Invitation to Tender: Professional Congress Organiser (PCO) Services for the BBMRI-ERIC Annual Congress 2028, 2029 and 2030

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1. Introduction

BBMRI-ERIC & ESBB invite qualified Professional Congress Organisers (PCOs) to submit a proposal for the planning, organisation and delivery of its annual congress in 2028, 2029 and 2030.

This document describes the services required, the procedure and timetable for the tender, the content of the proposal, the evaluation criteria and the main contractual conditions. Annex A contains the price schedule that every bidder must complete.

2. About the Contracting Authority and the Congress

BBMRI-ERIC (Biobanking and BioMolecular resources Research Infrastructure – European Research Infrastructure Consortium) is a European research infrastructure that connects biobanks, researchers and stakeholders across Europe to facilitate access to biological samples, data and expertise for health research.

ESBB (European, Middle Eastern and African Society for Biopreservation and Biobanking) is a non-profit scientific society dedicated to biobanking and the preservation of biological resources across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

BBMRI-ERIC & ESBB organise a yearly congress (Europe Biobank Week – "EBW"; https://www.europebiobankweek.eu). The congress brings together scientists, biobank professionals, industry partners and policy stakeholders and combines a scientific programme, an exhibition, sponsorship opportunities, poster sessions and networking and social events. The congress usually takes place mid-May every year.

Congress parameter	Information
Editions covered	2028, 2029, 2030 (one per year)
Expected attendance	700-800 participants per edition
Duration	4 days per edition
Typical format	In-person congress with exhibition and poster area
Destination	To be determined for each edition (see Service 3, Destination Sourcing)
Exhibition	Approx. 25 exhibitors / between 6 and 18 m^2 net exhibition space per booth

3. Subject and Duration of the Contract

3.1 Subject. The contract covers all PCO services listed in Section 4 for three consecutive congress editions (2028, 2029 and 2030).

3.2 Structure. One framework contract will be concluded with the successful bidder, with a separate annual work order for each edition. BBMRI-ERIC may decide not to proceed with the following edition, in particular if the performance of the PCO is unsatisfactory, with a notice period of three months.

3.3 Start of services. The services start on June, 1st 2027 and end after the delivery of the final financial statements of the 2030 congress, expected by August, 31st, 2030.

3.4 Financial model. Bidders must state clearly in their proposal under which financial model they work (for example, contracting and payments on behalf of BBMRI-ERIC, or in the PCO's own name with a service fee) and how the financial risk of each edition is allocated. The price schedule in Annex A must be completed on a management-fee basis; third-party costs (venue, catering, technical equipment, etc.) are passed through at cost and are not part of the fees.

3.5 Lots. The tender is not divided into lots. Proposals for part of the services will not be considered.

4. Scope of Services

The PCO will provide the following services for each congress edition. The wording of the tasks is the minimum standard; bidders may propose additions that add value.

4.1 Account Services

- Assist the client with financial, scientific and organisational planning and the development of the congress budget.
- Monitor expenditure against the approved congress budget, provide regular financial updates and advise the client on any necessary budget adjustments.
- Manage additional exhibitor and sponsorship orders, including revenue tracking and cash flow monitoring.
- Review invoices, coordinate payment processing and manage the accounts receivable.
- Manage contracting with third-party suppliers in accordance with the approved budget and agreed procedures.
- Coordinate reimbursement processes, where applicable.
- Prepare and submit preliminary and final financial statements.

4.2 Project Management and Logistics

General project management

- Establish and formalise the contractual agreement with the client.
- Develop a comprehensive project plan and timeline, defining key milestones, deliverables and responsibilities in collaboration with the client.
- Advise and support in developing strategies to increase attendee participation, sponsorship revenue and exhibition income.
- Arrange preparatory meetings, venue visits & selection and site inspections.

- Provide guidance and coordinate all logistical aspects of congress planning and delivery.
- Serve as the primary liaison between the organisers, suppliers, participants, exhibitors and other stakeholders.

Venue and on-site operations management

- Negotiate venue rates, contractual terms, deposit requirements, payment schedules and cancellation policies.
- Coordinate the allocation of conference facilities, including plenary halls, breakout rooms, offices, exhibition areas and other functional spaces, in line with the congress programme.
- Develop detailed room allocation and venue layout plans.
- Determine and coordinate audiovisual, technical and other equipment requirements.
- Plan and oversee venue logistics in collaboration with relevant authorities and service providers.
- Coordinate room set-up, dismantling and the overall preparation of all event spaces.
- Oversee signage, wayfinding, banners, venue decoration and stage design to ensure a consistent event presentation.
- Plan and coordinate catering services for all congress-related functions, including opening ceremonies, lunches, coffee breaks and business meetings.
- Organise and manage the poster presentation area.
- Prepare a comprehensive staff manual, including operational guidelines, detailed briefings and individual job descriptions.
- Organise and conduct on-site staff briefings to ensure clear communication and task allocation.
- Supervise on-site operations throughout the congress to ensure smooth execution and timely resolution of operational issues.

Supplier and procurement management

- Identify suitable suppliers and service providers based on the congress requirements.
- Prepare and issue requests for quotation (RFQs) and collect competitive offers from suppliers.
- Assess supplier offers based on quality, cost, service scope and suitability.
- Conduct price and contract negotiations and coordinate supplier appointments and agreements.
- Support BBMRI-ERIC's VAT free position when procuring services.
- Establish clear service requirements, communication channels and working procedures for all suppliers.
- Coordinate supplier activities, monitor service delivery and ensure compliance with agreed timelines, quality standards and operational requirements.

4.3 Consultancy Services

Committee meetings. The PCO attends the following committee meetings (online or in person as agreed) and provides the secretariat support described in 4.4 where applicable. Frequencies and durations are binding for pricing purposes.

Committee	Frequency	Duration	Period
Steering Committee	Bi-weekly	20 min	All year round

Committee	Frequency	Duration	Period
Operations Committee	Weekly	45 min	All year round
Marketing and Communications Committee	Monthly	45 min	September to May
Sponsorship and Exhibition (S&E) Committee	Weekly	20–30 min	All year round
Scientific Programme Committee	Weekly	45 min	September to June
Poster Committee	Bi-weekly	30 min	March to May
Networking and Social Events Committee	Monthly	30 min	September to May

App evaluation

- Research and identify suitable app providers based on the defined requirements and project objectives.
- Request and collect proposals and quotations from shortlisted providers.
- Evaluate and compare the submitted offers against predefined criteria.
- Prepare comparable budget overviews, including a detailed cost analysis.
- Develop a recommendation and summarise the key findings to support an informed decision-making process.

Destination sourcing

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of up to four potential congress destinations, considering their suitability for the event's objectives and target audience.
- Evaluate and compare suitable venues based on capacity, layout, technical infrastructure, available amenities, reputation and experience in hosting comparable events.
- Identify and assess accommodation options across different categories and price ranges to meet participants' diverse needs and budgets.
- Evaluate local dining, entertainment, cultural attractions and networking opportunities to enhance the overall attendee experience.
- Prepare a comparative cost analysis covering venue hire, catering, accommodation, transportation and other relevant expenses to ensure budget transparency and cost efficiency.
- Assess destination safety and security, including the local security situation, healthcare infrastructure, emergency response capabilities and accessibility to essential services.
- Consolidate the findings into a comparative evaluation and provide a recommendation to support the selection of the most suitable congress destination.
- Scout and negotiate potential local funding schemes to support the congress (e.g., local tourism boards)

4.4 Exhibition Management

- Provide secretariat support to the S&E Committee (weekly, 30 minutes, 52 weeks per year): set up proper communication channels, schedule meetings, prepare and distribute agendas and materials, take minutes, maintain action logs, follow up on outstanding tasks, coordinate communication between committee members and the PCO team, and update sponsorship

tracking documents. *Attendance at the meeting is priced once, under 4.3; only the secretariat work is priced here.*

- Prepare and manage exhibitor contracts and agreements.
- Develop the exhibition plan, timeline and floor plans.
- Provide a digital platform for exhibitor bookings and service orders.
- Prepare exhibitor manuals, guidelines, application forms and order forms.
- Allocate exhibition stands and coordinate exhibitor requirements.
- Manage freight forwarders, local subcontractors, customs, transport, cleaning and security.
- Coordinate stand construction, additional services, dismantling and removal.
- Provide an Exhibition Service Desk for on-site exhibitor support (on-site staffing is charged separately, see Annex A, Table A3).
- Assist exhibitors before, during and after the congress.
- Manage exhibitor invoicing, payment tracking and outstanding balances.
- Prepare the final financial reconciliation and exhibition report.

4.5 Sponsorship Management

- Provide a digital platform for sponsorship orders.
- Maintain regular communication with sponsors following contract conclusion.
- Coordinate and manage all contracted sponsorship benefits and services.
- Provide a digital platform for managing and tracking sponsor deliverables.
- Oversee sponsor administration, including invoicing and payment monitoring.
- Provide support to sponsors before, during and after the congress.
- Collect and evaluate sponsor feedback to identify areas for improvement.
- Provide regular progress updates and reports to the client.
- Prepare the final financial reconciliation and sponsorship report.

4.6 Registration Management

- Set up and manage the online registration system, including programme selection and bookings.
- Handle participant registrations, rebookings and cancellations.
- Manage participant correspondence and registration-related enquiries.
- Monitor payments, process invoices and manage outstanding fees and payment reminders.
- Provide detailed registration reports and participant statistics.
- Assist with visa procedures, including the issuance of invitation letters.
- Prepare participant documentation and name badges.

4.7 Accommodation Management

- Identify suitable accommodation options across a range of budgets.
- Negotiate room rates, contracts and room blocks with selected hotels.
- Provide an online booking platform for individual and group reservations.
- Manage accommodation requests and bookings for participants, speakers, sponsors, committees, staff, guests and volunteers.
- Monitor room block utilisation and adjust allocations according to demand.
- Issue booking confirmations and manage participant payments.
- Prepare and forward rooming lists to the respective hotels.

4.8 On-site Management

- On-site coordination, management and control of all areas and meeting rooms used at the congress venue, including all logistics.
- On-site coordination, supervision and optimisation of all services provided, and liaison with the suppliers.
- On-site coordination and control of auxiliary personnel (cleaning, cloakroom, security, hostesses, etc.).
- Daily on-site update meetings with all suppliers and the client.

4.9 Speaker Management

- Manage invitations and communication with speakers, chairs and oral presenters.
- Confirm programme assignments and provide relevant participation details.
- Issue poster and presentation guidelines, including speaker ready room procedures.
- Coordinate information and requirements for finalising the scientific programme.
- Manage audiovisual equipment and presentation logistics.
- Prepare and distribute speaker guidelines and disclosure forms.

4.10 Social Event Management

- Identify suitable venues, organise site inspections and negotiate rates and contracts.
- Source, evaluate and contract local suppliers for catering, entertainment and related services.
- Coordinate menu selection and catering arrangements.
- Manage venue decoration and on-site set-up as required.
- Organise ground transportation and local logistics.
- Coordinate and provide local on-site staff.
- Plan and manage social programmes and activities for accompanying persons.

5. Tender Procedure and Timetable

Step	Date
Publication of the invitation to tender	15th of November, 2026
Deadline for clarification questions	20th of December, 2026
Deadline for submission of proposals	15th of January, 2027
Evaluation and shortlisting	30th of January, 2027
Presentations by shortlisted bidders (online or in person)	Until end of February 2027
Notification of the decision	Until end of March 2027
Contract signature	Mid April 2027

Clarification questions must be sent in writing to **thomas.steger@bbmri-eric.eu** by the deadline above. All questions and answers will be shared anonymously with all bidders.

Submission. Proposals must be submitted in English, in electronic form (PDF plus the completed price schedule in Excel format), to **thomas.steger@bbmri-eric.eu** by the deadline above. Late proposals will not be considered.

Validity. Proposals must remain valid for at least 120 days after the submission deadline.

Costs of tendering. All costs of preparing and presenting a proposal are borne by the bidder. BBMRI-ERIC is not obliged to award the contract and may cancel the procedure at any time without liability.

Confidentiality. All tender documents and information provided by BBMRI-ERIC are confidential and may be used only for preparing a proposal.

6. Required Content of the Proposal

Proposals must follow the structure below so that they can be compared.

1. **Company profile:** legal form, registered office, years of experience, size of the organisation, relevant memberships and certifications (for example ISO 20121 or ISO 9001), and any subcontractors proposed.
2. **References:** at least three comparable international scientific or medical congresses organised in the last five years (size, location, scope of services, client contact for verification).
3. **Proposed team:** names, roles and CVs of the project director, project manager, finance lead, registration, exhibition and sponsorship leads, and on-site team, with availability and share of working time. Continuity of the key team over the three editions is expected.
4. **Methodology and project plan:** approach to each of the ten service areas in Section 4, communication and reporting structure, risk management and quality assurance.
5. **Digital tools:** description of the registration, exhibitor and sponsorship booking, accommodation and sponsor-deliverable tracking platforms, including data protection, accessibility and integration with BBMRI-ERIC systems.
6. **Financial management:** financial model (see 3.4), handling of client funds, bank guarantees, insurance and payment processes.
7. **Sustainability and inclusion:** measures to reduce the environmental footprint of the congress and to ensure accessibility.
8. **Data protection:** GDPR compliance, data processing roles and security measures.
9. **Price schedule:** Annex A completed in full.
10. **Declarations:** Annex B signed by an authorised representative.

7. Eligibility and Exclusion

Bidders must be legally established and must not be in bankruptcy, liquidation or similar proceedings. They must have paid taxes and social security contributions and must not have been convicted of professional misconduct, fraud, corruption or similar offences. Bidders must hold, or commit to obtaining before contract signature, professional liability insurance of at least EUR 1,000,000 and general liability insurance of at least EUR 1,000,000. Any conflict of interest must be declared. Consortia are allowed if one lead partner bears overall responsibility. BBMRI-ERIC may request supporting evidence at any time.

8. Evaluation and Award Criteria

The contract will be awarded to the most economically advantageous proposal. Proposals that meet the formal and eligibility requirements will be scored as follows. The weights below are a proposal and can be adapted before publication.

Criterion	Weight
Quality (total)	**60 %**
Experience and references with comparable congresses	15 %
Proposed team and continuity over three editions	15 %
Methodology, project plan and risk management	15 %
Digital tools and technical capability	10 %
Sustainability and data protection	5 %
Price (total)	**40 %**
Total management fee for 2028–2030 (Annex A, Table A1)	30 %
Unit rates for additional services (Annex A, Tables A2 and A3)	10 %

Price scores are calculated proportionally: the lowest compliant price receives the full score and other prices are scored in inverse proportion. BBMRI-ERIC may invite the highest-ranked bidders to a presentation and to clarify or improve their proposal before the final decision. Abnormally low offers may be rejected after the bidder has been given the opportunity to explain them.

9. Main Contractual Conditions

- **Fees:** fixed for the whole contract period, in EUR, excluding VAT, as BBMRI is VAT exempt. Annual indexation, if any, must be proposed in the price schedule and is capped at 3%.
- **Payment:** the management fee for each edition is invoiced in instalments and shall be linked to the cash-in from sponsors, participants and exhibitors.
- **Third-party costs:** only incurred with prior written approval of BBMRI-ERIC within the approved budget and passed on without mark-up unless otherwise agreed in the proposal.
- **Contracts with venues and suppliers:** concluded only with the prior written approval of BBMRI-ERIC. Cancellation and force majeure clauses must protect BBMRI-ERIC.
- **Ownership of results:** the registration, exhibitor, sponsor and participant data, the congress name, brand and materials remain the property of BBMRI-ERIC and must be handed over at the end of each edition and of the contract.
- **Data protection and confidentiality:** a data processing agreement in line with the GDPR will be part of the contract.
- **Reporting:** weekly progress and financial reports, and a final report within 90 days after each congress.

- **Liability and insurance:** the PCO is liable for damages caused by its own acts and omissions and those of its subcontractors, and maintains the insurance cover stated in Section 7 throughout the contract.
- **Termination:** by BBMRI-ERIC for convenience with 12 months' notice, and by either party for material breach. The consequences for committed costs will be defined in the contract.
- **Applicable law and jurisdiction:** This Agreement, and any dispute or claim arising out of or in connection with it, shall be governed by, and construed in accordance with, the laws of Austria. Each Party irrevocably agrees that the courts of Austria shall have exclusive jurisdiction to settle any dispute or claim arising out of or in connection with this Agreement, with the designated court being the Regional Court for Civil Matters Graz.

Annex A. Price Schedule

All prices in EUR, excluding VAT. Bidders must fill in every cell. Empty cells will be interpreted as "included in other prices" and cannot be charged later.

Table A1. Management fee per service area and edition

No.	Service area	Pricing unit proposed by bidder	Fee 2028	Fee 2029	Fee 2030	Total 2028–2030
1	Account Services					
2	Project Management and Logistics					
3a	Consultancy: committee meetings (see Table A1.1)	Lump sum acc. to the frequency				
3b	Consultancy: app evaluation	lump sum				
3c	Consultancy: destination sourcing (up to four destinations)	lump sum per edition				
4	Exhibition Management (incl. S&E Committee secretariat)					
5	Sponsorship Management					
6	Registration Management	per registered participant / lump sum				

No.	Service area	Pricing unit proposed by bidder	Fee 2028	Fee 2029	Fee 2030	Total 2028–2030
7	Accommodation Management	per room night / lump sum				
8	On-site Management	per day / lump sum				
9	Speaker Management					
10	Social Event Management					
	Total management fee					

Table A1.1. Committee meetings

Committee	Frequency and duration	Price per meeting	Meetings per year	Annual total
Steering Committee	Weekly, 20-30 min, all year			
Operations Committee	Weekly, 30-45 min, all year			
Marketing and Communications	Monthly, 45 min, Sept–May			
S&E Committee	Weekly, 20–30 min, all year			
Scientific Programme Committee	Weekly, 45 min, Sept–June			
Poster Committee	Bi-weekly, 30 min, March–May			
Networking and Social Events	Monthly, 30 min, Sept–May			
Total				

Table A2. Daily rates for additional PCO staff (outside the services above)

Role	Rate per day (8 h)	Rate per hour
Project director		
Project manager		
Finance / accounting officer		
Registration, exhibition or sponsorship officer		

Role	Rate per day (8 h)	Rate per hour
Assistant / coordinator		

Table A3. On-site staff (for additional services not covered under table A1, section 8)

Role	Rate per day	Rate per half day
On-site team leader		
Exhibition Service Desk staff		
Registration desk staff		
Hostess / auxiliary staff		

Table A4. Other conditions of the price offer

Item	Bidder's answer
Proposed annual indexation (max. 3%)	
Commission on hotel bookings, if any, and who receives it	
Fees charged to participants, exhibitors or sponsors, if any	
Payment terms requested	
Items not included in the fees above	

Annex B. Declarations and Checklist

The undersigned, authorised to represent the bidder, declares that:

- the bidder has read and accepts the conditions of this invitation to tender;
- the bidder meets the eligibility requirements in Section 7 and is not in a situation of exclusion or conflict of interest;
- the information in the proposal is complete and correct and the price offer is valid for the period stated in Section 5;
- the bidder will comply with applicable data protection law when processing personal data.

Name: _____ Function: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Submission checklist: company profile; three references; team and CVs; methodology and project plan; digital tools description; financial model; sustainability and data protection statements; completed Annex A (PDF and Excel); signed Annex B; proof of insurance.