Invisible Buildings: Terms of reference for a consultant to deliver identification, classification and reuse potential database for affordable housing in Slovenia

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

About Invisible Buildings:

Invisible Buildings is an EUKI-funded project aiming to develop and test methodologies for identifying, assessing, and activating vacant, obsolete, and underutilised buildings for affordable housing and sustainable urban regeneration. The project combines methodological development, stakeholder engagement, and pilot implementation in three countries (Slovenia, Croatia, and Greece).

This project is part of the European Climate Initiative (EUKI). EUKI is a project financing instrument by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Climate Action, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMUKN). The EUKI call for project ideas is implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. It is the overarching goal of the EUKI to foster climate cooperation within the European Union (EU) in order to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

About Slovenian pilot:

In Slovenia, increasing housing affordability pressures coexist with indications that a significant share of the existing housing stock may be vacant, underutilised, or only partially used. However, there is poor data accessibility as well as currently no agreed methodology, operational definition, or comprehensive evidence base that would allow public authorities to systematically identify and assess such properties.

The Slovenian pilot focuses on developing and testing a practical methodology for identifying and assessing vacant and underutilised residential buildings and housing units in Ljubljana. The pilot aims to support future policy development, municipal action, and investment planning related to affordable housing.

About the task:

This task aims to contribute to the development of a data-driven and policy-relevant approach for:

- identifying vacant and underutilised residential buildings and housing units;
- developing a Slovenian typology of housing vacancy and underutilisation;
- assessing reuse and activation potential;
- identifying barriers and opportunities for housing activation;
- supporting future pilot interventions and policy development.

This task will not treat vacancy merely as a physical condition, but as the outcome of interacting legal, economic, demographic, governance, ownership, technical and spatial factors. At the outset of the project, there is no guarantee that sufficient data will be available, accessible, or legally usable to reliably identify vacant or underutilised residential properties at the desired level of spatial detail.

A key purpose of the task here is therefore not only to identify and assess vacant housing where possible, but also to evaluate the feasibility of doing so within the Slovenian context. This includes assessing data availability, accessibility, quality, legal constraints, methodological limitations, and the reliability of different proxy indicators of vacancy and underutilisation. This task is expected to generate evidence on what can realistically be identified using currently available data, what uncertainties remain, and what additional

institutional, legal, technical, or data-related conditions would be required to establish a more robust vacancy monitoring system in the future.

Consequently, the success of the task will not be measured solely by the number of vacant properties identified, but also by the quality and transparency of the methodology developed, the understanding of data limitations, and the recommendations provided for improving future vacancy identification and activation efforts.

2. OBJECTIVES

Primary Objective

To develop and apply a methodology for identifying, classifying and assessing vacant and underutilised residential buildings and housing units within the selected pilot area in Ljubljana, and to determine their potential contribution to affordable housing provision.

Specific Objectives

The consultant shall:

1. Review available data sources and develop a methodology for identifying vacancy and underutilisation.
2. Develop a Slovenian classification framework for vacant and underutilised residential properties.
3. Identify and map potential vacant and underutilised residential properties within the pilot area.
4. Create a GDPR-compliant geo-referenced database and analytical framework.
5. Classify identified properties according to vacancy confidence levels and activation potential.
6. Develop a prioritisation framework for identifying high-potential cases.
7. Conduct feasibility assessments for selected priority cases.
8. Produce recommendations for future municipal and national policy development.

3. SCOPE OF WORK

The consultant will implement a structured analytical process aimed at identifying, classifying, and assessing vacant and underutilised buildings for their potential conversion into affordable housing. The work will be carried out through three main stages, combining data collection, analysis, and synthesis into actionable outputs.

Stage 1: Data Collection & Property Identification

The consultant will be responsible for developing and applying a methodology for identifying and documenting vacant or underutilised residential buildings and housing units within the defined pilot area.
As part of this stage, the consultant shall:

- review available data sources and assess their accessibility, reliability and limitations;
- assess legal and GDPR-related constraints affecting data use;
- propose a methodology for identifying vacancy and underutilisation using available data;
- develop a vacancy and underutilisation typology appropriate to the Slovenian context;
- define confidence levels and criteria for assessing vacancy;
- systematically identify and document potentially vacant or underutilised properties;
- collect and compile data from relevant sources, including public datasets, municipal records, utility data (where accessible), and other relevant information channels.

The methodology should, where possible, combine multiple independent indicators rather than relying on a single source of information. For each identified property, the consultant is expected to document key characteristics including:

- location,
- ownership information (where available),
- building typology,

- physical condition,
- current use or occupancy status,
- relevant planning or regulatory constraints.

The process should include validation of findings through stakeholder engagement and, where feasible, targeted field verification. All collected and validated information shall be structured into a GDPR-compliant geo-referenced database, forming the foundation for subsequent analysis.
As an important outcome of this stage, the consultant shall also document data gaps, methodological limitations, and recommendations for improving future vacancy monitoring systems.

Deliverable: Property Database & Methodology Report

Stage 2: Classification & Feasibility Analysis

Building on the collected data, the consultant shall assess identified properties and classify them according to both vacancy characteristics and reuse potential. The classification framework should distinguish, where feasible, between:

- confirmed or highly probable vacancy,
- potential vacancy,
- temporary vacancy,
- underutilisation,
- secondary use,
- non-viable cases.

The consultant shall further classify properties according to:

- technical condition,
- ownership complexity,
- legal constraints,
- housing conversion potential,
- level of intervention required.

The consultant should distinguish between different levels of intervention, including:

- light renovation,
- medium reconstruction,
- major reconstruction or redevelopment,
- non-viable or unsuitable cases.

Based on this analysis, the consultant shall develop an evidence-based prioritisation framework and identify a subset of high-potential properties for further assessment.
For these selected cases, feasibility assessments shall be conducted, taking into account:

- technical considerations,
- legal and ownership conditions,
- planning and regulatory requirements,
- indicative financial considerations,
- suitability for affordable housing purposes.

The depth of analysis should be proportionate to available data and the overall scope of the assignment, while ensuring that outputs remain actionable and policy-relevant.
Deliverable: Feasibility Report & Priority Property List

Stage 3: Synthesis and Reporting

In the final stage, the consultant shall consolidate findings into a coherent set of outputs. This shall include:

- finalisation of the geo-referenced database;
- synthesis of analytical results;
- assessment of the feasibility and limitations of vacancy identification in the Slovenian context;
- recommendations for improving future data collection and monitoring;

- recommendations for municipal and national policy development;
- recommendations for future activation of vacant and underutilised housing stock;
- recommendations for replication of the methodology in other Slovenian municipalities.

The final report should clearly present:

- the methodology used;
- data sources and limitations;
- key findings;
- prioritisation logic;
- identified high-potential cases;
- practical recommendations for both technical and policy-oriented stakeholders.

The report should explicitly distinguish between findings that are supported by available evidence and areas where additional data or institutional arrangements would be required.

Deliverable: Final Report

Operational scope and Target Parameters

The assignment will be carried out within a clearly defined geographic, property, and ownership scope, as outlined below.

Geographic Focus

The assignment shall focus on a selected pilot area in Ljubljana to be confirmed by the contracting authority. Analysis should be conducted at the highest feasible spatial resolution while respecting GDPR requirements.

Potential spatial units include:

- individual buildings;
- building blocks;
- municipal planning units (EUP);
- statistical areas;
- other appropriate aggregation levels.

Property Scope

Priority should be given to:

- residential buildings;
- mixed-use buildings with residential conversion potential;
- buildings capable of delivering multiple housing units;
- underutilised housing stock.

Ownership Scope

The primary focus shall be on privately owned properties. Publicly owned properties may be considered where relevant and where data is available.

4. TECHNICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The consultant shall propose a transparent, evidence-based and replicable methodology for identifying, classifying and assessing vacant and underutilised residential buildings and housing units within the selected pilot area.

The methodology should combine quantitative and qualitative approaches and should explicitly document assumptions, limitations, uncertainties and data gaps encountered during implementation.

Data Environment

The analysis should be based on reliable and verifiable data sources. A key objective of the assignment is to assess the feasibility of identifying vacant and underutilised housing within the Slovenian context using currently available data.

The consultant shall assess the availability, quality, accessibility and suitability of relevant datasets, including where possible:

National datasets

- Real Estate Register (REN);
- Building Cadastre;
- Land Cadastre;
- Address Register;
- Land Registry;
- Population and household statistics available through the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SURS);
- Housing stock and census data;
- Building permits and renovation records;
- Energy performance certificate data, where available.

Municipal datasets

- Municipal property records;
- Municipal spatial planning datasets;
- Detailed spatial planning units (EUP);
- Land use and zoning information;
- Relevant housing and urban development datasets.

Utility and proxy datasets

Subject to availability and legal accessibility:

- electricity consumption data;
- water consumption data;
- district heating consumption data;
- waste collection data;
- other relevant proxy indicators of occupancy or vacancy.

The consultant is not expected to obtain unrestricted access to all datasets. Where datasets are unavailable or inaccessible, the consultant shall document:

- attempted access routes;
- identified barriers;
- implications for the methodology;
- potential alternative indicators.

The methodology should, where feasible, combine multiple independent indicators rather than relying on a single source of information.

Vacancy and Underutilisation Methodology

The consultant shall propose a methodology for distinguishing between different forms of housing non-use and underuse. Where feasible, the methodology should differentiate between:

- confirmed vacant properties;
- highly probable vacant properties;
- potentially vacant properties;
- temporarily vacant properties;

- seasonal or secondary-use properties;
- underutilised housing stock;
- non-residential buildings with housing conversion potential.

The consultant shall clearly explain:

- indicator selection;
- weighting logic;
- confidence levels;
- limitations and uncertainties.

Particular attention should be given to the distinction between statistical vacancy and properties that may realistically be activated for affordable housing purposes.

Legal and Planning Context

The consultant is expected to consider relevant national and local planning frameworks and regulatory conditions affecting building reuse and conversion. This may include:

- zoning regulations;
- heritage protection requirements;
- planning restrictions;
- building regulations;
- housing legislation;
- ownership-related constraints;
- other legal factors affecting reuse potential.

The objective is not to undertake a detailed legal analysis of every identified property but to identify key regulatory factors influencing potential activation.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement should form an integral part of the methodology, particularly for:

- methodology validation;
- data validation;
- interpretation of results;
- contextual understanding of vacancy drivers and barriers.

Relevant stakeholders may include:

- Municipality of Ljubljana;
- Ministry for a Solidarity-Based Future;
- Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SURS);
- GURS;
- utility providers;
- housing organisations;
- housing funds;
- planning authorities;
- research organisations;
- property management organisations;
- other relevant actors.

The consultant should participate in stakeholder workshops organised by the contracting authority where requested.

Assessment Criteria

Properties should be evaluated using a multi-criteria assessment framework. The assessment should include, where possible:

Vacancy-related criteria

- confidence level of vacancy assessment;
- estimated duration of vacancy;
- evidence supporting vacancy identification.

Building-related criteria

- building condition;
- building typology;
- size and potential housing capacity;
- required level of intervention.

Ownership and legal criteria

- ownership clarity;
- ownership complexity;
- legal constraints;
- planning and regulatory conditions.

Spatial criteria

- location quality;
- accessibility;
- public transport connectivity;
- access to infrastructure and services.

Housing activation criteria

- potential for affordable housing conversion;
- implementation complexity;
- indicative feasibility;
- potential social impact.

The consultant shall clearly explain how these criteria are applied within the prioritisation framework.

5. DURATION AND TIMELINE

The assignment is expected to be implemented between August 2026 and December 2026. The consultant shall provide a detailed work plan and timeline as part of the technical proposal. The timeline should include sufficient flexibility to accommodate potential delays related to data accessibility, permissions, GDPR compliance requirements, and stakeholder consultations.
The assignment shall be structured into three implementation stages.

Stage 1: Data Collection, Methodology Development & Property Identification

Indicative duration: August – October 2026
This stage focuses on establishing the methodological and analytical foundation for the assignment.
Key activities include:

- review and assessment of available datasets;
- assessment of data accessibility, quality and limitations;
- development of the vacancy and underutilisation identification methodology;
- development of the Slovenian vacancy typology and classification framework;
- stakeholder consultations relevant to methodology validation;
- collection, processing and validation of available data;
- creation of the geo-referenced database.

A specific objective of this stage is to assess the feasibility of identifying vacant and underutilised housing within the Slovenian context and to document any methodological or data-related constraints encountered.
Deliverable Property Database & Methodology Report (Excel).

Stage 2: Classification, Prioritisation & Feasibility Analysis

Indicative duration: November – December 2026

Building on the outputs of Stage 1, the consultant shall classify identified properties, assess their reuse potential, and identify priority cases for further assessment.

Key activities include:

- classification of identified properties according to vacancy confidence levels;
- classification according to reuse and housing activation potential;
- development of prioritisation criteria;
- preliminary feasibility screening.

Deliverable Feasibility Report & Priority List.

Stage 3: Synthesis, Recommendations & Reporting

Indicative duration: Januar – Februar 2027

The final stage focuses on consolidating findings, documenting lessons learned, and preparing outputs for policy and practical application.

Key activities include:

- finalisation of analytical outputs;
- synthesis of findings;
- identification of methodological lessons and limitations;
- preparation of policy and implementation recommendations;
- preparation of replication recommendations for other Slovenian municipalities;
- final stakeholder validation.

Deliverable

Final Report.

6. Expected value of the contract

The maximum value of the contract is EUR 15 000.

7. REPORTING AND COORDINATION

The consultant shall work under the supervision of the Innovation and Development Institute of the University of Ljubljana (IRI UL), which acts as the contracting authority and coordinator of the Slovenian pilot.

The consultant is expected to maintain regular communication with the contracting authority and ensure that methodological decisions, emerging risks, and key findings are discussed throughout the implementation period.

Coordination Meetings

The consultant shall participate in:

Inception Meeting

Held at the beginning of the assignment to:

- confirm objectives;
- agree on methodology development process;
- confirm available datasets;
- agree on reporting procedures;
- review timeline and milestones.

Monthly Coordination Meetings

The consultant shall participate in regular coordination meetings (approximately once per month) with the contracting authority to:

- review progress;
- discuss challenges and risks;
- validate methodological decisions;
- agree on next steps.

Milestone Review Meetings

The consultant shall present findings and deliverables at the completion of each project stage. These meetings shall serve as validation points for:

- methodology development;
- analytical outputs;
- prioritisation logic;
- recommendations.

Stakeholder Workshops

The consultant shall participate in stakeholder workshops organised by the contracting authority, where requested. The consultant may be asked to:

- present interim findings;
- explain methodological choices;
- support discussion and validation of results;
- incorporate stakeholder feedback into the analytical process.

Progress Reporting

The consultant shall provide short written progress updates at least once per month. These updates should include:

- activities completed;
- activities planned;
- data obtained and analysed;
- identified risks or constraints;
- proposed mitigation measures;
- support required from the contracting authority.

Risk Escalation

Given the exploratory nature of the assignment, the consultant shall promptly inform the contracting authority of any significant risks affecting:

- data accessibility;
- GDPR compliance;
- methodological feasibility;
- timeline or deliverables.

Where significant constraints emerge, the consultant shall propose alternative approaches and clearly document their implications for the quality and reliability of the results.

Final Presentation

Upon completion of the assignment, the consultant shall present the final methodology, findings, prioritisation framework, and recommendations to the contracting authority and relevant stakeholders.

8. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

I. Relevant Experience

Applicants should demonstrate proven experience in housing, urban development, spatial planning, or real estate analysis, with a strong emphasis on analytical and data-driven work. Experience in vacancy mapping, adaptive reuse, or comparable assignments will be considered particularly relevant.

In addition, applicants should show a solid capacity for data collection, validation, and structuring, as well as experience working with public authorities, municipalities, or within international project environments.

Additional assets include:

- experience in Central and Eastern European contexts
- familiarity with regulatory and planning frameworks related to building reuse

II. Technical Proposal

The technical proposal should demonstrate a clear understanding of the assignment and its objectives, and present a coherent and well-structured approach to implementation.

In particular, the proposal is expected to outline:

- the proposed methodology, including approaches to data collection, validation, classification, and feasibility assessment
- the tools and systems to be used (e.g. databases, analytical tools)
- the approach to stakeholder engagement and data verification
- identification of potential risks and proposed mitigation measures

The proposal should also include a description of the team composition, outlining roles, and responsibilities.

III. Financial Proposal

The financial proposal should present a transparent and well-justified budget, aligned with the proposed methodology and scope of work.

It should include a breakdown of costs by task and/or project stage, as well as key assumptions related to the implementation of the assignment, including data collection activities and any travel or fieldwork where applicable. The total cost of the assignment should be clearly indicated.

IV. Deliverables and Timeline Alignment

Applicants are expected to confirm their capacity to deliver all required outputs and to propose an indicative timeline aligned with the scope and complexity of the assignment.

9. SUBMISSION PROCESS AND GUIDELINES

We invite proposals from companies/individual consultants with the experience and skills described above. Please send the following to Ana Tisov at ana.tisov@iri.uni-lj.si by 31.07.2026.

Proposal contents:

- *For companies* - Background/Administrative information including the name of applicant, correspondence address, telephone number and e-mail address, list of the proposed consultants with detailed CVs for the consulting companies;
  For individual consultants - a Cover letter and CV.
- Technical proposal with description of the consultant's approach and methodology, tools to be used, and tentative work plan.
- Financial proposal.

Selection process and criteria

All proposals will be evaluated systematically, on a rolling basis, based on the following key criteria. The purpose of this section is to identify suppliers with the interest, capabilities, and financial stability to supply consulting services, as defined in this ToR.

Following is a prioritized list of our key evaluation criteria:

- Profile, experience and competencies of the appointed contractor
- Quality of the methodological proposal: aspects that will help us to assess their suitability for that, which is proposed in the ToR, quality of the proposal, feasibility, etc.
- Suitability of the financial proposal: within the financial possibilities of the project

Final Selection

Contractor(s) who have demonstrated their capacity to meet our needs will be contacted via phone and/or email to be notified of their selection to move forward in the selection's process. Only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.