



6 January 2010

OPEN CALL FOR PROPOSALS

for the award of a Framework Partnership Agreement concerning the

European Topic Centre on

Inland, coastal and marine waters 2011-2013 EEA/NSV/10/002¹

1. Background information

1.1 The European Environment Agency and the European Environment Information and Observation Network

The European Environment Agency (EEA) is the main source of information of the European Union and its Member States in developing European environment policies. The Agency aims to support sustainable development and to help achieve significant and measurable improvement in Europe's environment through the provision of timely, targeted, relevant and reliable information to policy-making agents and the public.

Established in 1990 and operational in Copenhagen since 1994, the EEA is the hub of the European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet), a network of around 350 organisations across Europe through which it collects and disseminates environment-related data and information. This information is made available through various report series, briefings and the EEA website². The European Commission, the European Parliament, national and regional authorities in the member countries, and a wide range of non-governmental organisations are among the regular users of the databases and information products.

¹ The successful *consortium* will be proposed a Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) covering the period from 2011 to 2013 (the remaining period of the current EEA Strategy 2009-2013) with a possible renewal for one year under the next EEA Strategy subject to management board approval.

² <http://www.eea.europa.eu/>.

Institutionally, the EEA is one of the Agencies of the European Union. The functioning of the EEA and Eionet are described in the EEA regulation³. The Agency, which is open to all nations sharing its objectives, has currently 32 member countries. These are the 27 EU Member States; Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway; Switzerland and Turkey.

Part of Eionet are currently five European Topic Centres (ETCs) covering the following topics: 'Air and Climate Change', 'Biodiversity', 'Land Use and Spatial Information', 'sustainable consumption and production' and 'Water'.

Having regard to the expiry of the Framework for Partnership Agreement (FPA) concerning the ETC Water on 31 December 2010, the EEA launches this call with a view to identifying the consortium which will continue the work in the respective area from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2013⁴.

The change of name from ETC Water (ETC/WTR) to ETC Inland, coastal and marine waters (ETC/ICM) reflects the need to maintain an integrated but differentiated view of the different water bodies.

In February 2008, the European Commission adopted a Communication proposing to improve, modernise and streamline current environmental information systems by establishing a European Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS). SEIS is a distributed, integrated, web-enabled information system based on a network of public information providers sharing environmental data and information. It is built on existing e-infrastructure, systems and services in the Member States and EU institutions, especially those of the EEA and Eionet.

The system aims to tie in better all existing data flows and information related to EU environmental policies and legislation including the implementation of the infrastructure for spatial information in Europe Inspire, and other data and real time observations related to emerging environmental priorities, and services coming from programmes such as Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES). It will provide easily accessible information to both policy-makers and citizens. A major challenge will be to develop SEIS as a platform that also can be used for two-way communication on the environment, namely enabling users to upload and share their information with others from local to global level.

The EEA will achieve its contributions therein by, inter alia: working together with Eionet, the European Commission (primarily through ten thematic European Environmental Data Centres) and the EEA's European Topic Centres on the

³ (EC) Regulation No. 401/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the EEA and Eionet (codified version, OJ L126 of 21 May 2009, p13, see: <http://org.eea.europa.eu/documents>.

⁴ With a possible renewal for one year under the next EEA Strategy subject to management board approval. This call is subject to the EEA Financial Regulation and its Implementing Rules as determined by the EU's Financial Regulation (EC) No. 1605/2002 as last amended by (EC) No. 652/2008 and its Implementing Rules (EC) No. 2342/2002 as last amended by (EC) No. 478/2007, in particular their respective Titles VI on Grants (Articles 108-120 FR and 160-184a IR).). It is also subject to the EEA regulation which stipulates in Article 4(5) that 'topic centres shall be designated by the Management Board ...for a period not exceeding the duration of each multiannual work programme...Each designation may, however, be renewed'.

implementation of this distributed system for sharing information from local to global level based on interoperability and, focusing on EEA European data management, including streamlining priority dataflows with Eionet, coordination of the in-situ component of GMES and the management of 5 of those thematic Environmental Data Centres (Climate change, Air, Water, Land use and Biodiversity) to offer a wealth of European environmental datasets in suitable formats for various users.

The implementation of SEIS principles via appropriate technological development and networking activities with stakeholders plus an increased focus on the inclusion of near-real time measurements and improved use of modelling techniques means that EEA will move away from the traditional methodology of processing national data as applied over the last 10 -15 years while continuing to support countries in their efforts to produce relevant and high quality data.

The EEA website will evolve from one that stores documents into an interactive site and portal that supports two-way communications and can be effective in helping to improve the quality and spread of environmental information.

Subject to available funds from the General Budget of the EU, the estimated total annual budget for Specific Agreements (SAs) to be concluded on the basis of the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) to be concluded following this call is estimated at:

Inland, coastal and marine waters (total): 1,550,000 Euro.

1.2 Role of European Topic Centres (ETCs)

ETCs are, according to the EEA regulation⁵ and in practice, an important instrument supporting the EEA through the execution of sizeable, continuous, well-defined tasks with the involvement of member countries. ETCs supports EEA data centres for the issues air, climate change, water, biodiversity and land use and may provide help to EEA in supporting other data centres coordinated by Eurostat and JRC. Tasks focus on the harmonisation of monitoring of the environment in the member countries, the compilation of the resulting data in international databases, the processing of the information including the use of models to describe and analyse the present and future state of the environment, and the production of indicators to communicate the findings to various users.

ETCs are a part of and support to Eionet. Their activities have an important networking-component involving experts in the member countries in the harmonisation, quality assessment and exchange of data and/or information, capacity-building in member countries through country visits and meetings with all Eionet country experts. ETCs are sparring partners for countries discussing options for improving national information systems. Networking with member countries also includes their involvement in indicator analysis and assessment. Under the overall EEA leadership, ETCs are also expected to cooperate amongst themselves on crosscutting projects.

⁵ The EEA regulation, see footnote 2, describes in Article 4(4)-(6) European Topic Centres and their tasks as part of Eionet.

In order to assume this role, ETCs are expected to assemble the best expertise in Europe covering the full geographical area of EEA member countries, to handle data in their areas and analyse environmental data with regard to societal and economic developments relevant to environmental and sectoral policies.

1.3 Agreements

All activities of ETCs are based on Framework Partnership Agreements (FPAs) and Specific Agreements (SAs) concluded to implement the former. Work programmes (mostly annual implementation plans), which form part of the SAs, are decided upon by the EEA and ETCs taking into account the requirements of all parts of Eionet and other stakeholders.

All grants are subject to co-financing by the *consortium* concerned (minimum 10% of the total eligible costs).

2. Future EEA work and demands in the area of Inland, coastal and marine waters 2011-2013

In the EU, the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and related water directives provide an integrated framework within which to address the still many and varied challenges to water management. The first round of River Basin Management Plans and related Programmes of Measures in 2009 mark the crossing of an important threshold from preparation to action in the implementation of the WFD. Proper implementation requires continued integration across sectoral activities (agriculture, rural development, economy, energy, transport, water infrastructure), and needs to be supported by intense information provisions, analysis and exchange between relevant actors on good practice and suitable, efficient measures.

The importance of good environmental status of marine waters has now equally been recognized; the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Integrated Maritime policy place an ecosystem-based approach at the centre of an integrated policy response to oceans, seas and coastal issues. This approach takes into account the high environmental potential of European seas and coastal systems in the delivery of vital ecological services in the face of increasing pressures from climate change and the intensification of diverse and competing economic activities (inter alia shipping, fishing, energy, resource exploitation) throughout the European maritime area. The EEA will support these developments by providing integrated EEA marine assessments, covering inter alia linkages between marine ecosystem health and human well-being, supported by up-to-date data, indicators, models and analyses.

EEA work in this extended water area will continue to have a strong focus on the maintenance and further development of the European Data Centre for Water at the EEA as agreed with its partners organisations in the European Commission (DG Joint Research Centre, DG Eurostat and DG Environment). This entails the Water Information System for Europe (WISE), which is quite well developed for freshwater, as well as the more recent needs for the marine and maritime area with the development of WISE marine, in connection with the establishment of the European Marine Data Observation Network (EMODNET). Recognising that the developments for the WISE

modules in the freshwater and marine/maritime area are in a quite different state of development it is important to structure the future ETC in a way to support best all lessons learned and to enable the development of a 'WISE-family'. This future 'WISE – family' has also to serve most efficiently EEA needs, in particular: more integrated assessments and the subsequent appropriate data requirements, e.g. environmental accounting and horizontal aspects like vulnerability assessments; and, providing the single entry point for water-related data in Europe for user communities at all levels.

Data work in this context will comprise:

- the maintenance of the established data flows under WISE SOE (State of the Environment) and the water directives where EEA is involved or responsible for the reporting process or part of it (e.g. Bathing Water Directive, UWWTD, reference data sets required to support the Water Framework Directive implementation as well as to support water accounts), and
- the build up and establishment of efficient data structures for the marine and maritime thematic areas..

In the light of EEA's role in establishing the shared environmental information System (SEIS) with an integration of data services across thematic areas and in the view of future assessments, the following elements are vital when further developing the water data centre with WISE and WISE marine (the latter as part of EMODNET):

- full regard of the spatial dimension taking into account the Inspire directive and Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES), and
- utilisation of this information in the development of European scenarios, prospective analysis, water environmental economics and policy effectiveness evaluations
- the further integration of other relevant data sources.

EEA work on indicators is developing and will require concise data management and quality control and assurance processes. Main elements are the maintenance and updating of the EEA core set of indicators (CSI) in terms of data and assessment. Other areas not yet fully covered by the CSI have to be developed using relevant indicators, wider indicator frameworks or appropriate types of assessment (e.g. reporting from the other water directives, hazardous substances, emissions/pressures, water quantity, hydro-morphological and biological elements for both the freshwater and marine area.). Future indicator developments and assessment frameworks need to go beyond the current setting of displaying status and trends and to take into account loop analysis throughout the DPSIR framework, i.e. more sectoral integration, multidisciplinary science and the needs of more advanced approaches to ecosystem assessments at large, including in particular environmental accounting methodologies, distance-to-target evaluations and economic aspects.

Policy support will focus on the WFD and other water directives for the freshwater area and on the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and the EU Integrated Maritime Policy (EU-IMP) and related policies (e.g. Marine Spatial Planning, Fisheries) for the marine/maritime area.

The water assessments in the freshwater area (incl. coastal waters) in the next period 2011-2013 will be closely related to the first round of implementation of the WFD

towards achieving Good Status (ecological and chemical status, water quantity) in 2015. Key milestone will be the publication of the State of water assessment in 2012, which is planned to support the Commission assessment under WFD Art.18. The EEA assessments of the River Basin Management Plans need to focus on pressures in a wider policy context, seeing the good ecological status also in its biodiversity context as well as land management at large (changes in land use). Retrospective analysis evaluating success of basic measures so far should enable also a prospective analysis towards 2015 and beyond.

For the marine/maritime area, contributing to the integration between the MSFD and IMP with suitable assessments will be key. The ETC will support the EEA in paving the way for methods and tools relevant for conducting assessments of maritime issues from an environmental perspective.

The ETC work will take into due consideration the increasing challenges put to both directives from impacts of and adaptation to climate change. The freshwater part will need special focus of integration with floods and water scarcity and drought policies and information. The marine/maritime area will need special focus on information regarding the sea level rise, coastal erosion, changes in oceans dynamics and impacts on marine ecosystems, including the relation to fisheries. Similarly, the biodiversity component of water bodies and marine systems will have to gain in emphasis in terms of data integration and assessments.

The new ETC on inland, coastal and marine waters will replace the current ETC Water⁶ from January 2011. In the period 2011-2013 the role of the new ETC will be to support EEA in the realisation of its strategy by performing tasks in data collection, indicator compilation and assessment, and member country support as described in the following section. These tasks will have to be designed and implemented in close cooperation with other ETCs on matters of cross-cutting nature (e.g. climate change, biodiversity, land use, environmental economics).

3. Specific tasks of the European Topic Centre on Inland, coastal and marine waters

Main policy-related objectives for ETC/Water

The main policy context for EEA work in the water area is given by:

- The water framework directive (WFD); all other water related directives not repealed by the WFD, its daughter directives and the flood directive and water scarcity and drought policy;
- The Marine Strategy Framework directive (MSFD) and
- The EU Integrated Maritime Policy as well as the regional marine and river conventions.

The future ETC will have to focus its tasks on supporting EEA regarding data, indicator and assessment work in the fields of water quality, resources and water management at large in relation to these policy areas. Furthermore, work on fresh and marine waters will need to be well balanced. This will require careful dialogue between EEA and the

⁶ <http://water.eionet.europa.eu/>

future ETC in the preparation of the annual implementation plans to prioritise and balance work on current and new activities, particularly in the marine area.

Main elements in the programme of work

The proposed consortium is expected to describe its competence and ability to efficiently manage and process relevant data and information with in-depth knowledge for targeted utilisation of this data in assessments and, to synthesize scientific evidence to produce relevant deliverables for the following main elements in a strategic work programme for the ETC/ICM 2011-2013 with possible renewal for one year under the next EEA Strategy.

Work area 1: Monitoring, data and information systems

The ETC/ICM needs to work with EEA member countries and key international organisations to arrive at efficient structures for the European water data centre to deliver policy relevant data and information on chemical and biological water quality, on emissions to water and on water quantity (incl. resources management).

Hydromorphological and other information on pressures from transport, energy, agriculture, urban/rural/coastal development and aquaculture as well as economic information should be developed for wider assessments integrating throughout the DPSIR. The work will have to cover all water types, groundwater, and surface, transitional, coastal and marine waters according to needs at European level. Regarding information on pressures, driving forces and water economic data, sources from other sectors outside the environmental domain have to be increasingly utilised from an environmental perspective.

The ETC will need to play an active role in designing and establishing information systems to hold, process, and exchange, visualise and disseminate that information.

The ETC is expected to provide support to EEA in further developing the Data Centre for Water by means of WISE in a WISE family comprising WISE freshwater and WISE marine, to facilitate the data assimilation for EEA needs and to provide expert support to EEA in coordination activities for European water monitoring including GMES in-situ monitoring:

Specific tasks in the Freshwater area:

- The maintenance and further development of the WISE SOE and data flows under other water directives as well as the widening to other data source (water business and utilities).
- The ETC in close cooperation with EEA member countries will have to ensure a high quality of data and information stored in the water data centre including quality assurance and control of data, documentation of data collections and databases. QA/QC on the substantive interpretation of data and the evaluation of used methodologies (e.g. models) done by EEA has to build on this and should be supported by additional water expertise from ETC.
- The further work on data and information flows needs to focus on the further integration of measures under the WFD, the other water directives and relevant

sectoral activities and policies (e.g. agriculture, energy) to work towards the EEA contribution to the EU-level assessment for a good status in all European water bodies by 2015. Therefore the future data work will need high focus on dealing with information from River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) as provided by EU Member States under the WFD (on ecological and chemical status, water quantity). This is expected to be a valuable source of information for pressure, quality and information on measures.

- In the light of climate change, water quantity data flows as well as floods information need particular consideration, without ignoring the other parameters (esp. ecological and chemical status). Scarcity and drought assessments should draw on the water accounting methodology as a strong tool with high data demands.

Issues concerning the hydrological cycle should also be dealt with in cooperation with other relevant ETCs. The development under the flood directive with its focus on reporting on geographical data and the needs for a truly distributed system under INSPIRE and the link to Member State information puts a particular challenge to the architectural development of WISE. All information on impacts and adaptation (floods, scarcity and droughts) needs to be fit for the processing in the Climate Change Clearing house mechanism and linking these developments with the WFD reporting under WISE incl. RBMPs.

- As WISE more and more develops into the central platform for all water related directives and their related data flows, the integration between e.g. data on emissions, the reporting under the UWWTD, the EPRTR-directive and the Nitrate Directive needs further development. Further integration is needed also with the bathing and drinking water directive. The ETC needs to fully account for EEA's role in these streamlining processes among the EU bodies and Member States.

Specific tasks in the Marine/Maritime area:

- In the marine area the peak of data work will be in 2011/2012 to set up the marine/maritime part of the data centre (WISE-marine) that can support EEA marine /maritime assessments as well as further MSFD reporting flows. Some focus on data work will be needed to catch up with the status of the water data center on the Freshwater side.
- A vital part for ETC support to EEA marine/maritime data work will need to include knowledge on marine spatial planning and seabed mapping and help developing the EEA perspective on integrating the marine work as environmental pillar of the maritime observation and data network (EMODNET). The EMODNET data work is essential to the further development of WISE marine.
- Improve the data aspects in close cooperation with all stakeholders, the marine conventions as well as sectoral and research related actors towards an integrated approach to ecosystem management also to be implemented in terms of the respective information system under WISE marine. It is important to note that EEA work covers marine regions from the Arctic to the Black Sea.

- The ETC should, as part of Eionet, help in the review of monitoring networks in close coordination with member countries and conventions to support the establishment of monitoring networks as required under the MSFD. This needs to be developed in close relation to the role of EEA as coordination unit for the GMES in-situ monitoring.
- GMES activities and core services are a central element in the data work especially in the marine/maritime area. They need to be integrated in the further development of WISE marine along side with close contact to the development of the marine core services (e.g. link to MyOcean).

Work area 2: Indicators

The EEA is developing indicators within the DPSIR assessment framework⁷ to support regular assessments on state of, and trends, in the environment and to support policy processes in the water area. Work on data, indicators, regular SoE assessments and integrated assessments are interlinked. ETC/ICM will need to give support especially where the link to the member countries is crucial to ensure sound quality-assured data.

The ETC will need to maintain and develop indicator fact sheets, especially for the core set of indicators⁸, which include an analysis of the trends.

More indicator development work is needed in the areas of freshwater and marine on chemicals, emissions to water, biological elements and marine ecosystems health as well as economic activities and for inland waters on water quantity. It needs to be carefully evaluated where a full fleshed development of indicator fact sheets for further core set indicators is needed and where, in the sense of a wider assessment, the DPSIR is utilised also without full development of a monitoring – data –indicator chain. In more complex areas, like integrated water resource management, the indicator development should focus more on integrative aspects throughout the DPSIR and e.g. distance to target analysis than single state, trend, impact or pressure analysis.

Work area 3: Support the development and implementation of EU policy in the area of inland, coastal and marine waters

ETC/ICM needs to provide technical assistance to EEA to support the implementation processes of the WFD⁹ and Marine Strategy¹⁰ and other related directives and policies and the relevant working groups in there. This includes providing advice to specific clients/users, reviewing and commenting on draft notes and reports and preparing data summaries and data assessments.

Specific tasks in the Marine/Maritime area:

- The ETC needs to support EEA in its role in the start up of the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), with its first phase up to 2013 focusing on first steps by member states and a stable establishment of a reporting framework. The ETC should be able to support strong stakeholder processes providing scientific expertise and institutional and operational knowledge at the

⁷ http://reports.eea.eu.int/TEC25/en/tech_25_text.pdf

⁸ See e.g. <http://themes.eea.eu.int/indicators/>.

⁹ [EU Water Framework Directive](#) - Directive 2000/60/EC

¹⁰ [EU Marine Strategy](#) - COM(2005) 505 final

regional level and with marine conventions.

- Expertise and networking capacities are needed to support EEA in development and maintenance of contacts relevant for EEA assessments to the network under the Maritime Strategy¹¹, and streamlining with and under the water-related directives outside the WFD (UWWTD regarding marine spatial planning, fisheries, energy or transport in the overarching objective of ecosystem-based management).

Specific tasks in the Freshwater area:

- The ETC needs to support EEA in fulfilling its role regarding the cooperation with the European Commission towards the further implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) with first assessments of its achievements in 2012.
- Reporting activities (on drinking water, bathing water, nitrates directives, floods directive, E-PRTR) and with other policies (e.g. agriculture, biodiversity) have to be followed and the future streamlining of reporting under WISE has to be supported with the relevant networking.
- Regarding the future WS&D policy water quantity accounts, as part of established national accounts processes, have to be evaluated as a tool to support and monitor progress towards European water resources management. This task will be developed in close cooperation with European Commission services, in particular within the EEA/Eurostat collaboration on environmental accounting.

Work area 4: EEA assessment reports

For the assessments to be produced by the EEA, ETC/ICM will provide the knowledge-base on water-related questions (freshwater, marine and maritime information, water quality, quantity and structural aspects) together with EEA staff. Upon request by EEA, ETC/ICM is expected to participate in environmental assessment processes, cross cutting assessment reports like SOER 2015 and assessments covering European neighbourhood areas. All assessment work needs to account for the functions water provides as ecosystem or economic good and the restrictions set by the given sustainability boundaries (good status):

- The main assessments will have to support the further integration of measures under the WFD, the other water directives and relevant sectoral activities and policies (e.g. agriculture, energy) to work towards a good ecological status in all European water bodies (inland and coastal) by 2015 with a report on “state and outlook for Europe’s water” in 2012 providing an independent EEA contribution under WFD Art 18.2 (b) as the main milestone.
- Both, Marine/maritime and inland water assessments will have to work in an ecosystem assessment approach integrating environmental social and economic

¹¹ [Maritime Strategy](#) – Communication to the commission - Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union

aspects (incl. accounting methodologies). In particular further marine assessments will have to support the marine/maritime integration from an ecosystem assessment perspective with the marine element in the EEA Eureka assessment in 2012 as the main milestone and doing so will have to account for the Member States initial assessments under the MSFD.

- Spatial analysis is a more and more important aspect of any assessment work. The ETC is expected to provide capacities to support EEA capabilities on visualisation of all information and supporting the evaluation of information at the EU-level based on river basins.
- Policy effectiveness and socio-economic assessments will continue to be an important part of the overall work of EEA. The ETC should give support to this work especially with its data capacities.
- The ETC will also be expected to support work on ecosystem goods and services provided by water bodies, wetlands, island and coastal ecosystems led by the EEA itself and supported by other relevant ETCs. In this context the further work on water quantity accounts (see link to WS&D policy), but later also quality and emission accounts will have to be developed in close relation to the ongoing European assessment needs towards policy effectiveness and socio-economic assessments. Led by EEA the ETC/ICM has a key role here, but regarding the spatial dimension and the inevitable link to land use accounts close cooperation needs to be maintained with the new ETC SIA supported by
- EEA assessment work has to be supported further by providing information activities, for example through briefing notes, seminars etc.

Work area 5: ETC management and role in the EIONET

The organisational set-up and management procedures of the ETC consortium must meet the special and general conditions of the Framework Partnership Agreement. To ensure this, the management of the ETC requires, for example, clear decision and communication structures within the consortium, and well-established links to the EEA and its member countries, to the European Commission and to other relevant organisations. In response to the annual work programme, which is the basis for the grant, the consortium shall produce a draft annual implementation plan for agreement with the EEA.

The ETC management must also include procedures for quality assurance – inclusive language-checking - of all its deliverables.

The ETC shall maintain close links with the Eionet (EEA member countries and other ETCs), through:

- strong communication efforts with the countries, including networking and regular country visits;
- in dialogue with the countries identifying barriers to optimally perform their tasks (e.g. monitoring capacities, staff resources, knowledge gaps) and developing proposals to solve any issues that may emerge and providing training and capacity

- building in the countries as appropriate;
- organising regular Eionet workshops and seminars to discuss the outcomes of the work and plan future activities with the member countries;
- engaging actively in co-operation with other ETC to strengthen the coherence of data and information, in particular regarding geographical reference data sets, and integration in an ecosystem approach (biodiversity, land use, sustainable consumption and ecological footprints, vulnerability in different sectors etc). Co-operation should be integrated into the ongoing content work and provide efficient synergies, not additional work load. Work from different ETCs and their core groups has to build on each other. Priority areas for cross-ETC cooperation from a water perspective would be:
 - spatial analysis and common spatial reference data sets providing the common information on land use, catchments and river network (ECRINS). (important also regarding common work on environmental accounts);
 - land use (including coastal areas) and its impacts on inland coastal and marine water (including link to land use accounts);
 - climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptation regarding floods, droughts, water scarcity and related hazards and their socioeconomic effects;
 - integration between the climate change clearing house mechanism and relevant elements in WISE.

4. General guidance on the expertise and organisation of the European Topic Centre on Water

The present and earlier ETCs are consortia of government organisations, private non-profit organisations and a few commercial firms. Based upon EEA experience, some general guidance can be given for a successful consortium:

A. The structure of the ETC consortium

The ETC consortium shall comprise one coordinating organisation and several partners. The following points have to be considered when establishing the consortium:

- As it can be difficult to manage many small partners (e.g. with contracts of less than EUR 50 000 per year) in a consortium, fewer partners can facilitate management. However, this has to be balanced against the need to cover the required field of expertise and to ensure good geographical coverage.
- The work programme may be best addressed by a ‘core group’ located at the coordinating organisation, supported by partners with specific competences. The expertise needed in the core group is both topical and technical, including:
 - coordinator (ETC manager), having appropriate management and networking capabilities;
 - technical/scientific coordinator with in-depth knowledge of water related issues;
 - administrative support, able to work in English and organise European meetings and consultations;
 - data management with experience in QA/QC;
 - expertise to design water information systems including the ability to handle

relevant GIS components in cooperation with the European data infrastructure developed at EEA.

- In order to ensure proper financial management, the core team shall have access to financial control services.
- The consortium as a whole needs to cover the main work areas with the expertise listed under B, but also to have appropriate links to wider European expertise. This is particularly important where specific skills are needed, e.g. for certain methodologies, modelling or for wider sector integration etc.
- Therefore, the ETC needs to be structured in a way to ensure the necessary flexibility to be able to adapt to changing needs and to be able to subcontract experts for specific projects.

B. Technical and scientific expertise

The consortium is expected to work equally in the freshwater (groundwater, rivers, lakes) and marine/maritime areas and to cover all water-related aspects such as quality (nutrients, oxygen-consuming substances and hazardous substances), water quantity (water availability, abstraction and use), biological and hydromorphological elements, as well as emissions to water and information related to pressures and driving forces. With the specific needs for quality assurance and quality control, sufficient scientific expertise is needed in all these working areas and water categories.

To undertake the tasks and to provide the deliverables listed above under section 3, ETC/ICM is expected to have technical and scientific expertise in the following areas:

- Data work and indicator development.
- Capabilities to go into effective networking also outside the Eionet with all institutions and bodies (e.g. regional sea and river conventions, water professionals, NGOs) associated with providing information for the regions covered by the EEA work programme on data issues as well as insight into scientific knowledge to exploit the needs and possibilities for integrated and cross-sectoral assessments.
- Sufficient knowledge on spatial analysis to cooperate with ETC Spatial Information and Analysis to work on visualisation of data and make best use of remote sensing services and data as provided via the GMES activities together with other geographically based information and data available from in-situ monitoring. This is of particular importance in the marine/maritime area, but increasingly also for inland water.
- Similarly, corresponding expertise is also expected on biodiversity matters and vulnerabilities and adaptation to climate change impacts, which is pertinent to cooperation with ETCs Biodiversity and Climate change Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation.
- Integrated assessments in order to ensure that data flows and indicators feed into assessments dealing with cross sectoral and interdisciplinary aspects. (Tools and methodologies to develop these assessments are not necessarily a core task of

the ETC).

- Effective networking, cooperation and communication with the countries and other stakeholders.

5. Mandatory requirements

In order to deliver high quality products and services the future beneficiaries shall comply with the following mandatory requirements:

As the working language of the EEA is English, it will also be the working language of the FPA and SAs. More particularly, the ETC is expected to deliver documents (background notes, draft fact sheets and reports, etc.) requiring minimal further language checking prior to publication. Future beneficiaries are required to have a quality control procedure to this effect.

Without exception, the ETC shall report to the EEA, the main contact points being the ETC Manager and the competent EEA Project Manager.

Subject to guidance from the EEA, the ETC shall ensure coherence and integration of its work with the work carried out by the EEA. To this effect and as far as specific tasks are concerned, the EEA Project Manager(s) will be in close contact with the future beneficiaries (ETC Manager and partners as needed).

The ETC is also expected to provide input into the development of the EEA annual work programme. Furthermore it shall provide EEA with proposals for the continuous development of the working areas.

While cooperation amongst ETCs is subject to respective requests and coordination from the EEA, ETCs shall be structured in a way which ensures proper linkages with other ETCs as cross-sectoral and cross-thematic cooperation and integration needs further attention in the future. Such integrated cooperation needs highly transparent ETC management in order to avoid duplication or disintegration of tasks across partners.

Maintaining and improving the links to Eionet¹², in particular the Primary Contact Points (PCP) and National Reference Centres (NRC) appointed by the member countries, is the basic foundation for the work of the ETCs. This means, e.g., *ad hoc* technical support to member countries, reflecting the specific needs of all countries, to enable them to contribute to the reporting of 'priority data'. The ETC shall also assist the EEA in organising annual meetings with the Eionet partners.

The EEA is committed to an internal Environmental Policy to ensure that the EEA operates in an environmentally sound manner. Since March 2005 the EEA is EMAS certified. It is thus required that the future beneficiaries take into consideration the reduction of environmental impact of ETC activities and develop Environmental Policies for the ETCs.

¹² <http://www.eionet.europa.eu>

6. Criteria

6.1 Eligibility

Consortia consisting of at least two partners (natural/legal persons, private or public), these partners being established in different EEA member countries (the 27 EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey), are eligible, subject to 6.2 and 6.3, for submitting proposals.

Entities which do not have legal personality under the applicable national law of one of the EEA member countries are also eligible under the same conditions, provided that their representatives have and can prove their capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf and assume financial liability.

A *consortium* may also include partners from other countries than the above mentioned, provided that the other eligibility requirements are respected and the share of partners from non-EEA member countries does not exceed 10 % of the total eligible costs.

6.2 *Ne bis in idem*

While partners may participate in *consortia* aiming at FPAs concerning different ETCs (see the parallel Open Calls EEA/ACC/10/001, EEA/NSV/10/001 and EEA/NSV/10/003), **no partner** may participate **in more than one** *consortium* aiming at the FPA **concerning the ETC of this Open Call**, the ETC on Inland, coastal and marine waters. Disregard of this rule leads to exclusion of all *consortia* concerned.

Similarly it is prohibited for proposed staff to sign letters of intent to participate in more than one *consortium* aiming at the FPA concerning the ETC/ICM. Disregard of this rule leads to exclusion of all *consortia* concerned.

6.3 Exclusion criteria

Apart from the situations under 6.2, *consortia* shall be excluded from participation in this procedure if any of its partners is in one of the situations referred to in Articles 93(1), 94 and 96(2)(a) of the FR, namely the following:

- (a) they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- (b) they have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment which has the force of *res judicata*;
- (c) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the contracting authority can justify;
- (d) they have not fulfilled obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the contracting authority or those of the country where the contract is to be performed;

- (e) they have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of *res judicata* for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation or any other illegal activity detrimental to the Communities' financial interests;
- (f) they are currently subject to an administrative penalty referred to in Article 96(1) FR;
- (g) they are faced with a conflict of interest;
- (h) they are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the contracting authority as a condition of participation in the procedure or fail to supply this information;
- (i) following another procurement or grant award procedure financed by the Community budget, they have been declared to be in serious breach of contract for failure to comply with their contractual obligations;
- (j) have been excluded (according to Article 96(2)(a) FR) as candidate, tenderer or contractor from the contracts and grants financed by the budget, for a maximum period of ten years.

The cases referred to in point (e) shall be the following:

- (a) cases of fraud as referred to in Article 1 of the Convention on the protection of the European Communities' financial interests drawn up by the Council Act of 26 July 1995;
- (b) cases of corruption as referred to in Article 3 of the Convention on the fight against corruption involving officials of the European Communities or officials of Member States of the European Union, drawn up by the Council Act of 26 May 1997;
- (c) cases of involvement in a criminal organisation, as defined in Article 2(1) of Joint Action 98/733/JHA of the Council;
- (d) cases of money laundering as defined in Article 1 of Council Directive 91/308/EEC.

Every *consortium* partner must provide a declaration on their honour, duly signed and dated, stating that they are not in any of the situations listed above (see Annex 3).

The *consortium* with whom the Agency will enter into a Framework Partnership Agreement must provide evidence confirming the declaration referred to in the previous point.

The contracting authority shall accept as satisfactory the following evidence:

- (i) For points (a), (b) and (e) a recent extract from the judicial record, or failing that, a recent equivalent document issued by a judicial or administrative authority in the country of origin or provenance showing that those requirements are satisfied.
- (ii) For point (d) a recent certificate issued by the competent authority of the State concerned.

Where the document or certificate referred to above is not issued in the country concerned and for other cases of exclusion, it may be replaced by a sworn or, failing that, a solemn statement made by the interested party before a judicial or administrative authority, a notary or a qualified professional body in his country of origin or provenance.

6.4 Selection criteria

The selection criteria will be assessed as a first step by the evaluation committee. Failure to comply with these criteria will result in the proposal not being evaluated further by the evaluation committee. Applicants may be asked to provide additional proof, or to clarify the supporting documents, related to the selection criteria within a specific time limit.

(a) Legal capacity

Consortia are required to prove that all their partners are authorised to perform the framework partnership agreement under national law, as evidenced by inclusion in a trade or professional register, a sworn declaration or certificate, membership of a specific organisation, express authorisation, entry in the VAT register or any other statutory document allowing verification of the partner's legal status.

All partners of a *consortium* shall provide an identification sheet (Annex 2 to the Call for proposals) duly filled out and signed, a copy of inscription in a trade register, where applicable, and a copy of inscription in VAT registers.

(b) Economic and financial capacity

Evidence of the *consortium's* economic and financial capacity shall be furnished by the following documents:

- proof of stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain the *consortium's* activity throughout the period 2011-2013;
- for private partners: profit and loss accounts, balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts were closed (and audit reports by an approved external auditor certifying the accounts for the last available financial year¹³).

(c) Technical and professional capacity

Evidence of the *consortium's* technical and professional capacity to carry out the envisaged work programme shall be furnished on the basis of the following documents:

1. Detailed CVs (indicating, *inter alia*, the level of English/other language skills) + signed letters of intent of:
 - the ETC Manager and core staff of the *consortium* coordinator; as well as
 - the key experts of all *consortium* partners proving that the *consortium* as a whole has sufficient technical, scientific and management (including financial) experience to assume the role of an ETC;
2. A list and brief account of work considered relevant and carried out by the partners forming the *consortium* in the past five years, with the sums, dates and recipients, public or private;

¹³ Having regard to Article 173(4) IR and the fact that all *consortium* partners will assume joint and several liability in accordance with the FPA, such audit reports are not required if consortia include any public bodies.

3. Letters of intent of all *consortium* partners to participate and provide cofinancing up to at least 10% of the total eligible cost of the annual work programme¹⁴;
4. For each partner established in an EEA member country, letters of confirmation from the respective Member of the EEA Management Board that the relevant partner is able to perform the function of an ETC partner within Eionet;
5. Proof and description of the *consortium's*/partners' Quality Assurance and Quality Control systems;
6. Proof and description of the *consortium's*/partners' environmental policy;

¹⁴ The 10%-rule of minimum co-financing is applied towards the *consortium* as a whole. To what extent partners contribute to this co-financing is an internal *consortium* matter. Before awarding any grant through Specific Agreements (SAs) based on the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA), the *consortium* must furnish proof of the amount of co-financing to be provided (Article I.6.2 FPA).

6.5 Award criteria

The Framework Partnership Agreement will be concluded with the *consortium* whose proposal guarantees best that the EEA demands as described above are met. Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of the six award criteria and allocation of points as outlined below, producing a maximum total score of 100 points:

	Max. award points
1) General approach to the work – ability to provide information that addresses the needs of <i>policy-makers</i> . The proposal needs to demonstrate the consortium’s understanding of the objectives of the EEA strategy, and the policies to which ETC/ICM will contribute. This needs to be reflected in the set up of the consortium, the design of the work programme and the products proposed.	15
2) Expertise and experience on the water environment and relevant data – in-depth knowledge of the relationship between state of, pressures and impacts of main drivers on the aquatic environment and the capacity to handle the relevant data and information (knowledge of relevant European data sets and monitoring programmes from environmental and other sources).	20
3) Expertise and experience of water relevant policy processes – the capacity of the consortium in supporting firstly EU and pan-European but also global and national policy instruments related to water as evident from their previous projects and publications/reports; experience of participation in the development and implementation of this policy by providing expert advice in working groups, etc.	15
4) Expertise and experience in developing indicators and supporting assessment – the proposal and previous projects and publications/reports needs to show the capacity to provide the required deliverables.	10
5) Technical expertise in data management – the expertise of the consortium as evident from their previous projects and publications/reports/internet sites as regards data flow management, including validation processes, quality assurance and quality control, database development and management including the handling of spatial data, data processing for indicators and presentation.	15
6) Use of existing capacities in Europe – sound approach to access of expertise in the member countries and in institutes external to the consortium, links with relevant scientific and administrative organisations in Europe as evident from previous projects and reports.	10
7) Project management and networking capacity – sound arrangements for the management of the ETC consortium, and tracked record in implementing effective management procedures, enhancing cooperation between partners, and with countries and other stakeholders, transparent financial administration environmental policy adopted and quality assurance. Adequate level of manpower, resources and output corresponding to the indicative annual budget. Ability to work with countries across Europe (EEA member countries and potentially others).	15
TOTAL	100

Proposals will be evaluated and awarded points according to the extent to which the above award criteria are fulfilled. Proposals scoring less than 65% of the maximum total score for the seven award criteria overall will be considered to be of insufficient quality and eliminated from the award procedure. Should proposals obtain the same total score of 65 points or more and tie for first place, the winning proposal will be decided on the basis of the highest score achieved in total across award criteria 2 to 5.

7. Environmental considerations

The EEA runs a certified environmental management system (EMAS) and aims to minimise the environmental impact of all its activities, including those carried out under contract. The future beneficiaries will, therefore, be requested to consider the EEA environmental management guidelines in the implementation of the contract, in particular, those relating to business travel/electronic means of communication, paper and energy consumption. Further information on the EMAS system can be found on the EEA homepage: <http://www.eea.europa.eu/documents/emas>.

Moreover, it is strongly recommended that proposals are submitted in an environmentally friendly way, e.g., by choosing a simple and clear structure (list of contents and consecutive page numbering), double-sided printing, limiting attachments to what is required in the Terms of Reference (no additional material in paper) and avoiding plastic folders or binders.

8. Further information

Submitting a proposal implies acceptance by the *consortium* of all terms and conditions of the standard Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) and its Annexes.

9. Timing

Information briefing: 3 February 2010 (Copenhagen)

Deadline for submitting proposals: 20 April 2010

Following the decision of the EEA Management Board on the designation of the successful *consortium* (foreseen for 16 June 2010) and prior to signature of the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) all *consortia* will be notified of the outcome of this call.

ANNEXES

Annex 1 – Proposal (model structure)

Annex 2 – Identification sheet

Annex 3 – Declaration exclusion criteria

BRIEFING MEETING and further information

A briefing meeting to provide more background information on the expectations for the ETC and the procedure for submitting a proposal will be organised on 3 February 2010 in Copenhagen. If you are interested, please register by sending an email to olivier.cornu@eea.europa.eu. We will send you the meeting details in response. Any immediate questions regarding this call for proposals should be sent by e-mail to the European Environment Agency: ronan.uhel@eea.europa.eu (general questions) or beate.werner@eea.europa.eu (technical questions). All applicants are encouraged to consult the section 'contract opportunities' on the EEA website regularly before the deadline.