



Terms of reference text for the European Topic Centre on Urban, Land and Soil systems (2019-2021)

Reference: Open call for proposals No OCP/EEA/NSS/18/003-ETC/ULS

Closing date: 30.4.2018

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 (EU) and its Member States (MS) in developing, implementing and evaluating European environment policies. The EEA 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 ⁽¹⁾), a partnership network consisting of the EEA itself, six European Topic Centres (ETCs) and a network of around 1000 experts from 39 countries in over 350 national environment agencies and other bodies dealing with environment information. These are the National Focal Points (NFPs) and the National Reference Centres (NRC). Through Eionet the EEA collects environment-related data and information, which is made available through various report series, briefings and the EEA website ⁽²⁾. 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 EU. The functioning of the EEA and Eionet are described in the EEA regulation ⁽³⁾. The EEA, which is open to all nations sharing its objectives, currently has 33 member countries ⁽⁴⁾ and 6 cooperating countries ⁽⁵⁾ in the West Balkans, jointly referred to as the EEA39.

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 public information

⁽¹⁾ <http://www.eionet.europa.eu>

⁽²⁾ <https://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/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32009R0401>)

⁽⁴⁾ These are the 28 MS of the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.

⁽⁵⁾ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia as well as Kosovo under the UN Security Council Resolution No 1244/99.

providers sharing environmental data and information. It builds on existing e-infrastructure, systems and services in the member countries, EU institutions and main international and regional partner organisations.

As stated above, 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', 'Urban, Land and Soil systems', 'Biological Diversity', and 'Waste and Material in a Green Economy'.

Having regard to the expiry of the framework partnership agreement (FPA) concerning the ETC on Urban, Land and Soil systems on 20 July 2018, the EEA launches this call with a view to identifying the consortium that will take up the work in the topic area from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.

1.2 Role of European Topic Centres (ETCs)

ETCs are, according to the EEA regulation ⁽⁶⁾ and in practice, an important instrument supporting the EEA through the execution of sizeable, continuous, well-defined tasks with the involvement of EEA countries. Tasks focus on the harmonisation of monitoring of the environment in EEA countries, the compilation of the resulting data in 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 EEA countries in the harmonisation, quality assessment and exchange of data and/or information, capacity-building in EEA 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 EEA countries also includes their involvement in indicator analysis and assessment. Under the overall guidance of the EEA, leading, steering and supervising their work, ETCs are also expected to cooperate amongst themselves on crosscutting projects.

The role of ETCs in supporting EU legislation implementation has been also a key element of EEA activities towards its support to Commission work. In some cases some capacity building with MS is involved in these reporting and assessments activities.

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 topic areas and analyse environmental and climate change data with regard to societal and economic developments relevant to environmental, climate change and sectoral policies and achieving sustainable development.

1.3 Agreements

The successful consortium will be awarded an FPA for a maximum period of 36 months starting from the date of signature and not exceeding 31 December 2021. The FPA will be implemented through specific grant agreements (SAs), which shall be valid for a period of 12 months. Annexes to such SAs will include a detailed description of the tasks to be performed and of the deliverables to be provided and shall be decided upon by the EEA and ETCs taking into account the requirements of all parts of Eionet and other stakeholders.

The total value of the FPA ranges between EUR 2,900,000.00 and EUR 3,300,000.00 over a maximum period of 36 months. However, the total value of the annual budget for each SA will be subject to

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

available funds from the general budget of the EU and the priorities set in the EEA's annual work programme.

All grants are subject to co-financing by the consortium concerned (minimum 10% of the total eligible costs ⁽⁷⁾).

The FPA will be signed between the EEA and the appointed coordinator of the consortium to whom the other consortium partners confer powers of attorney for the purposes of submission of the proposal and signature of the FPA and SAs and any subsequent amendments thereto.

For further details, reference is made to the draft FPA and draft SA attached as annex 5.

2. Future demands on EEA work in the area of urban, land use and soil 2019-2021

2.1 Policy context

ETC support to EEA is needed in particular in areas where EEA contributions to the policy process entails a complex knowledge base and the management of large amounts of data, information and their concise quality assurance, interpretation and assessment. In the following, the wider policy context, of which the ETC needs to be aware, is scoped. The concrete roles of the EEA and ETC are described in section 2.2, and specific ETC tasks in section 3. The proposal submitted in response to this call is expected to demonstrate the capability of the consortium to work with all the specific tasks targeted in the described policy context.

The urban, land use and soil policy context up to 2020 consists of new EU and global policy frameworks agreed in 2011-2018. The general European Union Environment Action Programme to 2020, 'Living well, within the limits of our planet' (7th EAP) (COM(2012) 710 final) ⁽⁸⁾, follows on relevant objectives and milestones in the EU Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe (COM(2011) 571 final) ⁽⁹⁾, including the Rio+20 goal of a 'land-degradation neutral world'⁽¹⁰⁾, and the 2006 EU Soil Thematic Strategy ⁽¹¹⁾. A revised Urban Agenda for the EU (i.e. the Pact of Amsterdam) and the New Urban Agenda by UN HABITAT ⁽¹²⁾ were developed and agreed by the countries in 2016.

The 7th EAP contains three thematic priority objectives that directly identify targets and respective actions for urban, land use and soil:

- Priority objective 1: To protect, conserve and enhance the Union's natural capital.
- Priority objective 2: To turn the Union into a resource efficient, green and competitive low-carbon economy.
- 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

⁽⁷⁾ 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.

⁽⁸⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/newprg/pdf/PE00064_en.pdf

⁽⁹⁾ [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/com/com_com\(2011\)0571_/com_com\(2011\)0571_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/com/com_com(2011)0571_/com_com(2011)0571_en.pdf)

⁽¹⁰⁾ 'The Future We Want', paragraph 206.

⁽¹¹⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/soil/three_en.htm

⁽¹²⁾ <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/NUA-English.pdf>

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/ULS. These developments are in line with the implementation of the EU Soil Thematic Strategy, where different EU policies (e.g. agriculture, industrial emissions) play a key role in working towards the goal of sustainable use of 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 land degradation striving to achieve a land degradation neutral world in the context of sustainable development’ ⁽¹³⁾.

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 considers soil as a non-renewable resource which performs many vital land functions.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has a major influence on agriculture, forestry and rural development in Europe and has increasingly taken on objectives related to land management and addressed land degradation; thus CAP is vital for achieving EU land objectives. In addition, land use, land use change and forestry, or LULUCF, is a major part of EU and international climate policy. The Decision 529/2013/EU and the 2016 proposal for EU regulation (COM(2016)479 final) on accounting rules on greenhouse gas emissions and removals resulting from activities relating to land use, land-use change and forestry for 2021-2030 is a 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.

The Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020 (TA 2020) covers strategic matters to achieve Territorial Cohesion in Europe (introduced by the Lisbon Treaty). It recognizes main territorial challenges in Europe and aims at a coordinated approach to transform these into potentials for sustainable and harmonious territorial development. It points at risks regarding the environmental infrastructure (e.g. adaptation to climate change, quality of air, soil and water) and at geographically diverse impacts (disparities in the access to clean air, water and soil, which do not only appear between countries and regions but also between urban and rural areas as well as inside cities).

Regarding cities, the 7th EAP confirmed the importance of urban areas. The priority objective 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’.

Farmland and forest land occupy around 90% of EU territory. The quality and restoration of these terrestrial ecosystems (which also include cities) are targeted by policies such as water and nature EU legislation, and the EU Biodiversity strategy to 2020. Spatial mapping and assessments of ecosystems (as territorial assets) form important knowledge developments in Europe and are supported by activities under the Copernicus programme.

⁽¹³⁾ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 27 July 2012 66/288. The future we want.

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. Since 2015, EEA is entrusted to implement the Copernicus land monitoring service and coordinate the Copernicus in situ component.

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 EEA Multiannual Work Programme 2014-2018 ⁽¹⁴⁾, that has been extended to 2020, 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 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 the 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, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and UNCCD (global Convention on desertification), as well as more recently EU Common Agricultural Policy and territorial cohesion objectives.

The period from adoption of the current EEA Multiannual Work Programme 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 2013 ⁽¹⁵⁾, where land is mentioned among three key resources that require

⁽¹⁴⁾ See EEA website

⁽¹⁵⁾ 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

indicators to measure progress towards the overall objective of the EU2020 objective of an overall decoupling of resource use and its environmental impacts from economic growth.

For the past years, the EEA has already been putting the above principles and approaches into practise in the area of urban, land use and soil. Two concrete interlinked areas of work in support to policies will continue in the future, in continuity and reinforcement of the cooperation with European Commission services (JRC and Eurostat in particular) in the related domains.

For one part, the support to developing the generic knowledge base related to urban, land use and soil issues, including environmental accounting, through inter alia:

- Analysis of environmental issues in land systems by involving land, soil and socio-economic data across the urban-rural interface, as well as particular territorial characteristics such as coastal areas, in cooperation with the DG JRC, DG Eurostat, DG REGIO, DG AGRI and the EEA countries. This also includes analytical support to the Integrated Urban Monitoring in Europe (IUME) ⁽¹⁶⁾ process and the Green Infrastructure Strategy ⁽¹⁷⁾ under 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.

For the other, articulate data and information flows supporting EU Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe objectives and those of the 7th EAP priority on natural capital (PO1) and resource efficiency (PO2), which consider a set of actions that established a set of land and soil-related targets. These 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 SDGs (e.g. land-degradation neutral world). Confirmed by the 7th EAP, the European Commission aimed to undertake, with the Member States 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). 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), as well as the Urban Agenda for the EU and EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change (COM/2013/0216 final), Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020 ⁽¹⁸⁾, and DG REGIO Urban and Territorial Development work priorities for 2014-2020 ⁽¹⁹⁾ proposing actions and contributing to the knowledge base at Commission level. These should be taken into account in future ETC/ULS work linking to specific activities of the other ETCs;
- EEA data services for land (focusing on land systems, including agriculture, forest and rural components) and urban environment in support of the EU actions on urban, land use and soil. Revising the concept of land systems and linking it to a clear user requirements and implementation plan. Moreover, foreseeing an evolving partnership between the EEA and

⁽¹⁶⁾ <http://iume.ew.eea.europa.eu/>

⁽¹⁷⁾ Green Infrastructure (GI) — Enhancing Europe's Natural Capital (COM(2013) 249 final)

⁽¹⁸⁾ <http://www.eu2011.hu/files/bveu/documents/TA2020.pdf>

⁽¹⁹⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/how/priorities/

European 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 policy implementation issues and, on the other, their relevance for integrated analysis, reaching out to interconnected matters in the domains of 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 SDGs and follow-up actions under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) ⁽²⁰⁾ regarding land degradation still require further reading on how to shape the EEA work up to 2020 while the EEA Multiannual Work Programme from 2014 onwards already is addressing many relevant topics, in particular through outputs and performance indicators in its project group Urban, land use and soil.

3. Specific tasks of the European Topic Centre on Urban, Land and Soil systems

3.1 Organisation of the work

The European Topic Centre on Urban, Land and Soil systems (ETC/ULS) shall support the work of the EEA in these interconnected themes in the period 2019-2021. The key priority working areas are 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 the EEA and European Commission services. These areas will include:

- Support to implementing the Copernicus land monitoring service to provide information linked to the global-to-local environmental monitoring of land features, biodiversity, terrestrial ecosystems, and natural land-based resources (soil, water or biomass);
- Support to the European assessment and reporting on the global land degradation neutrality and EU strategies on natural capital and resource efficiency, while supporting implementation of data and information aspects, namely monitoring and assessing land and soil-related processes across urban and rural dimensions of European land systems, including the ecosystemic dimension;
- Work on territorial analyses that will encompass the policy framework of EU Regional and Urban policy, such as Territorial cohesion, e.g. development of 'territorial capital' indicators, rural measures (under the CAP), 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. agriculture, forestry, tourism), which requires cooperation with DG REGIO, DG AGRI, Eurostat, DG GROW and other EU, pan-European and global partners;
- Support to the implementation of existing EU policies for urban areas and strategies on sustainable cities, 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.

On land and soil-related resource efficiency, a wider understanding of land systems and the land degradation neutrality concept in Europe as a follow-up of the Rio+20 and the 'land-degradation

⁽²⁰⁾ <https://www.ipbes.net/deliverables/3bi-land-degradation>

neutral world' goal is required, in particular in support of the activities underlying key milestones on land and soil objectives set in the EU Roadmap for Resource Efficiency.

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 approaches based on EU regional sea catchments or major river basins (such as the Danube catchment). Mountains 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 (addressed in Maritime spatial planning directive 2014/89/EU), strategic environmental assessment (i.e. the SEA directive) and urban design, linking these measures to agriculture and forests management.

In recognition of the different expertise needed for the various types of work to be done under these interconnected topics (territorial analysis and urban systems; land and soil-related resource efficiency; territorial development and regional information), and in order to ensure the best allocation of available resources, the expected work covers four structural domains: Monitoring, data management and information systems; Indicators; Assessments; and Networking and policy support. All are applicable to all three topic areas.

Work package 1 – Monitoring, data management and information systems

- Assist EEA in maintaining the function of 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 the Land Use and Coverage Area frame Survey (LUCAS)) and JRC on topics of soil and forest;
- 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 the LUCAS survey;
- Assist EEA in supporting the European Commission-led development of the European Forest Information System (FISE) (depending on provision of resources to the EEA);
- Possible support to the implementation of the proposed LULUCF regulation (COM(2016)479 final) on parameters related to soil carbon accounting, in collaboration with JRC and Eurostat (on LUCAS);
- In close cooperation with JRC and Eurostat, address the needs, benefits and design options about soil monitoring in Europe, considering links to other natural resources such as water, air and biodiversity, while building on existing (national) assessment schemes, applying INSPIRE;
- Further develop the EEA Data service ⁽²¹⁾ for urban environment providing quality-assured urban data in support of European reporting initiatives using SEIS and INSPIRE principles; 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. ICLEI, ISOCARP) levels;

⁽²¹⁾ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/sustainability-transitions/dc>

- Organise data and information on urban areas and their territorial flows in support to the implementation of the EU Urban and Regional policies agenda, and 7th EAP priority objective 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);
- Explore the concept of territorial regional alliances and regional cooperation bodies (e.g. CPMR, VASAB, 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 territorial analyses (e.g. coastal areas).

Work package 2 – Indicators

- Assess pressures on land and soil resources from a wide range of socio-economic activities in the land systems context, 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 the development of indicators about critical soil functions, such as those related to the filtering and release of heavy metals, nitrogen and soil carbon; specific issues in urban and rural landscapes are considered including the abundance of contaminated sites and management of them;
- Provide guidance on the development of indicators related to forested land and the data flows possibly needed;
- Contribute with land and soil-related inputs to the EEA work on green infrastructure and biophysical mapping of ecosystems and their services, including providing necessary inputs to ETC/BD on ecosystem assessment;
- Further develop and update EEA indicator frameworks, including land take, landscape fragmentation and imperviousness indicators, link to other land and soil related indicators in the agri-environment and forest indicator sets, and integrate them into EEA assessments;
- Assist further development of EEA natural capital 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;
- Support the territorial reporting and assessment frameworks being further advanced under the EU Territorial cohesion policy, and the modernization and simplification of the Common Agricultural Policy (pillar II on rural areas), 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 AGRI;
- Contribute to the development of 'territorial capital' 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;
- 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 as well as territorial footprints;

- Produce analyses on the state and trends of urban areas and their status in terms of environmental quality, 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);
- Support Eionet in establishing the indicator framework for assessing environmental impacts of tourism, linking to existing work on sustainable tourism destination indicators in DG GROW, other indicators at Eurostat, and streamline with other EEA indicator sets.

Work package 3 – Assessments

- Assess and gather knowledge on methodologies required for integrated land systems assessment for Europe, including links to natural capital accounting, based on country and global organisation experiences; analyse and evaluate links between land use and demographic change. This will include integration of the remote sensing approach (Copernicus land monitoring products) and in-situ survey (LUCAS), following the standard classification on land cover and land use in the framework of the INSPIRE directive;
- 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 assessments of the impact of global megatrends and climate change;
- Prepare related 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 state and outlook of the environment report (SOER). Using to this end the SOER2015 thematic assessment on urban systems, the urban components of SOER2020 and existing EEA reports on Urban quality of life (EEA Report No 5/2009), Urban adaptation (EEA Report No 2/2012), Efficient cities (EEA reports No 23, 24/2015), Urban sprawl (EEA report 11/2016) and Urban typologies (EEA report in late 2017) as a baseline, set as the benchmark to evaluate progress in the policy cycle;
- Improve the EEA communication on urban environment via diversified products and media channels ⁽²²⁾, including on floods, air quality, green infrastructure, transport and noise aspects;
- In support to spatially integrated assessments, 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;
- Information collection and evaluation as well as policy support on soil functions and degradation processes, in particular on soil contamination and their drivers and responses on national territories.

Work package 4 – Networking and policy support

- Establish the relevant interfaces with other ETCs, other key partners, in particular JRC and Eurostat, as relevant and defined in the EEA's annual work programmes, and with the research and scientific communities via appropriate projects or networks;
- Actively support EEA in its support to the implementation of the 7th EAP land and soil objectives and the EU Expert Group on Soil Protection by providing information relevant to proposed land targets and give expert advice on related soil issues;

⁽²²⁾ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/sustainability-transitions/urban-environment>

- Support EEA and actively participate in Eionet NRC networks on Land use and spatial planning (LUSP), on Soil, Land cover, Environment and agriculture and the Eionet forest expert group;
- Specifically on soil, consolidate the collaboration with JRC to join in European Regional Soil Partnership (within the Global Soil Partnership) activities;
- 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;
- Network with major players in these areas, both at EU and global level, and liaise with major assessment processes within a natural capital assessments framework.

3.2 General activities

Work package 5 - ETC management, capacity-building and cross-ETC cooperation

The organisational set-up and management procedures of the ETC consortium must meet the special and general conditions of the FPA. To ensure this, the management of the ETC requires, for example, clear decision and communication structures within the consortium, and well-functioning links to the EEA, which leads on networking with countries and coordinating with the European Commission, and other relevant organisations.

The ETC management must provide a robust risk management structure and procedures, and maintain procedures for quality assurance - including language-checking and management-level sign-off - 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 on content-related tasks for EEA at least 50% of their time.

In order to enable international networking, the consortium should include partners with experience in EU and regional level work and international networks, without necessarily representing all EEA member countries.

As the ETCs are part of Eionet, close link to other Eionet members (EEA countries and other ETCs) is instrumental. This needs to be realised through:

- strong communication efforts with the countries, including networking and country visits within defined processes;
- in dialogue with the countries, identifying barriers preventing them from optimally performing 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 countries; build upon the discussion results of the Eionet groups (i.e. NRC LUSP, NRC Soil, NRC Land cover, NRC Environment and agriculture, and the Eionet forest expert group);
- gathering feedback on the effectiveness of networking and training activities and acting on that feedback;
- 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;

- establishing the relevant interfaces with other key partners, as relevant and defined in the action plans, including the research and scientific communities active in the relevant domains via appropriate projects or networks.

Priority areas for cross-ETC cooperation could include:

- conceptual development of spatial-temporal landscape systems by combining territorial extent, functional capacity and temporal change, and how these can be framed in the assessment of ecosystem condition as assessed under MAES;
- land cover/use (including use of Copernicus information) and its impact on biodiversity (including link to land use accounts);
- habitat loss, landscape fragmentation and connectivity (land and water) and green infrastructure (wider landscape as well as urban environment);
- land-based pressures on coastal and inland water bodies in supporting assessments of aquatic ecosystems and their services;
- cooperation on land-atmosphere exchanges, related to sequestration and emissions from land, and state of soil as a carbon pool;
- contributing to terrestrial habitat information in EUNIS through cooperation on the classifications and respective cross-walks, and providing spatial expertise;
- underpinning the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 implementation by land and soil related information across different reporting strategies. Such cross-cutting dimension is further extended to Earth observation data, as well as land-dependant sectors such as agriculture and forestry.

4. General guidance on the organisation and structure of the European Topic Centre on Urban, Land and Soil systems

The present and earlier ETCs are consortia of government, research and non-profit organisations, as well as commercial firms. Based upon EEA experience, some general guidance can be given on the structure of a consortium:

- The ETC consortium shall comprise one coordinating organisation and several partners.
- A structure needs to be in place to ensure efficient communication and coordination between and among the ETC coordinator and all partners. This can e.g. be through organisation in teams or with dedicated core staff at the coordinating organisation and/or one of the key partners.
- The consortium should be organised around the following administrative functions:
 - an ETC manager, and a deputy ETC manager or similar function ensuring continuity of services, both 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.
- The ETC manager, deputy manager and key experts organising and leading on the thematic content should have a high level of senior management expertise, good knowledge of the policy setting, strong integration into the respective scientific community, and interdisciplinary expertise across the different relevant topics. At least 50% of their time should be made available to the work of the ETC.

- The ETC manager, deputy manager, core staff and key experts develop the annual action plans together with the assigned EEA Head of Group and project staff responsible for managing the tasks, in mutual understanding and the agreed iterative process, based on the priorities set by EEA in its multiannual programming documents and annual work programme for the year in question.
- 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 and a dedicated coordination structure can facilitate management and coherence of delivery. However, this has to be balanced against the need to cover the required fields of expertise and to ensure good geographical coverage across Europe.
- The consortium as a whole needs to cover the main work areas with the expertise listed under 5.2 below. It is important to show a wider European expertise, using a consortium spread over different member countries and different national experiences (see also eligibility criterion under 6.1 below). 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 with relevant Commission services and/or other international policy and scientific communities.

5. Minimum requirements

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

5.1 Organisation and governance

- 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 and following the requirements as stated in the EEA Corporate Identity Manual²³ and the EEA writing manual (see annex 7). Future beneficiaries are required to have a quality control procedure to this effect (see also the award criteria under section 6.5 below).
- Without exception, the ETC shall report solely to the EEA, the main contact points being the ETC manager and/or the deputy ETC manager, the Head of Group for Land systems and the assigned EEA Project Managers.
- Subject to guidance from the EEA, the ETC shall carry out the necessary checks in accordance with the terms and arrangements laid down in the FPA and the respective SA or in the consortium agreement in order to ensure the quality and regularity of the implementation of the annual action plans.
- 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).

²³ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/eea-corporate-design-manual>

- 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 increasing attention. 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 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 (see also section 7 below).

5.2 Technical and scientific expertise

The ETC is expected to have technical and scientific expertise that allow it to undertake the tasks and provide the deliverables listed above under section 3 above. In broad terms, technical and scientific expertise and experience in the following areas is specifically needed (which will be appraised by reference to the award criteria listed under section 6.5 below):

- International, EU and national policy developments regarding urban environment, land and soil assessments, including territorial analysis and regional information;
- Good understanding of reporting under 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; agriculture and forestry; 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 their 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 4; understanding of INSPIRE directive provisions and Copernicus services;

- 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 relevant indicators;
- Understanding of methods for territorial and regional policies analysis including environmental aspects in relation to Europe 2020²⁴ and the green growth concept of OECD²⁵;
- 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 SEEA²⁶ framework for environmental accounting;
- QA/QC of data flows, indicators and assessments on urban, land use and soil;
- SEIS principles, EEA spatial data infrastructure, Integrated data platform and their associated services, including geo-spatial data management;
- 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.

6. Criteria

The evaluation procedure will consist in three successive stages; only the proposals meeting the requirements of one stage will be examined in the next stage. The procedure foresees

1. to check, in the first stage, whether applicants can take part in the award procedure (eligibility, legal capacity and exclusion criteria);
2. to check, in the second stage, the financial and operational capacity of each applicant who has passed the eligibility stage (selection criteria); and
3. to assess, in the third stage, the quality of each proposal which has passed the eligibility and selection stages (award 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 MS, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey), are eligible, subject to 6.2 and 6.3 below, for submitting proposals ⁽²⁷⁾. 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

²⁴ A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth - COM(2010) 2020

²⁵ <http://www.oecd.org/greengrowth/oecdworkongreengrowth.htm>

²⁶ System of Integrated Economic and Environmental Accounting

⁽²⁷⁾ For British partners: Please be aware that eligibility criteria must be complied with for the entire duration of the FPA. If the United Kingdom withdraws from the EU during the FPA period without concluding an agreement with the EU ensuring in particular that British partners continue to be eligible, British partners will then cease to receive EU funding (while continuing, where possible, to participate) or be required to leave the consortium on the basis of Article II.12.2(a) of the FPA.

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 estimated total value of the FPA as specified under section 1.3 above.

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

While partners may participate in consortia aiming at FPAs concerning different ETCs ⁽²⁸⁾, **no partner may participate in more than one consortium aiming at the FPA concerning the ETC of this Call for proposals**, i.e. the ETC on Urban, Land and Soil systems (ETC/ULS). 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 this ETC, i.e. the ETC on Urban, Land and Soil systems (ETC/ULS). 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 award 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 Union ⁽²⁹⁾.

When submitting their application, each consortium partner (including any subcontractor) 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 an FPA 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

> *Requirement:*

Any consortium partner is required to prove that it is authorised to perform the FPA under national law.

⁽²⁸⁾ See the parallel calls for proposals No OCP/EEA/ACC/18/001-ETC/ATNI, OCP/EEA/ACC/18/002-ETC/CME, OCP/EEA/ACC/18/003-ETC/CCA, OCP/EEA/IEA/18/001-ETC/WMGE, OCP/EEA/NSS/18/001-ETC/BD and OCP/EEA/NSS/18/002-ETC/ICM, <https://www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/tenders/calls-for-proposals/open>.

⁽²⁹⁾ 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. This regulation is currently under revision.

> *Evidence to be provided:*

Each consortium partner 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 or professional register and/or a copy of inscription in the VAT register, or a sworn declaration or certificate, or evidence of membership of a specific organisation, or express authorisation, or any other statutory document allowing verification of the partner's legal status.

(b) Financial capacity

> *Requirement:*

Consortia must have stable and sufficient source of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period of the FPA (2019-2021) and to contribute to its funding.

> *Evidence to be provided:*

- Each consortium partner shall provide a duly completed and signed simplified Financial Statement, in accordance with the template provided as annex 6;
- In addition for private partners: balance sheets or extracts from balance sheets for at least the last two financial years for which the accounts were closed, where publication of the balance sheet is required under the company law of the country in which the consortium partner is established.

(c) Operational capacity

> *Requirements:*

Consortia must have the following professional competencies and qualifications required to complete the annual action plans:

- relevant experience in terms of human resources
- relevant experience in the provision of comparable services to similar clients over the past three years
- application of quality control processes
- application of environmental management measures

> *Evidence to be provided:*

The following documents or information shall be presented as evidence of compliance with the operational capacity selection criteria:

Human resources

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, and identification of relevant skills, expertise and experience;
2. Signed letters of intent of:
 - the ETC manager, deputy ETC manager, and other core staff performing the administrative functions listed under section 4 above, as well as
 - the key experts ⁽³⁰⁾ of **all** consortium partners,

⁽³⁰⁾ 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 at least 50 % of their time for that purpose. The letters of intent to be

proving that the consortium as a whole has sufficient technical, scientific and management (including financial) experience to assume the role of an ETC;

3. 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 action³¹;
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.

Past contracts

5. A list and brief account of work considered relevant and carried out by the partners forming the consortium in the past three years, indicating the value, dates and recipients of the services (public or private).

Quality control

6. For each consortium partner, proof and description of their Quality Assurance and Quality Control systems; namely, details of any quality assurance accreditation that they hold; if no accreditation held, consortium partners shall provide an outline of any quality assurance policy specifying the status of implementation and details of any quality assurance accreditations for which they have applied.

Environment policy

7. For each consortium partner, proof and description of their environmental management measures or system, specifying the status of implementation.

6.5 Award criteria

The FPA 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 documentation provided to demonstrate that the consortium meets the six award criteria set out below. The allocation of weightings to the 6 criteria is also given, corresponding to a maximum total score of 100 points:

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; 	15

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).

⁽³¹⁾ 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.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how the environmental and policy issues in the topic area vary across EEA countries and how this 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. 	
2	<p>Data and information systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	20
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 or national policy processes, including contributions to ex-ante and ex-post analysis of the effectiveness of strategies and policies, in the topic area.</p>	15
5	<p>Collaboration and networking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound approach to collaborating with and providing capacity-building support to Eionet member organisations in EEA countries; • Experience and expertise in accessing and working together with relevant expert networks and institutes external to the Eionet, including the scientific world; • Experience and expertise in preparing and facilitating in a participatory manner workshops, webinars and similar. 	15

6	<p>ETC management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 countries; • Sound environmental policy for the consortium; • Adequate level of manpower, resources and output corresponding to the indicative annual budget; • Completeness and quality of the proposed QA/QC procedures and standards that will be applied to ensure the proper quality of the work and deliverables. 	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 FPA, 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 website: <https://www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/emas/index.html>.

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

8.1 Contractual terms and guarantees

In drawing up their proposal, applicants shall bear in mind the provisions of the draft FPA and draft SA attached as annex 5 to these terms of reference, particularly those on payment arrangements, performance of the agreement, confidentiality, and checks and audits. Any limitation, amendment or denial of the terms of the draft FPA and draft SA will lead to the automatic exclusion from the award procedure.

The consortium partners shall have internal arrangements regarding their operation and coordination to ensure that the FPA and the annual action plan under an SA are implemented properly. These internal arrangements must be set out in a written consortium agreement between the partners, which may cover all aspects necessary for the management and internal organisation of the consortium, including the business continuity, the distribution of the EEA funding, the settlement of internal disputes, liability and confidentiality between the consortium partners, and, where appropriate, additional rules on intellectual and industrial property rights.

Payments shall be made upon delivery and approval of the services requested, within the deadline stipulated in the SA and upon receipt and approval by the EEA of the relevant cost statements and any supporting documents relating to the tasks undertaken.

No financial guarantee will be required.

8.2 Subcontracting

A consortium partner may subcontract part of the services.

If a consortium partner intends to have recourse to subcontracting for performance of the action, it shall specify the name, address and legal status and provide a document containing a list of the professional qualifications of each envisaged subcontractor as well as a statement of the means of ensuring quality and confidentiality when subcontractors are used. Consortium partners shall bear in mind that subcontracts may only cover the execution of a limited part of the action, and that they shall retain sole responsibility for carrying out the action and complying with the terms of the FPA and the corresponding SA.

For more detailed information, reference is made to Article II.10 of the draft FPA (see annex 5).

9. Timing

Deadline for submitting proposals: **30.4.2018**

Opening of proposals: **7.5.2018**

Evaluation of proposals: **From 8.5.2018 to 31.5.2018 (indicative dates)**

Following the decision of the EEA Management Board on the designation of the successful consortium (foreseen for **19 June 2018**) and prior to signature of the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) all consortia will be notified of the outcome of this call.

Signature of the FPA: **by mid-September 2018 (indicative date)**

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 OCP/EEA/NSS/18/003-ETC/ULS
- The call for proposals title ***“Framework partnership agreement concerning the European Topic Centre on Urban, Land and Soil systems 2019-2021”***
- 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, deputy ETC manager and other core staff performing the administrative functions listed under section 4 above
- Presentation of the proposed organisation of the consortium
- Full contact details of each of the other partners of the consortium
- For each partner, name and CVs (abstract) of key experts expected to contribute at least 50% of their time 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 template in annex 3
- For each partner (other than the one assuming the role of coordinator of the consortium), the power of attorney as referred under section 1.3, drawn up in accordance with the template in annex 8
- 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) (financial capacity) and 6.4 (c) (operational capacity)

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

The technical proposal addressing the elements described in sections 2 and 3 and providing all information requested under section 6.5 (award criteria). The technical proposal shall also be provided in PDF searchable format on a USB memory stick.

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 of the executive summary (envelope No 1) and the technical proposal (envelope No 3); the administrative section (envelope No 2) shall be submitted only once in original unbound).

It is important that proposals be 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 proposal is wrapped in such a way to prevent any accidental opening during its 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) ⁽³²⁾.

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

ANNEXES

Annex 1 – Proposal submission form

Annex 2 – Declaration and evidence of absence of situation of exclusion

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 grant agreement

Annex 6 – Simplified Financial Statement form

Annex 7 – EEA writing manual (November 2017)

Annex 8 – Power of attorney template

⁽³²⁾ This regulation is currently under revision.