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Access Europe
Unlocking EU Funding

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Invitation to Tender for the Redesign and Hosting of the Access Europe Website

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APPLICATION DEADLINE: FRIDAY 6 JUNE 2025, 5pm

PLEASE NOTE: ALL APPLICATIONS MUST BE RETURNED BY 5PM TO
christina@wheel.ie

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Access Europe is a support and capacity-building programme designed to help Irish civil society and social enterprise organisations access EU funding and engage in EU policy. It is funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and delivered by The Wheel.

The Wheel is Ireland's national association of charities, community, voluntary organisations and social enterprises. The Wheel's vision is to see a thriving community and voluntary sector at the heart of a fair and just Ireland.

2.0 PURPOSE OF THE TENDER

Access Europe is inviting proposals from qualified vendors to redesign and develop its website, www.accesseurope.ie. The objective is to create a modern, user-friendly, and accessible site that effectively supports our mission and engages our target audience. In addition to a content update, we aim to enhance the website's design and incorporate new features and functionalities.

2.1. Access Europe Programme Overview

The Access Europe programme is built around its overall vision, mission and objectives.

Vision: Irish civil society and the social economy is highly engaged in and resourced by EU funding programmes.

Mission: To deliver a support and capacity building programme for Irish civil society and social enterprise organisations to better access EU funds from 2024-2027.

Objectives:

1. Raise awareness of the value of strategic involvement in EU programmes and share information on EU funding opportunities.
2. Build the capacity of Irish civil society organisations to apply for and win funding from EU programmes.
3. Support the development of partnerships between Irish civil society organisations, and potential European partners, as well as national agencies, contact points and other institutions that promote participation in EU programmes.

The programme has four key services:

- **Information and awareness**: Updates, guides, and expert insights on EU opportunities.
- **Events and training**: Webinars, workshops, and trainings to build capacity.
- **Helpdesk support**: Individualised assistance for applicants.
- **Network building**: Matchmaking through the Partner Database and events.

Building on a successful phase 1 and phase 2, our strategy for the next phase of this programme is to fully exploit the learnings from Access Europe Phases 1 and 2, and the increased expertise we now have to achieve greater engagement of Irish civil society in accessing EU funds. We will continue with our original four services, but with new features and goals for each.

2.2 THE CURRENT ACCESS EUROPE WEBSITE

The existing Access Europe website (www.accesseurope.ie) was launched in December 2021. It serves as a resource hub for Irish civil society organisations seeking information and support regarding EU funding. It is currently hosted and maintained using Webflow.

Key features include:

- Resources and guides on getting started with EU funding
- Descriptions of relevant EU funding programmes and current application deadlines
- A searchable Partner Database showcasing Irish civil society organisations for partner matchmaking purposes
- A blog with programme updates and news
- Newsletter registration functionality
- Contact information to reach out to the European Programmes team for individual support

2.3 PURPOSE OF THE NEW ACCESS EUROPE WEBSITE

With the renewal of programme funding for 2025 – 2027, we are seeking to improve, expand and modernise our website to enhance support for Irish civil society organisations interested in EU funding opportunities.

Planned Enhancements (see specific requirements in section 4.3)

1. Improved basic functionalities and overall look and feel: More user-friendly, intuitive, and modern interface
2. Refined homepage layout with better calls to action
3. Refreshed and updated single pages for improved user experience
4. Updated Partner Database functionality
5. Public online calendar for events and deadlines
6. New e-training section: Inclusion of educational resources to support a self-paced learning process.

While the current website is hosted on Webflow, we are open to alternative hosting solutions that meet our needs and budget.

Vendors should outline their proposed hosting approach and include details on:

- Performance and reliability – including uptime guarantees or service level agreements (SLAs)

- Data residency – confirmation that hosting complies with GDPR, including data storage within the EU or with appropriate safeguards

- Backups and recovery – regular backups and a clear disaster recovery plan to ensure site resilience

2.4 TARGET AUDIENCE

The website primarily serves:

- Irish civil society and social enterprise organisations
- EU stakeholders
- National contact points and public bodies involved in EU funding
- Researchers and academics
- Policymakers and programme administrators

3.0 SCOPE OF SERVICES

This project requires a full redesign of the Access Europe website.

The redesigned website should improve user experience, increase engagement, and offer seamless navigation. It must be visually appealing, responsive, and compliant with current web standards, including GDPR and accessibility regulations.

The website must be fully GDPR-compliant. This includes:

- SSL/TLS encryption and full HTTPS enforcement for secure data transmission
- A cookie consent tool that lets users control non-essential cookies
- Use of a GDPR-compliant analytics tool (e.g. Matomo or properly configured Google Analytics)
- Identification of any third-party tools used and confirmation they meet GDPR requirements, including appropriate data processing agreements

Vendors should outline how they will meet these requirements in their proposal.

This document outlines the broad specification of requirements for the redesign of the Access Europe website. We invite interested web development companies to present their proposals for developing a suitable solution as specified in this document.

We anticipate that the information provided here will be sufficient to enable prospective suppliers to understand the scope of the site and to be able to cost their services, but we will want to work closely with the supplier during the design and development of the site to ensure that our aims and requirements are met in the best way possible.

4. FUNCTIONALITY

4.1 General Requirements for the Site

The redesigned website must:

a) Be user-friendly, accessible, secure, and built on modern technologies. We are aiming for a simple but modern interface that is intuitive and easily navigable for the user.
b) Support all major browsers: The pages must be viewable in all major web browsers as of the completion date (Edge, Chrome, Opera, Firefox and Safari).
c) Be fully responsive across smartphones, tablets, desktops, PCs, laptops, MacBooks and Apple computers.
d) Load quickly and perform efficiently.
e) Comply with the latest web content accessibility guidelines (e.g. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Version 2.1) and explain how this will be implemented into the website and tested.
f) Be accessible to search engine spiders and be coded with the very latest on-page search engine optimization.
g) Be futureproofed (i.e. as far as practicable avoids the need for major rebuilds to update to future versions of CMSs used etc).
h) With regards to IP, we intend that the site to be developed should remain the property of The Wheel. Please confirm your acceptance of this in your bid.
i) The bid should include hosting options (see 2.3)
j) We would like the option to engage the vendor for ongoing support after the website launch, while retaining the ability to manage and update the site in-house. If support is offered, please specify expected response and resolution times (especially for critical issues), any limits such as monthly hours or scope, and whether support is available on a retainer or pay-as-you-go basis. We are open to either model, provided it is flexible, clearly defined, and cost-effective.
k) The supplier should be able to make the site secure.

4.2 USERS OF THE WEBSITE

- General public [external users]
- Editors (internal)
- Admins (internal)

4.3 SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

Overview

1. Improve basic functionalities and overall look and feel
2. Maximise homepage layout with better calls to action
3. Update single web pages for improved user experience
4. Enhance Access Europe Partner Database functionality
5. Include public online calendar for EU events and funding deadlines
6. Develop and include new e-training section

4.3.1 Improve Basic Functionalities and Overall Look and Feel

The redesigned website should present a fresh, modern appearance while improving usability and accessibility. Enhancements should include:

- A contemporary and consistent visual style
- A site-wide search bar to improve navigation
- Updated imagery throughout the website
- Adjusted typography to ensure all text is legible (increase text size where needed)

4.3.2 Maximise Homepage Layout with Better Calls to Action

The homepage should serve as a vibrant, engaging entry point and clearly communicate Access Europe's core offerings.

Key improvements:

- Rebrand as a "One-stop shop for EU funding"
- Replace the current header image with an Access Europe-branded image
- Enhance visibility of the "Key Services" section using photos and improved formatting
- Make the "Open EU Funds" section more dynamic (e.g. smaller tiles, grouped by themes)
- Update the "Quotes" section with real testimonials and partner logos, styled with lighter visual elements
- Reposition the "Quotes" section further down the page
- Introduce a new "Trainings and Events Calendar" section on the homepage
- Automatically feature the latest items from the "News and Events" page on the homepage
- Add a new explainer video to succinctly convey the website's purpose and offerings

4.3.3 Update Single Web Pages for Improved User Experience

We intend to refresh core content areas to ensure alignment with the new visual identity and improved user experience.

About Page:

- Replace static header image with an introductory video
- Improve visibility of the "Objectives" section (e.g. larger text, visuals)
- Restructure the "How" section to mirror the "Key Services" format
- Add photographs from recent events
- Update all textual content for clarity and relevance

EU Funding Guide:

- Include an auto-playing video at the top explaining what EU funding is (and isn't)

Open EU Funds:

- Make the thematic filter bar scrollable
- Merge "Interregional" and "Rural Development" categories
- Enhance the search function to be more intuitive

4.3.4 Enhance Access Europe Partner Database Functionality

Our goal is to optimise the Access Europe Partner Database's functionality to improve partner search and visibility.

Proposed Enhancements:

- Alphabetise and simplify filter categories
- Enable full-text search across all profile content
- Ensure all profiles load fully when scrolling
- Improve social media sharing (auto-thumbnail when shared)
- Increase readability by enlarging text on individual profile pages

4.3.5 Include Public Online Calendar for EU Events and Funding Deadlines

We intend to implement a public, interactive calendar that highlights EU-related events, training, and funding deadlines. A prototype of this calendar, which is maintained by the Access Europe team, can be found here.

Design Specifications:

- Traditional calendar layout with visual monthly/daily views
- Distinct colour coding for events and deadlines
- Enhanced visibility for Access Europe-organised events
- Simple backend editing for ongoing updates

Development Requirements:

- Build the calendar feature within Webflow (or preferred CMS)
- Embed prominently on the homepage for easy discovery

4.3.6 Develop and Include New e-Training Section.

We aim to offer a structured, self-paced learning experience by consolidating our existing educational resources.

The overall goal with this new section of the website is to make use of all the information materials we have already produced (i.e. videos, templates, documents, toolkits, roadmaps, spreadsheets, presentations, pictures) and that are currently living all across the website or other portals (e.g. YouTube) in a better and more structured way. Our current plan is that video hosting will not be necessary and to keep YouTube as the video host. We also do not currently plan to have a learner management system or log in system now or in the future. Instead, our goal is to give visitors of the website the possibility for an open, self-paced learning experience, making use of existing and new resources provided in a structured way.

This completely new section either will live as a submenu under the <u>EU Funding Guide</u> or a standalone section.

Goals:

- Structure all content (videos, templates, toolkits, presentations, etc.) into themed learning areas
- Allow open and free access with no sign-in required
- Support multiple content formats (video, templates, documents, toolkits, roadmaps, spreadsheets, presentations, pictures) for diverse learning preferences
- Enable resource downloads and theme-based browsing

4.3.7 SEO and Performance Requirements

The redesigned website should be search engine friendly and load efficiently for all users. Specifically, it must:

Follow SEO best practices:

- Use clear page titles, meta descriptions, and proper heading structures
- Include alt text for images and clean, readable URLs
- Be fully indexable by search engines and include an XML sitemap

Be optimized for fast performance:

- Load quickly on both desktop and mobile devices
- Use compressed images and minimize scripts where possible
- Score well on Google PageSpeed Insights and meet modern performance standards

Vendors should outline how they will ensure these requirements are met and tested before launch.

5.0 DESIGN

Visual identity Access Europe

The design of the website should remain consistent with Access Europe's visual identity. Logos, colour schemes, and brand guidelines will be provided.

General style approach

We are aiming for simple interface that is intuitive and easily navigable for the user. We require the style to be:

- Clean and simple
- In compliance with accessibility guidelines

- Featuring distinct calls to action

These considerations should be incorporated in the information architecture and graphic design.

6.0 INFORMATION FOR THE SITE

Access Europe will supply all updated content, including text, images, logos, and partner information. The website must be built on a user-friendly CMS that gives our team full control to update and manage content independently. This includes editing text, images, pages, events, and resources without developer support.

The vendor must provide basic training and user-friendly documentation to ensure our staff can confidently manage the site after launch.

7.0 TIMELINE

We suggest the following timeframe for delivery: a first version by end of July 2025, a testing phase during August and September 2025, and a final launch in October 2025. Vendors are asked to provide a detailed project plan as part of their submission, including key milestones such as UX wireframes, an interactive prototype, beta testing, final deployment, and handover documentation. This plan should align with the proposed timeline while allowing for review, feedback, and revisions.

8.0 PRICE

For the provision of the specified services, we offer a price range of €8,000-13,000 inclusive of VAT.

Note: The Wheel is a registered charity and not VAT registered. All quoted prices must be VAT-inclusive.

9.0 YOUR SUBMISSION

Application deadline is FRIDAY 6 JUNE 2025, 5pm. All applications must be returned to christina@wheel.ie by 5pm. Late submissions will not be considered.

Mock-Ups or demos are welcome along with links and/or testimonials of similar or previous work.

Notes:
- The winning tenderer will work with the team in The Wheel and will receive more information about the site and more detailed specification of requirements in each section as we go through the project.

- As part of your submission, you should include two references and insurance details.

- In relation to costs please note that The Wheel is a registered charity and is therefore not registered for VAT so all prices quoted must be inclusive of VAT where applicable.

- A Tax Clearance Certificate (or your country's equivalent) is required.

- Also note under 'Value for Money' that as a charity The Wheels requirements are extensive but our budgets are prohibitive, so we are interested in proposals that suggest ways to pay for our extensive requirements over a period that our budget allows.

- If you have any questions in relation to this tender, please address them to christina@wheel.ie before THURSDAY 5 JUNE 2025, 3pm.