Berghof Foundation:  
Website development brief/call for proposals

About us

The Berghof Foundation is an independent, non-governmental and non-profit organisation supporting people in conflict in their efforts to achieve sustainable peace through conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

Based in Berlin, the foundation is run by a diverse team of more than 100 professionals, collaborating on the ground with partners in selected regions around the world. It is supervised by a board of trustees. To fund its work, the foundation relies on the financial support of numerous public and private donors.

What makes us different?

We bring people in conflict together. We enable and support learning processes that inspire the development of new perspectives, relationships and behaviour, thus opening possibilities for addressing conflict and finding ways of living together peacefully.

The Berghof Foundation works with conflict parties, as well as governmental agencies and other likeminded partners. We rely on a broad range of tools, including mediation and dialogue facilitation as well as capacity building measures such as training and peace education. In addition, we conduct research to ground our work in a solid understanding both of the conflict contexts and conflict transformation methods.

Our current website

- **Website URL:** [https://www.berghof-foundation.org](https://www.berghof-foundation.org)
- **Average monthly visits / sessions:** 6,775 users / 10,148 sessions
- **Year built:** 2014
- **Current CMS:** Typo3 8.7.3
- **How we drive traffic to the website:** Presence on several social media channels, inbound links from supporters and partners, (non-paid) search engine results on relevant topics, word-of-mouth recommendations of our content, media coverage, academic references.

What we like on our current site

In terms of content, we will migrate many of the resources (with some modifications), such as publications, project descriptions, news articles, staff biographies, etc to the new site. In terms of functionality and structure, the current site underdelivers for us and frustrates visitors – we are looking for a fresh start. Read on to see why...
Issues with our current site

We’ve done quite a bit of analysis, including user surveys, analytics deep dives, and a content audit. The most important among many issues with the current site are:

- It contains much valuable content, but it’s difficult to navigate and access
- Siloed content stretching up to five tiers deep; entries live in one place rather than being approached via multiple vectors – there are many dead ends.
- Site structure no longer matches our work (and was based on old internal organisational structure – nonsensical to external visitors)
- Top navigation too limited
- CMS’s approach to multilinguality is poor; site implies multiple languages are available but rarely has the content – new approach needed
- Poor UX/usability, particularly in being able to share links from key resources such as our publications
- Site looks dated at this stage (an example is the tendency toward long lists of gray text, rather than more current card approaches to displaying content)
- CMS’s approach to taxonomy and cross-referencing entries is poor, denying us opportunity to increase user engagement through ‘recommendations/related content’
- Site currently lacks content emphasising/explaining our approach, our terminology, ways to support us – we need this but prefer to implement it in the new site as the current site is so restrictive/rigid
- High bounce rates, low returning visitor rates, etc indicate fundamental change is urgent.

Additionally, content creation is laborious owing to the CMS’s obtuse approach and rigid structure, the need to build basic page structures from scratch with each new entry, and the various imposed restrictions of the site’s current design. Typo3 has not improved its back end UX in many years, and new content editors rarely understand its overwrought content modelling approach.

Why now?

There are multiple reasons to commence the rebuild now. The current site is showing its age, and failing us in terms of user engagement and retention. A Communications team has been built up over the past two years, including the hiring of a Digital Content Manager, which increases capacity to drive a site overhaul at this time. Budget has been allocated during 2020 to carry out the website rebuild. More broadly, the Berghof Foundation underwent a restructuring from 2018-2019, and we’d like the new site to convey our new ways of working and offerings. Ultimately, replacing our dated site will enable us to better show our activities, expertise, and impact in a range of fields and settings.

Aims of the new website – what does success look like?

We want visitors to find an engaging, well-designed website that makes our rich content resources simpler to find and share. In part, we see this happening via a taxonomy-driven
back-end where entries are categorised in multiple ways, allowing us to present users with resources that relate topically to what they’re already viewing on the front end.

We want to add content that clearly (and succinctly) describes the ways our organisation works, how it contributes to creating sustainable peace, and how people can engage with us in this work (whether through our project activities, joining our trainings, clicktivism, donating, etc). The current site does not present the ‘how’ and ‘what’ of our work well, leading to a rather atomised/siloed presentation of projects that mimics our old internal team structure (which we know is irrelevant to our visitors).

We want to make it easier for users to find the content they seek. Beyond the typical top-level nav and search engine approach, we will bring in landing pages with filters (drawing on the taxonomised entries in the back end), allowing users to drill down to the most relevant results based on their own needs and interests.

We will adopt more of a news approach, using news articles to show updates and highlight our staff’s expertise. We’ll use more multimedia and social media in our news to increase user engagement and outreach. News feeds will add dynamism that the current site lacks.

We want to rationalise the approach to multiple languages across the site, making English the primary language but using several others where the content warrants it. There is no intention of running a fully translated site in five or more languages, for we simply do not have the internal capacity for this; but if an article should be available in Arabic or German in addition to English, we can do that. Using taxonomy and filters, we can help visitors see the content that is available in a given language.

In numerical terms, we expect the new site to reverse our negative trends in analytics data (sessions, sessions per user, page views, pages per session, and average session duration are all dropping currently). We know this has much to do with the current site’s silos and poor UX. An improved website can also support our efforts to diversify our funding base by boosting our ability to make appeals around the site.

We’d also like to maintain one of our current site’s few strong points – it has rarely suffered any outages or downtime.

From a content creator perspective, the site rebuild should enable a simplified and modern block-based editorial approach, where the predetermined styles and elements are added simply by choosing them from a menu, and edits are done through a rich text editor that doesn’t prevent such basics as embedding a video or a Tweet. It’s basic, but our current site imposes all sorts of restrictions on easy editing, and demands far too much in terms of remembering which disparate plug-ins, databases, and controls are responsible for making simple amendments and additions. That is wasted effort for our small team, when we could be creating useful content!

**Website content and functionality**

The Berghof Foundation Communications team will coordinate new content for the website, so that messaging aligns with our broader shift in communications. Some of the organic build-up of information on the current site over its many years in service will be streamlined to the
essentials during this rebuild (this is not a simple ‘re-skinning’ of the existing site), while some completely new sections will also be written.

A sitemap and taxonomy have already been developed.

In terms of migrated content, we plan to use a ‘Minimum Viable Product’ (MVP) approach. To bring the launch date forward, we will prioritise certain content until the MVP threshold is reached, migrating the remaining content after the launch.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of content types we anticipate for the website. Each content type will have a spec (drawn up by Berghof’s Digital Content Manager) defining its fields, relationships, and special uses scenarios. These specs are, of course, open to further discussion with the developers.

- **About article**: a sort of generic article, typically but not exclusively used in the About section. They can be one-off (like an impressum page), or sets of ‘about articles’ can be grouped and ordered in navigation to create sections and sub-sections (for instance, a new section detailing the Berghof Approach could actually be a set of ‘about articles’). ‘About articles’ tend to be more ‘evergreen’ and static, and usually go without a date on the front end. Each entry displays as a page with a unique URL (e.g., /about/governance or /approach/knowledge_generation).

- **News article**: flexible format capable of handling all news content, from blog posts to press releases to features to interviews and multimedia content. Through taxonomisation, entries can be sent to display as related content in other contexts. Each news article gets a page with a unique URL. All entries ‘archive’ in a sortable paginated list.

- **Project article**: standard format to convey core information about our projects. Site-wide taxonomy applied, and each gets a unique URL. Possible to add status (e.g., current, completed).

- **Publication**: each publication will be a separate entry, with both the site-wide taxonomy and a secondary ‘type’ taxonomy applied (e.g., report, curriculum, etc). A publication will display as a page with a unique URL and hold at least one asset (typically a PDF, but could also have supporting assets associated with it).

- **Collection**: a sort of meta-publication concept, allowing us to create a curated set of publications. The Berghof Handbook is a great example, where we wish to have both its individual standalone articles as publications, but also the ability to show that all of those belong to a greater whole. Collections would also have a unique page/URL, with the back-end ability to select and sort existing ‘publication’ entries into the ‘collection’ entry being created.

- **Staff bio**: each staff member gets a biography, creating a unique page/URL. Additional fields in select staff members’ bios can feed a new ‘Find an expert’ feature.

- **Opportunity**: covers tenders, consultancies, and possibly public consultations. HR team has a third-party recruitment platform which will handle Berghof’s own jobs/internships. Creates a unique page/URL that can be shared, with assets attached.

- **Appeal**: possible format to cover calls to action and focused fundraising appeals. Would live in Impact or Donate sections depending on purpose.

- **Impact article**: similar to ‘news articles’, but specifically focused on conveying impact. We may decide this can be a sub-set of ‘news’ in consultation with the developers.

- **Training/workshop/event**: a distinct content type for our course/training offerings seems like a good idea, and might be paired with events, allowing us to build in
registration details and show available courses in an appropriate landing/sub-landing page.

- **Testimonials**: also related to impact, these are supportive quotes from beneficiaries/partners about Berghof. Displayed typically as banners.
- **Contact form**: a special content type, enabling us to create an interactive form where users can contact us; aim would be to make it conditional so that we can ‘route’ queries to the appropriate recipient rather than simply offering an ‘info@’ approach.
- **Driver**: this is a behind-the-scenes content type that lets us creating the contents of many of the cards and banners that make up landing pages. Typically just a few fields are involved: title, image, blurb, link, etc.
- **Controller**: another behind-the-scenes content type used to compile and order all the contents of a particular landing page. An example would be that it might ‘control’ the 12+ drivers that make up the ‘About Us’ landing page, allowing us to select which drivers are bigger or smaller, which order they appear in, etc.

**Non-navigable content and important behind-the-scenes elements**

This term covers elements that are not really pages of their own (and thus not able to be directly linked to from a menu), but rather important connectors and tools that bind the site together.

- **Search**: Technically there is a page for search, but our search engine will be directly accessed via the top navigation. (Most users will only get to /search/results by running a search from the top menu itself, rather than visiting /search on its own).
  - Note: Several landing pages will offer a search/filter bar that searches only among the limited set of entries in that sub-section (e.g., The search/filter bar in ‘Our projects’ would only display results from the Project Article content type). Aromatico.de is one example of multi-vector filtering; Avocadostore is another. Isotope is also a popular approach to sorting/filtering.
- **RSS feeds**: These should be available for content such as ‘Tenders’, ‘Events’, ‘News’ and possibly ‘Publications’.
- **Driver**: This is a very important concept – a channel/content type of its own, used to make what are effectively ‘advertisements’ that can be displayed in pre-set slots around the website. They often display in the form of a card, too – so that we can make more eye-catching links to related content, or resources we wish to highlight. A few examples of drivers are: a small ‘donate’ banner alongside all news articles, a plug for the Annual Report on pages in the About section, a ‘sign up for our newsletter’ element, or a banner promoting our sister site Frieden-fragen.de on some pages. Similarly, landing pages use drivers to direct people toward more information.
- **Dynamic feeds**: Almost a hybrid of the RSS feeds and the driver, the dynamic feed concept is basically a display for contextual ‘calls’ for specified content. An example would be ‘Related news’, where a small block of space in a template is reserved for making a call to the database to retrieve news articles that relate to the topic/place being displayed on a particular page. We’ll build a variety of dynamic feeds (news, publications, etc) and in most cases they’ll display as blocks of cards. These rely heavily on taxonomising all the entries, so we can call items fitting the proper parameters for a given setting. These are very good for making a website ‘stickier’ – in ecommerce they’re sometimes called ‘suggestion engines’ showing you similar content (‘You may also like...’).
• **Meta data:** Worth mentioning here just to show the thinking: entries in the CMS will have various fields that are not intended to be displayed on the site’s front end, but which are important to the functioning of the website. These include the taxonomy terms for the article, SEO descriptions that search engine bots seek out, Open Graph (OG) tags used to make previews for sharing on social media platforms.

• **Redirects:** It’s a bit of a stretch to call them content, but we will put quite a few redirect rules in place so that URLs from the old site are properly rerouted to their equivalent on the new site. At least for primary navigation and anything we consider mission-critical, this will minimise the disruption of switching sites (the current site has over-long URLs in part due to the CMS and the influence it had on the structure). We may also attempt redirects with publication file paths, so existing hotlinks to our publications don’t break.

**Images**

You can view our current site to see some of the images we have. Confidentiality of participants is sometimes an issue with our photography, but our communications team will control for that. We can also draw on Creative Commons and public domain images, as well as submissions from our staff and project partners. Though resources are limited, in specific scenarios we could also approach designers, photographers or illustrators to create custom works. We definitely need to attribute/credit our images, and given the responsive nature of the site some on-the-fly resizing may be necessary.

**Target audience**

In no particular order, here is an overview of some of our core audience groups, what they seek, and what we intend for our website to provide for them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>What they seek from us</th>
<th>What can we provide them?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Journalists</strong></td>
<td>See an easy-to-consult introduction to our topics, paths to research findings, and ideas for their stories</td>
<td>Press releases about new reports/research findings</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Find experts to be background sources or interviewees</td>
<td>Executive summaries of reports</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Find interesting advocacy calls or policy positions that complement/fill out the context around ongoing events</td>
<td>Clear online presentation of key terminology from our field, with links to ‘deeper’ content</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analysis/opinion on current events and conflicts</td>
<td>Resource showcasing our spokespersons and their topics of expertise, simple means to contact us to arrange an interview</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Impact stories that give concrete examples of the efficacy of Berghof approach (these can’t be buried in PDFs)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quotes and analysis from our experts for use in stories</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Event listings (invitations to panel events)</td>
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<td>Twitter feed (and we might follow them)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Professional peaceniks</strong></td>
<td>See quick/concise information about our projects and activities</td>
<td>News content backed up by project descriptions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Videos that show the human dimension (e.g., the <a href="#">Somalia Shirarka video</a>) or summarise our</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*By Ben Molesworth, 27 March 2020*
| **Berghof by name, and working in very related fields or at peer organisations** | An occasional uplifting story of something going well in the world because of this work  
Research reports, when it relates to their particular specialisation/topic  
Job and consultancy opportunities  
Training opportunities  
Campaigns to engage with / opportunities for involvement | research findings (e.g., 90 second interview with the report author)  
A newsletter that comes not-too-frequently, but that they usually click at least one article in  
Might listen to a podcast on the metro/bus  
Twitter feed  
Listings for our various opportunities, including courses/trainings |
|---|---|---|
| **Donors**  
(Prospective donors who are in a position to support Berghof but need to see evidence) | Want to see evidence that Berghof is worthy of support (what is the impact?), such as human interest stories and examples of the life-changing nature of Berghof’s activities.  
Evidence of impact gives hope/reassurance that change is possible  
Need a personalised touch, beyond what the website can do on its own | Impact stories and videos, packaged with non-generic appeals  
Short interviews (text or video) may work particularly well, showing the work and conveying examples of our approach’s efficacy  
Our analysis of (what could help) specific countries  
A printed impact report in the post  
Invitations to special events  
A person (named email/phone) to be in contact with  
Blog posts with innovative/counterintuitive arguments may appeal to some of this group – individual disruptors can shift debates and change the status quo |
| **Policymakers**  
(People, whether in political office or influential via their activism or ideas, who shape policy debates) | They want talking points and quick-to-the-point backgrounder, but will also read longer reports if it’s in their (often narrow) focal area  
They’ll prefer targeted recommendations or ‘5 steps to stop X’ over lengthy research that concludes that more research is needed  
Research reports are also sought, but the items above are the preferred format to digest for them | Leveraged research, with executive summaries, advocacy calls, recommended next steps, and easy access to the expertise behind the research  
Short-attention pieces that convey Berghof’s headline findings and point the way to the longer paper/report (‘research is great, but I’m busy so give me the two-minute takeaway version’)  
Timely op/eds (particularly if placed in their favoured media outlets) will fit their attention span and agendas  
Blog posts with innovative/counterintuitive arguments may also suit this audience segment  
Social media posts with a sharper take, particularly if relating current events to recommendations/research  
Inclusion in events (even as panelists) |
| **Researchers**  
(Whether working in academia, thinktanks, or fellow NGOs, they share an interest in intellectual pursuits and nuanced perspectives. Generally they have time to read longer texts and absorb the details, and are likely to reference) | Research articles and reports, new thinking and ideas.  
Contacts: for their research, for potential field visits, for intellectual exchange | A usable library of publications, easy to search and share links  
Summaries/highlights of reports, to aid their own filtering  
Newsletter giving occasional updates might suit their desired level of engagement with us  
Policy recommendations and advocacy calls/campaigns |
our findings in other contexts)

| Teachers |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| (We are referring foremost to German-speaking primary and secondary school teachers) |
| Teaching materials (curricula, activities, games, lesson plans) about our main topics, all geared toward age range of 8-18. |
| Videos suitable for a classroom setting |
| Definitions of terms, or examples of positive peacebuilding work in the world |
| We can compile materials into collections, and give these a certain prominence on the site. |
| We can continue to create news items that are as jargon-free as possible, bringing in visuals and video more than has so far been the case. |
| Clear drivers to sites like Frieden-fragen.de |
| List of potential workshops they can book and bring to their school (facilitated by our Global Learning team) |

| Unfamiliar public |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Though heterogeneous and not a single ‘target group’, this is also the largest pool of visitors – almost all of them first-timers in need of a reason to consider returning. Most will only just have heard of Berghof for the first time... |
| Answers to the classic fundamentals: Who, what, where, why, when, and how? |
| Just a taste of Berghof |
| A site that’s visually appealing enough to hold interest long enough to have them click on a story |
| Digestible landing pages, explanations, and stories that don’t rely on jargon |
| Clear pathways to ‘dig deeper’ into our work, without it seeming like a wall of information |

**Brand guidelines and design**

We have Corporate Identity guidelines which can be shared with the selected developers. It’s important to note that we have already commenced work with a web design agency on creating the visual design of our new site, as a first step in this website rebuild. We would then convert these designs to agnostic CSS/HTML/JS in consultation with the selected developers.

**Additional requirements**

- The site must be responsive. The designs we are already working on will have three views: desktop, tablet, and mobile.
- We are Germany-based so must comply with the national legislation on data protection concerns, which often exceed the GDPR levels.
- Adhering to web standards on accessibility is also important.
- Permissions-based back-end user groups (admins, site-wide editors, single-content type editors, etc)
- Ability to develop clearly distinct content types and merge elements of multiple content types into front-end display templates (e.g., seeing a press release, then seeing ‘related news’ beneath it based on taxonomy + entry date, etc).
- Support for multilingual sites (EN will be the primary language, but we expect to eventually offer selected content/areas of this site in other languages).
- Rich text/WYSIWIG editing, ability to call pre-set block/formatting styles simply via visual editor in CMS
- Ability to preview new or modified content before it is pushed live
- Taxonomisation (categorisation) of entries in back-end – anticipating need to enable behind-the-scenes relation of content and generation of dynamic thematic feeds on front end of the website (e.g., ‘More news about dialogue support’ or ‘Other publications about Somalia’)
• Occasionally, we release an embargoed report or materials – we’d like to be able to put these behind a password and share the log-in detail with select partners/journalists. In practice, this would simply be another type of standard article but with authentication required for front-end viewing of the particular embargoed page.
• We intend to create a few custom maps (for instance, showing which countries we have projects in, with a click in a country leading to a page showing the related projects)
• Set-up of staging server separated from live server (or another approach toward undertaking future expansion of the site without having to construct on the live site)
• One-click, low- or no-cost updates to CMS are preferred. We would like to avoid the frequent update cycles of CMSS like WordPress.
• Deployment of the new site to a storage/compute environment hosted within the GDPR ‘bubble’.
• We’ll need a cookie control banner.

There are some third-party platforms we will need to do basic integrations with – in most cases this is a simple iframe embed rather than an API hook, but we need to unpack that together:
• Our third-party donation portal, Twingle
• Our third-party HR/recruitment platform, EasyHR
• Social sharing options (a select few) and display of social feeds on site (likely just Twitter)
• We will likely use our third-party CRM, Agile CRM, as the basis for building a newsletter subscriber list, so some basic connections between the site and the CRM are anticipated
• We’re considering using a flipbook tool (like Issuu or Boke) as an additional display option on some of our publications (this is usually just iframe embed code)
• Google Analytics integration. We are also keen to count certain binary file downloads, to gauge interest in our publications.

Budget

Our anticipated budget for the development and deployment of this site is in the range of €42K-47K, VAT-inclusive (where applicable).

Please also include a basic costing/proposal for a fixed-cost, retainer-type arrangement combining server administration, system maintenance, regular back-ups, and occasional support with bug fixes and enhancements. We’d appreciate knowing any significant recurrent costs (such as license renewals) associated with the technology stack you propose to use.

Timeline

We aim to select developers in April and commence work immediately. We intend to build the website using a series of work packages to be jointly determined with the developers – which content types should get priority to enable specific testing or migration, which sections are dependent on others coming first, etc? This approach would also enable a brief review/check-in with senior management between each package. Our aim is to launch the MVP site in October 2020.
Contact and application details

**Location:** Remote (no on-site work expected, but working hours proximate to CET are preferred)

**Deadline for applications:** 23:59 CET, 13 April 2020

**To apply:** Please email your written proposal (including a cost estimate and portfolio/URLs of sites you’ve developed) to: Eric Fichtl, Digital Content Manager, Berghof Foundation, E.Fichtl@berghof-foundation.org

Feel free to contact Eric if you have any questions about this brief/call.