



Framework Partnership Agreement concerning the European Topic Centre on Urban, land use and soil 2015-2018

Reference: Open call for proposals EEA/NSV/14/001-ETC/ULS

Closing date: 31.03.2014

1. Background information

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

The European Environment Agency (EEA) is a main source of information of the European Union and its Member States (MS) in developing, implementing and evaluating 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 (Eionet¹), 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, the scientific world and a wide range of non-governmental organisations are among the regular users of the databases and information products.

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, currently has 33 member countries. These are the 28 EU Member States (MS), Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.

The EEA and Eionet contribute to the European Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS), a distributed, integrated, web-enabled information system based on a network of

¹ <http://www.eionet.europa.eu>

² <http://www.eea.europa.eu>

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://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32009R0401:EN:NOT>)

public information providers sharing environmental data and information. It builds on existing e-infrastructure, systems and services in the MS and EU institutions.

Part of Eionet are currently six European Topic Centres (ETCs) covering the following topics: 'Air pollution and climate change mitigation', 'Climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptation', 'Inland, coastal and marine waters', 'Spatial information and analysis', 'Biological Diversity', and 'Sustainable consumption and production'.

Having regard to the expiry of the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) concerning the ETC on Spatial information and Analysis on 13 September 2014, the EEA launches this call with a view to identifying the consortium which will take up the work in the present topic area from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2018⁴.

The total annual budget for Specific Agreements (SAs) to be concluded on the basis of the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) will be subject to available funds from the General Budget of the EU and priorities set in the EEA Strategy 2014-18, which will be approved by the EEA Management Board later in 2013. Present spending in the related topic area of spatial information and analysis is of the order of:

Current ETC Spatial Information and Analysis (total): EUR 750,000 in 2014

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 or one-off, well-defined tasks with the involvement of member countries. ETCs support the EEA Environmental Data Centres for the topics 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 leadership of EEA, leading, steering and supervising the work of the ETCs, ETCs are also expected to cooperate amongst them on crosscutting projects.

⁴ This call is subject to the EEA Financial Regulation and its Implementing Rules as determined by the EU's Financial Regulation (EU) No 966/2012 of 25.10.2012 (OJEU L 298/1 of 26.10.2012) and its Rules of application laid down in Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012 of 29.10.2012 (OJEU L 362/1 of 31.12.2012), in particular their respective Titles VI on Grants (Articles 121-137 FR and 173-210 RAP). 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'.

⁵ The EEA regulation, see footnote 3, describes in Article 4(4)-(6) European Topic Centres and their tasks as part of Eionet.

The role of ETCs in supporting implementation of EU legislation and policies has been also a key element of EEA activities towards its support to Commission work. In order to assume this role, ETCs are expected to assemble the best expertise covering the knowledge needs to assess the full European state and trends of the environment occurring in the 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. Annual work programmes, which serve as the basis for the award of grants, are decided upon by the EEA and ETCs taking into account the requirements of all parts of Eionet, European Commission services and other stakeholders.

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

2. Future demands on EEA work in the area of Urban, land use and soil 2015-2018

2.1 Interconnected policy contexts

The urban, land use and soil policy context up to 2020 consists of new EU and global policy frameworks agreed in 2011-2014.

The new general European Union Environment Action Programme to 2020, "Living well, within the limits of our planet" (COM(2012) 710 final)⁶, follows on relevant objectives and milestones in the EU Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe (COM(2011) 571 final), including the Rio+20 goal of a 'land-degradation neutral world'⁷, and the 2006 European Soil Strategy.

The [7th EAP](#) (EU Environment Action Programme) contains two thematic priority objectives that directly identify targets and respective actions for urban, land use and soil:

- Priority objective 1: To protect and enhance the EU's natural capital.
- Priority objective 8: To enhance the sustainability of EU cities.

The EU Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe addresses land and soil in a section on natural capital and ecosystem services. The relevant milestone establishes that 'by 2020, EU policies take into account their direct and indirect impact on land use in the EU and globally, and the rate of land take is on track with an aim to achieve no net land take by 2050; soil erosion is reduced and the soil organic matter increased, with remedial work on contaminated sites well underway.' This milestone is followed by a list of actions for the Commission and MS, providing a policy basis for programming support from the EEA and the ETC on urban, land use and Soil.

The EU Roadmap is also in line with global commitments made in Rio de Janeiro in July 2012, where world leaders recognized the "economic and social significance of good land management, including soil, particularly its contribution to economic growth, biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and food security [...] and the need for urgent action to reverse

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/newprg/pdf/PE00064_en.pdf

⁷ 'The Future We Want', paragraph 206.

land degradation striving to achieve a land degradation neutral world in the context of sustainable development⁸”.

At the Rio+20 Conference, it was implicitly recognized that translating a land degradation neutral world into national action plans that yield tangible results on the ground will first require specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound targets. Neutrality implies maintaining or improving upon the current status and extent of land degradation, in other words, a zero net loss in the amount of healthy and productive land. This should be regarded as extending to soil as a non-renewable resource which performs many vital functions.

In addition, land use, land use change and forestry or LULUCF is a major part of EU and international climate policy. The recently adopted Decision 529/2013/EU on accounting rules on greenhouse gas emissions and removals resulting from activities relating to land use, land-use change and forestry is a first step towards incorporating agriculture and forestry - the last major sectors without common EU-wide rules on GHG - into the EU's emission-reduction efforts, for which collecting robust carbon data from forests and soils needs reinforcement.

Regarding cities the [7th EAP](#) has recently reconfirmed the importance of urban areas. The priority 8 focus on the sustainability of cities highlights the necessity to develop an effective, efficient coordination between different levels of administration (regional and local authorities) and across administrative boundaries, to support innovation and best practices on sustainable urban development. This requires, in particular, defining and agreeing ‘a set of criteria to assess the environmental performance of cities, taking into account economic and social impacts’.

Finally, under Priority objective 5 of the 7th EAP, Copernicus is identified as a system which can provide spatial information and support streamlining and common approaches for the provision of information in support of environmental and climate policies, both at national and European level.

2.2 EEA role in support of policy

Better implementation is an essential part of the 7th EAP. This requires improving the delivery of benefits from EU environment measures and ensuring full implementation of environmental policies and legislation at EU level, as well as to further develop and implement the objectives and initiatives set out in the 7th EAP such as (selected quote):

- Further developing and better structuring, dissemination and accessibility of environmental knowledge, and strengthening the science policy-interface;
- Enabling implementation and enforcement to be more easily tracked;
- Improving inspections and surveillance regimes where necessary, *inter alia* through guidance for MS, on the basis of experience with existing provisions; and
- Fostering partnerships with MS, possibly in the form of implementation agreements.

To secure the knowledge and evidence base for developing the policy framework in line with EU policies, the new EEA Multiannual Work Programme 2014-2018⁹ is aimed at informing the policy implementation. The overall objective is providing feedback and input to long-established and emerging policy frameworks, objectives and targets through

⁸ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 27 July 2012 66/288. The future we want.

⁹ See EEA website.

reporting on progress in recognised environmental themes, including links to those sectors that are the primary sources of environmental pressures, and through reporting on the state and trends for natural environment systems – including urban, land use and soil – using the DPSIR assessment framework (Driver, Pressure, State, Impact, Response) –see respective EEA thematic webpages for proper definitions of the urban, land and soil themes.

The main objectives of EEA’s urban, land use and soil work, with the contributions and support of its ETCs, are to deliver streamlined data and information and prepare policy and thematic relevant assessments of urban, land use and soil to track progress towards the corresponding targets as defined in relevant EU and international policies and supporting the evaluation of the effectiveness of European policies and measures. From 2011 onwards, these include the EU Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe and its land and soil targets, including support to the EU involvement in the Rio+20 follow-up and UNCCD (global Convention on desertification).

The current five-year period of the EEA strategy has witnessed a significant expansion of the EU urban, land use and soil policy area, due to an increased awareness of the significance of land-related resource efficiency, the ecosystems approach (which urban, land and soil are part of) and the concomitant evolution of the respective policy tools. The European resource efficiency platform (EREP) has produced recommendations from a high-level panel on resource efficiency published in June 2013¹⁰, where land is mentioned among three key resources that require indicators to measure progress towards the overall objective of the EU2020 objective of overall decoupling of resource use and its environmental impacts from economic growth.

For the past years, the EEA has already been putting these above principles and approaches in practise in the area of urban, land use and soil. Two concrete key areas of work in support to policies will continue in the future, in continuity and reinforcement of the cooperation with EC services (JRC and ESTAT in particular) in the related themes:

A – Support the knowledge base related to urban, land use and soil, including environmental accounting, e.g. through:

- Analysis of environmental issues by involving land, soil and socio-economic data across the urban-rural interface, in cooperation with the JRC, Eurostat and the EEA member countries. This also includes analytical support to Integrated Urban Monitoring in Europe¹¹ and Green Infrastructure Strategy¹², linked to the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020.
- Assessments of the land take, landscape fragmentation and soil sealing trends in Europe as a key aspect of EEA reporting to the state and outlook of land and soil resources, including the consolidation of the indicator platform based on the data flows from Copernicus Land monitoring.

B – EU Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe. The EU Roadmap considers a set of actions that aim at a European Commission’s Communication, which is requested to establish a set of land and soil-related targets that could lead to a future Common

¹⁰ EREP Action for a resource efficient Europe, Brussels, 17 June 2013.

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/resource_efficiency/documents/action_for_a_resource_efficient_europe_170613.pdf

¹¹ <http://iume.ew.eea.europa.eu/>

¹² Green Infrastructure (GI) — Enhancing Europe’s Natural Capital (COM(2013) 249 final)

Implementation Framework. It will include a reference to a coherent framework for monitoring, assessing and reporting on progress towards reaching the EU targets and streamlining these with the obligations under the Rio+20 follow-up (land-degradation neutral world). As part of the Communication, the Commission is expected to commit to undertake, with the member countries and the EEA, technical work to link existing land and soil data, information and knowledge and use it to monitor the implementation of the EU Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe (milestone on land and soil) streamlining reporting to avoid administrative burden. To fulfil these objectives, different actions need to be addressed:

- Use existing experience on process and development of land and soil indicators in support of the land and soil-related targets proposed by the EU Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe for the upcoming Land Communication, revise the current set and mobilise the necessary expertise/*fora*;
- Interlink urban, land use and soil issues based on the 7th EAP priorities for natural capital (land and soil section) and sustainable cities, as well as the EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change (COM/2013/0216 final), Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020¹³, and DG REGIO Urban and Territorial Development work programme¹⁴ proposing actions and organising responsibilities at Commission level. These should be taken into account in future ETC/ULS work linking to specific activities of the other ETCs of the EEA;
- EEA data services for land (Environmental Data Centre for Land Use) and urban environment in support of the EU actions on urban, land use and soil. Revising the concept and linking it to a clear user requirements and implementation plan. Moreover, foreseeing an evolving partnership between the EEA and Commission services, a precise discussion on priorities for development and allocation of responsibilities among partners is required.

All the points mentioned demonstrate, on the one hand, the high degree of involvement of EEA in urban, land use and soil implementation issues and, on the other, their relevance for areas much beyond, reaching out to biodiversity and ecosystems, agriculture, forests, water, climate change vulnerability and adaptation and resource efficiency aspects. Respecting the spatial scope of urban systems such broader dimension of work would also link to needs and realities of urban dwellers, such as drinking water, energy, food, mobility, waste management and cultural ecosystem services.

Furthermore, outcomes of Rio+20 and follow-up actions under UNCCD still require further reading on how to shape the EEA work up to 2020 while the EEA Multiannual Work Plan from 2014 onwards already is addressing many relevant topics, in particular through outputs and performance indicators in its strategic work area 1.8 Urban, land use and soil. Requirements arising from the EU clearly set the priorities in terms of future work.

3. Specific tasks of the European Topic Centre on Urban, land use and soil

3.1 Organisation of the work

The European Topic Centre on Urban, land use and soil (ETC/ULS) shall support the work of the EEA in these interconnected themes in the period 2015-18, the key priority working

¹³ <http://www.eu2011.hu/files/bveu/documents/TA2020.pdf>

¹⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/regional_policy/document/amp2013_en.pdf

areas being identified in the EEA annual work programmes and tasked in the ETC annual action plan. Where relevant, these areas will also be embedded in rolling plans established between EEA and European Commission services. These areas will include:

- Support to the implementation of existing EU policies for sustainable cities and urban areas, encompassing articulation with other key EU legislation in the air quality, noise and water area, climate change adaptation, green infrastructure, and energy efficiency, and streamlining, as possible, data and reporting activities and sharing expertise and knowledge;
- Support to the European assessment and reporting on the global land degradation neutrality and EU resource efficiency strategies, while supporting implementation in data and information aspects, namely monitoring and assessing land and soil-related processes in Europe across urban and rural dimensions;
- Possible support to implement the Copernicus land monitoring service to provide information linked to the global-to-local environmental monitoring of biodiversity, soil, water, forests and natural resources; as well as possible support to the implementation of the LULUCF Decision 529/2013/EU on parameters related to soil carbon accounting, in collaboration with the JRC and Eurostat (on LUCAS).
- Work on territorial analysis that will encompass the policy framework of EU Regional and Urban policy, such as Territorial cohesion, macro-regional strategies, regional conventions (e.g. Alpine); and, environmental impacts of selected land-related economic sectors not covered by other ETCs and strongly connected to the two first blocks of work (e.g. tourism), which requires cooperation with DG REGIO and DG ENTR and other EU, pan-European and global partners.

In recognition of the different expertise needed for the various types of work to be done under this topic, and in order to ensure the best allocation of available resources, the expected work is divided into three main areas: Urban areas and sustainable cities; Land and soil-related resource efficiency; and Territorial analysis and regional information.

Work package 1 – Urban areas and sustainable cities

The EEA urban work will be organised around five priorities:

- Support the implementation of the European urban policies in general, and building a knowledge base for the follow-up of the Urban Thematic Strategy of the 6th EAP in particular;
- Organise data and information on urban areas, sustainable cities and their flows;
- Support the preparation of Integrated Urban Monitoring for Europe (IUME) stakeholder workshops with a view to improving the urban data availability and understanding of urban metabolism processes;
- Assess progress to achieve higher urban resource efficiency in the EU by 2020 and report on progress using indicators and appropriate baselines addressing both urban cores and peri-urban fringes;
- Prepare urban assessments and support broader EEA integrated assessments analysing pressures and driving forces relevant for urban sustainability and quality of life, in support of both the respective 7th EAP priorities and the EEA SOER reports.

A coherent approach to these main streams of work requires concrete tasks, including:

- Further develop the EEA Data service for urban environment providing quality-assured urban data in support of European reporting initiatives using SEIS and INSPIRE

principles (<http://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/urban/dc>); to this effect link with EEA Environmental data centres and knowledge management initiatives, including Climate-ADAPT as well as with other relevant partners both at EU (e.g. Eurostat, JRC, DG REGIO) and global (e.g. ICLEI¹⁵, ISOCARP¹⁶) levels;

- Support the implementation of EU policies for sustainable cities (7th EAP priority 8), including the preparation of required databases; to this end reinforce the knowledge base for human population variables (e.g. Urban Audit database) and incorporate Copernicus Land monitoring local component results (e.g. Urban Atlas);
- Produce analyses on the state and trends of urban areas and their status in terms of environmental quality and infrastructure efficiency, and ability to withstand the climate change impacts; by doing this assess the essential variables on urban compactness versus expansion, land recycling rates, access to and quality of green urban and peri-urban areas, etc.;
- Develop the knowledge base and indicators for integrated urban monitoring for Europe (IUME) (<http://iume.eu.eea.europa.eu/>);
- Support policy evaluation and target assessment for the period up to 2020 by using the SOER2015 thematic assessment on urban systems (in preparation) and existing EEA reports on Urban quality of life (EEA Report No 5/2009), Urban adaptation (EEA Report No 2/2012), follow-up of the report on Green Infrastructure (publication in late 2013) and Efficient cities (publication in 2014) as a baseline, set as the benchmark to evaluate progress in the policy cycle;
- Support the EEA's regular state and outlook of the environment reports (SOER) and other major integrated assessments using EEA generated datasets, indicators and other sources of information, generated by various research projects and networks (<http://www.eea.europa.eu/soer/europe/urban-environment>);
- Improve the EEA communication on urban environment via diversified products and media channels (<http://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/urban>), including on floods, air quality, green infrastructure, transport and noise aspects; and,
- Establish the relevant interfaces with other ETCs as well as to other key partners, in particular JRC and ESTAT, as relevant and defined in the EEA annual work programme.

Work package 2 – Land and soil-related resource efficiency

On land and soil-related resource efficiency, a wider understanding of the land degradation neutrality concept in Europe as a follow-up of the Rio+20 and the 'land-degradation neutral world' goal is required, in particular in support of the activities underlying Milestone on land and soil in the EU Roadmap for Resource Efficiency. These require:

- Assist EEA in maintaining the Environmental data centre for land use (<http://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/landuse/dc>) while keeping countries and other stakeholders involved in building a European land use knowledge node; liaise with Eurostat (in particular on LUCAS inventory) and the Soil and Forest Data Centres (ESDAC and EFDAC in JRC);

¹⁵ ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability <http://www.iclei.org/>

¹⁶ International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP) <http://www.isocarp.org>

- Assess and gather knowledge on methodologies required for integrated land and soil assessment for Europe, including environmental accounting, based on country and global organisation experiences; analysis and evaluation of links between land use and demographic change; it will include integration of remote sensing approach (Corine Land Cover) and in-situ survey (LUCAS-Land Cover and Land Use Area frame Survey), following the standard classification on land cover and land used in the framework of INSPIRE directive;
- Actively support EEA in its support to the upcoming Land Communication and possible set up of a respective working group at the European Commission by providing information relevant to proposed land targets and give expert advice on related soil issues;
- Assess pressures on land and soil from a wide range of socio-economic activities, linking to the resource efficiency road map and in support of raising awareness about the role of land and soil resources for securing habitats and ecosystem services;
- Improve the knowledge about land and soil stocks in Europe, including quantitative and qualitative analyses of Europe's land cover, in particular in relation to impacts of pressures including climate change and landscape fragmentation, and support assessments on the restrictions such pressures pose on soil functions delivery by specific land systems;
- Support EEA and actively participate in EIONET National reference centre networks on Land use and spatial planning, on Soil, Land cover and Agriculture and forest (following agreed work profiles);
- Compile current MS activities on land use and soil functions, in support of assessment and knowledge management activities and projects;
- Integrate this knowledge into the assessment of progress of the milestone on Land and soil in the EU Roadmap for Resource Efficiency; where relevant, analysis and evaluation of policy instruments (of the EU and its MS) which counter the land degradation;
- Contribute with land and soil-related inputs to the EEA work on green infrastructure and biophysical mapping of ecosystems and their services, including Work Package 2 of ETC/BD (Ecosystem assessment);
- Maximise the use of existing data (e.g. Copernicus, Lucas) and spatial modelling techniques (e.g. from JRC) to support analysis of the land use in Europe and globally in terms of Europe's footprint and emerging sector demands; this will include the use of data collected in LUCAS (Land Cover and Land Use Area frame Survey) survey;
- Further develop and update EEA indicator frameworks, including land take, landscape fragmentation and imperviousness indicators¹⁷, link to other land and soil related indicators in agri-environment and forest indicator sets, and integrate them into EEA assessments;
- Assist further development of EEA environmental accounting tools by helping to include additional analytical dimensions to land accounts and development of new variables relevant to natural capital accounts; cooperate and provide necessary inputs to ETC/ICM on water accounts;

¹⁷ Based on Copernicus Land monitoring Imperviousness High Resolution Layer

- Establish the relevant interfaces with other ETCs, other key partners, in particular JRC and Estat, as relevant and defined in the EEA's annual work programmes and with the research and scientific community via appropriate projects or networks.

Work package 3 – Territorial analysis and regional information

Territorial analysis and support to regional information is a way to support EU Territorial cohesion objectives and explore the multi-functionality potential of Europe's regions. EU strategies for macro-regions (e.g. the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region) are becoming important drivers of regional cooperation and delivery of ecosystem-based management approach based on EU regional sea catchments or major river basins (such as the Danube catchment). Alpine conventions successfully deliver regional cooperation models for the Alps, Pyrenees or Carpathians, securing their viability and promoting sustainable transboundary management of these vulnerable natural systems.

Tasks to be developed will address the uptake and impact of horizontal measures such as territorial development by regional and cohesion funds, spatial planning (at various governance levels) and integrated coastal management (i.e. the MSP/ICM Directive proposal), strategic environmental assessment (i.e. the SEA directive) and urban design, linking these measures to agriculture and forests management, and will include:

- Assess, through the use of EEA or other providers' indicators, the driving forces determining the success of horizontal governance measures and respective regional and territorial policies in support of spatially integrated assessments, including the EEA 5-year State of the Environment Report;
- Support the territorial reporting and assessment frameworks being further advanced under the EU Regional policy, streamlining regional and urban indicator development and information and data sharing according to SEIS principles; in doing so, assist EEA in its cooperation with DG Regio and the European Spatial Observation Network (ESPON);
- Contribute to the development of 'territorial capital'¹⁸ indicators as a measure of regional competitiveness and its links to sustainable development based on multi-functionality, to complement the EEA work on natural capital mapping and accounting;
- Support the EEA in establishing the indicator framework for assessing environmental impacts of tourism, linking to existing work on sustainable tourism destination indicators in DG Enterprise and streamline with other EEA sets;
- Undertake assessments of critical issues in the interface of green infrastructure, functional restoration, landscape connectivity, based on land use changes and socio-economic variables, as well as the impact of global megatrends and climate change;
- Explore the concept of territorial regional alliances and regional cooperation bodies (e.g. CPMR¹⁹, VASAB²⁰, etc.) for integration of data and promoting data sharing principles (e.g. SEIS) at sub-European trans-boundary level, with a view to improving data support for EEA assessments;

¹⁸ Proposed by OECD in its Territorial Outlook (2001) and recently re-launched by DG Regio of the Commission of the European Union.

¹⁹ Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) <http://www.cpmr.org/>

²⁰ Vision and Strategies for the Baltic Sea <http://www.vasab.org/>

- Network with major players in these areas, both at EU and global level, and liaise with major assessments within a natural capital assessments framework;
- Establish the relevant interfaces with other ETCs as well as to other key partners, in particular JRC and ESTAT, as relevant and defined in the annual work programme of the EEA.

3.2 General activities

Work package 4 - ETC management and capacity-building

The management of the ETC requires clear decision and communication structures within the consortium, as well as well-established links to the EEA and its member countries, the European Commission, and other relevant organisations.

In response to the jointly agreed annual work programme, which is the basis for the grant, the consortium shall submit a proposal for action. The ETC management must maintain procedures for quality assurance, including language-checking of all its deliverables.

Overall, the size of the consortium needs to be small enough to ensure a budgetary distribution that enables some senior staff to work for EEA tasks at least 50% of their time.

EEA member country coverage is 33 countries. The consortium should be constructed in a way that the partnership enables the international networking among partners with experience in EU and regional level work, international networks and, e.g., EU-level think tanks, without representing all EEA member countries.

Under the supervision, guidance and agreement of EEA, 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 country visits within defined processes;
- Dialogue with the countries identifying barriers to optimally perform their tasks (e.g. monitoring and reporting capacities, flows of data, knowledge gaps, indicator developments), developing proposals to solve any issues that may emerge and providing training and capacity building in the countries as appropriate;
- Helping organising regular Eionet workshops and seminars to discuss the outcomes of the work and plan future activities with the member countries; build upon the discussion results of the Eionet groups (i.e. NRC Land use and spatial planning, NRC Soil, NRC Land cover and NRC Agriculture and forest);
- Engaging actively in co-operation with other ETCs to strengthen the coherence of data and information, in particular regarding the implementation of relevant directives (Habitats, WFD, Floods as examples), urban, land and soil-related indicators, adaptation to climate change, territorial analysis and spatial planning.

4. General guidance on the expertise and organisation of the European Topic Centre on Urban, land use and soil

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.

4.1 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, a core team can facilitate management and coherence of delivery. However, this has to be balanced against the need to cover the required field of expertise and to ensure good geographical coverage.
- The consortium should be organised around the following administrative functions:
 - a coordinator (ETC manager), having appropriate management and networking capabilities;
 - administrative support, able to work in English and organise European meetings and consultations; and,
 - accounting support, in order to ensure proper financial management.
- It is important that team leads are from organisations which either have experience from participating in Eionet or from working closely with and supporting EU Institutions and that their organisations are actively engaged in the implementation in the policy area.
- The consortium as a whole needs to cover the main work areas with the expertise listed under 4.2, but also to have proven 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 provide experts for specific projects.
- It should also have the capability to network and communicate with countries and also with relevant Commission and/or other international policy and scientific working groups and conferences.

4.2 Technical and scientific expertise

The consortium is expected to have excellent technical and scientific expertise to be able to fulfil all the tasks in the work packages mentioned in Section 3.

Excellent technical and scientific knowledge, expertise and experience are specifically required in the science-policy support provided to the following areas:

- International, EU and national policy developments regarding urban environment, land and soil assessments, including territorial analysis and regional information;
- Good understanding of reporting to the environmental directives (e.g. air quality, noise, waste, nitrates, UWWTP) as concerns assessing urban, land and soil systems; similarly, understanding of linkages with other thematic information systems (BISE, WISE and ClimateAdapt);
- Broad knowledge of main land use drivers: dynamics of population and households; economic growth and energy supply; transport networks and mobility; land use planning; subsidies and policy coordination; climate change impacts and adaptation;
- Proven knowledge and expertise in land use and management processes, both at EU and pan-European scales;

- Demonstrable understanding of the EU and global land and soil targets and knowledge of relevant processes supporting their assessment and reporting (indicators, information and knowledge systems);
- Knowledge of urban systems and their flows, mapping and assessment of agglomerations, urban-rural relations and peri-urban processes and respective conceptual and process frameworks (e.g. IUME urban metabolism concept, urban green infrastructure);
- Understanding of the EEA conceptual MDIAK (Monitoring-Data-Information-Assessment- Knowledge) chain for urban, land use and soil;
- Relevant spatial analysis expertise (e. g. GIS, geo-statistical methods, remote sensing) across the requirements imposed by Work Packages 1 to 3; understanding of INSPIRE directive provisions;
- Expertise and proven experience in conducting integrated assessments along the DPSIR cause-effect conceptual chain (Driver-Pressure-State-Impact-Response), including the development and analysis of respective indicators;
- Understanding of methods for territorial and regional policies analysis including environmental aspects in relation to Europe 2020²¹ and the green growth concept of OECD²²;
- Understanding of the link between the land, soil and urban cluster and ecosystem functioning and service delivery, in particular through Green Infrastructure;
- Indicator streamlining activities, including urban, land use and soil indicator frameworks, understanding of the EEA method of land accounting and its relation to the UN SEEA²³ framework for environmental accounting;
- QA/QC of data flows, indicators and assessments on urban, land use and soil;
- SEIS, Copernicus and their associated services, including geo-spatial data management (and Inspire);
- Networking and communicating with countries, including Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) and European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) countries, with relevant Commission and/or other international organisations and scientific bodies and working groups, including relevant regional cooperation bodies.

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 requiring minimal further language checking prior to publication. Future beneficiaries are required to have a quality control procedure to this effect.

²¹ A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth - COM(2010) 2020

²² <http://www.oecd.org/greengrowth/oecdworkongreengrowth.htm>

²³ System of Integrated Economic and Environmental Accounting

- Without exception, the ETC shall report to the EEA, the main contact points being the ETC Manager and the assigned 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 Eionet, 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.

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 28 EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey), are eligible, subject to 6.2 and 6.3, for submitting proposals. Consortia must identify one of their partners as coordinator who will interface with the EEA.

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.

With a view to assess the fulfilment of the eligibility criteria, the consortium's coordinator is required to submit a proposal submission form (see annex 1) duly filled out and signed.

6.2 Ne bis in idem

No partner may participate **in more than one** consortium aiming at the FPA **concerning this ETC**, i.e. the ETC on Urban, land use and soil. 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 on Urban, land use and soil. 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 106(1), 107 and 109(1)(b) of the Financial Rules applicable to the general budget of the European Union²⁴.

When submitting their application, each partner of the consortium must provide a declaration on their honour in accordance with the form attached as annex 2, duly signed and dated, stating that they are not in any of the situations specified in the above mentioned provisions.

The partners of the consortium with whom the EEA will enter into a Framework Partnership Agreement will be required, prior to the signature of the agreement, to provide the evidence specified in the penultimate paragraph of the declaration of honour mentioned above (see annex 2).

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, or entry in the VAT register or any other statutory document allowing verification of the partner's legal status.

To that effect, each partner of a consortium is required to submit a legal entity form (see annex 3) duly filled out and signed, accompanied by a copy of inscription in a trade register and, where applicable, a copy of inscription in VAT register.

(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 2015-2018;

²⁴ Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25.10.2012, OJEU L 298/1 of 26.10.2012.

- 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 year²⁵).

(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 of the partner's managerial staff as well as those of the staff designated to carry out the work indicating, *inter alia*, the educational and professional qualifications and statement of language skills;
2. Signed letters of intent of:
 - the ETC Manager and core staff of the consortium coordinator; as well as
 - the key experts²⁶ 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;

3. 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);
4. Letters of intent of all consortium partners to participate and provide co-financing up to at least 10% of the total eligible cost of the action²⁷;
5. For each partner established in an EEA member country, letters of confirmation from the respective Member of the EEA Management Board²⁸ that the relevant partner is able to perform the function of an ETC partner within Eionet;
6. For each partner, proof and description of their Quality Assurance and Quality Control systems;
7. For each partner, proof and description of their environmental policy specifying the status of implementation.

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 award criteria and allocation of points as outlined below, producing a maximum total score of 100 points:

²⁵ Having regard to Article 196(3) RAP 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.

²⁶ i.e. experts from the partners in the consortium who would be entrusted with the performance of activities in the main work areas should dedicate between 50 to 75% of their time for that purpose. The letters of intent to be provided shall therefore cover at least the staff designated to carry out the work whose CVs have been submitted in accordance with point 6.4(c)(1).

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ <http://www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/governance/management-board/list-of-management-board-members>

No	Award criteria	Max. points
1	<p>General understanding of the task.</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the policies and stakeholders that the EEA and the Eionet are supporting and cooperating within the topic area; • how the different dimensions of the topic area (e.g. urban systems, land and soil) are related, and how they are related to thematic and cross-cutting issues outside the topic area; • how the environmental and policy issues in the topic area vary across the EEA member countries and how it impacts on the tasks of the EEA and Eionet; • the roles of data, indicators and assessments in EEA work in the topic area, and the methodologies and frameworks, such as urban audit, land use/land cover and soil inventories, spatial modelling and land accounting, that underpin the work; • the importance of collaboration within and outside Eionet. 	20
2	<p>Data and information systems</p> <p>Sound knowledge of the actual and potential existence, availability and usefulness of data and information on urban systems, land use and soil (including status and flows) from Eionet sources, and from other official and non-official sources at (sub)national, EU and international levels, including sources such as expert surveys, research, citizen science and remote sensing; experience and expertise in supporting the design, quality control and management of data and information systems in the topic area reflecting SEIS principles and Inspire requirements, inter alia exploiting accounting frameworks and data modelling and assimilation techniques.</p>	15
3	<p>Assessments</p> <p>Experience and expertise in supporting the definition, production, management and use of indicators in the topic area, and in contributing to thematic, sectoral and cross-cutting assessments.</p>	20
4	<p>Policy support</p> <p>Experience and expertise in providing technical and scientific support to the development and implementation of international, EU, national or scale-relevant (e.g. regional cooperation areas) policy processes, including contributions to ex-ante and ex-post analysis of the effectiveness of strategies and policies, in the topic area.</p>	15

No	Award criteria	Max. points
5	<p>Collaboration and networking</p> <p>Sound approach to collaborating with and providing capacity-building support to Eionet member organisations in member countries; experience and expertise in accessing and working together with relevant expert networks and institutes external to the Eionet, including the relevant communities of practice and the scientific world.</p>	15
6	<p>ETC management</p> <p>Sound arrangements for implementing transparent, effective and quality-assured management of the ETC consortium, including financial management. Sound approach to managing different dimensions of the topic area individually and as a coherent whole, and to addressing geographical specificities in the topic area across EEA member countries. Sound environmental policy for the consortium. Adequate level of manpower, resources and output corresponding to the indicative annual budget.</p>	15
Total		100

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 Framework Partnership Agreement, 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/about-us/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

Deadline for submitting proposals: **31 March 2014**

Opening of proposals: **7 April 2014**

Evaluation of proposals: **5 or 7 May 2014 (indicative dates)**

Following the decision of the EEA Management Board on the designation of the successful consortium (foreseen for 18 June 2014) and prior to signature of the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) all consortia will be notified of the outcome of this call.

10. Presentation of the proposal

Proposals shall be submitted in accordance with the ***double envelopes system***:

The outer envelope or parcel should be sealed with adhesive tape and signed across the seal and carry the following information:

- The call for proposals reference No EEA/NSV/14/001-ETC/ULS
- The call for proposals title “Framework partnership agreement concerning the European Topic Centre on Urban, land use and soil 2015-2018”
- The name of the consortium’s coordinator
- The indication “Proposal – Not to be opened by the internal mail services”
- The address for submission of proposals (as specified in the letter of invitation to submit proposals)
- The date of submission shall be legible on the outer envelope or parcel

The outer envelope or parcel must contain three inner envelopes, i.e. Envelopes No 1, 2 and 3, corresponding to the following three sections: Executive summary, Administrative section and technical proposal.

(a) Envelope No 1 – Executive summary shall include the following information (max. 10 pages):

- ETC name as indicated in the title of these terms of reference;
- Full contact details of the partner assuming the role of coordinator of the consortium;
- Name and CV (abstract) of the proposed ETC Manager affiliated with the partner coordinating the consortium;
- Presentation of the core team of the partner coordinating the consortium;
- Full contact details of each other partners of the consortium;
- For each partner, name and CVs (abstract) of key experts expected to contribute at least 100 days/year to the ETC.
- Brief summary of the technical proposal (max. 5 A4 pages)

(b) Envelope No 2 – Administrative section shall include the following information:

- The proposal submission form drawn up in accordance with the template in annex 1
- For each partner, the declaration on exclusion criteria as required under section 6.3 drawn up in accordance with the template in annex 2
- For each partner, the legal entity form as required under section 6.4 (a) drawn up in accordance with the model in annex 3
- For the partner acting as coordinator of the consortium, the financial identification form drawn up in accordance with the template in annex 4
- The evidence and documentation demonstrating the fulfilment of the selection criteria as required under section 6.4 (b) (economic and financial capacity) and 6.4 (c) (technical and professional capacity)

(c) Envelope No 3 – Technical proposal shall include the following:

The technical proposal providing all information requested under section 6.5 – Award criteria

Proposals shall be drafted in one of the languages of the EEA member countries, **preferably in English** (supporting evidence does not need to be translated) and submitted in **duplicate** (one original unbound and one copy).

It is important that proposals are presented in the correct format and include all documents necessary to enable the evaluation committee to assess them. Failure to respect these requirements will constitute a formal error and may result in the rejection of the proposal.

Consortia shall observe precisely the indications in points 2, 3, 4 and 6 of the letter of invitation to submit a proposal to ensure their proposal is admissible. Late delivery will lead to non-admissibility of the proposal and its rejection from the award procedure. Proposals sent by e-mail or by fax will also be non-admissible and discarded. Envelopes or parcels found opened at the opening session will also lead to non-admissibility of the proposal. Consequently, consortia must ensure that their proposals are packed in such a way to prevent any accidental opening during their mailing.

11. Confidentiality and protection of personal data

For the processing of this award procedure, the EEA observes the rules set in Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data (OJEU L 8/1 of 12.1.2001).

For further detailed information please refer to the privacy statement available on the EEA external website at the following address: <http://www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/tenders/privacy-statement>.

ANNEXES

Annex 1 – Proposal submission form

Annex 2 – Declaration on exclusion criteria

Annex 3 – Legal entity form

Annex 4 – Financial identification form (only for the partner coordinating the consortium)

Annex 5 – Draft framework partnership agreement and specific agreement