Relevant company or professional registration and tax information.

The proposal should make clear which costs are fixed, which are indicative and which would be confirmed after the technical audit. Applicants should not be expected to provide a definitive redevelopment quote before the technical requirements have been assessed.

All proposals must be submitted by **27 November 2026** via email to communications@ccre-cemr.org, with the subject line:

"Call for proposals – RFSC website and online tool"

7. Selection criteria

Proposals will be evaluated by a Selection Committee at CEMR based on:

- Quality and robustness of the proposed maintenance, hosting and cybersecurity approach – 2 points
- Portfolio and expertise – 2 points
- Relevance of the proposal, including similar coding languages, projects, organisation, timeline, references and testimonials – 3 points
- Budget – 3 points

CEMR will assess the relevance and feasibility of the proposed approach, the contractor's ability to maintain both platforms, the clarity of the financial proposal and the sustainability of the recommended solutions.

8. Budget

Applicants are invited to propose transparent and itemised costs for the different phases of the assignment.

Where appropriate, applicants should present different packages at different price levels, explaining the scope, benefits and limitations of each option.

CEMR intends to use the audit findings and the resulting financial proposals to determine which interventions are necessary and which packages best meet its needs and available budget.

9. Contact details

If you have any questions related to this Call for proposals, you can contact communications@ccre-cemr.org.