



Framework Partnership Agreement concerning the European Topic Centre on Circular Economy and Resource Use 2022-2026

Reference: Open call for proposals OCP/EEA/CAS/21/006-ETC CE

Closing date: 29.4.2021

Terms of reference's purposes:

1. Specify what actions the EEA is to finance under the framework partnership agreement resulting from this call for proposals (technical specifications)
2. Announce the criteria which the EEA will apply to determine the successful consortium among the applications received (evaluation of applications)
3. Provide information on how to apply, and the expected timeline

These terms of reference will form Annex I to the framework partnership agreement resulting from this call for proposals and will be binding during the agreement implantation.

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1 Technical specifications

1.1 Background information

1.1.1 *The European Environment Agency and the European Environment Information and Observation Network*

The European Environment Agency (EEA¹) is a main source of information of the European Union 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.

Institutionally, the EEA is one of the Agencies of the European Union and is the hub of the European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet²), a network of around 350 organisations across Europe through which environmental-related data and information are collected and disseminated. The functioning of the EEA and Eionet are described in the EEA regulation³. The Agency has 32 member countries. These are the 27 EU Member States (MS), Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.

The EEA Regulation identifies three elements of Eionet: main component elements of national networks, National Focal Points (NFPs), and European Topic Centres (ETCs). The Regulation⁴ sets out that ETCs are formed with institutions (within the Network) who conclude agreements with the Agency. They are designated by the Management Board and entrusted to cooperate with the Agency on specific tasks, set out in the multiannual work programme. These partnerships, implemented through multi-annual framework partnership agreements, are also foreseen to be an important element of the modernisation of Eionet that will be a key on-going process for the coming years.

European Topic Centres (ETCs) are consortia of organisations in EEA member countries with expertise in specific environmental areas, contracted by the EEA through framework agreements to carry out specific tasks to support the implementation of EEA and Copernicus work programmes. Each ETC consists of a coordinator organisation and specialist partner organisations from the environmental research and information community, which combine their resources in their areas of expertise.

This call for proposals aims to identify a new ETC that will take up the work in the following topic area from 1 January 2022: Circular economy and resource use.

¹ <https://eea.europa.eu>

² <http://www.eionet.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>

⁴ (i.2. articles 4 and 5).

1.1.2 EEA-Eionet Strategy 2030⁵

The EEA-Eionet common vision for 2030 is to “...together constitute the leading network for policy-relevant environment and climate knowledge at European Union and country levels...”. The Strategy – Delivering data and knowledge to achieve Europe's environment and climate ambitions clarifies how the network intends to achieve this vision and sets out the strategic directions for the network during the next decade, articulated in five Strategic Objectives (SO):

- SO1 Produce evidence-based knowledge to support policy implementation and development of new initiatives to accelerate and scale up the transition to sustainability;
- SO2 Deliver targeted inputs to inform policy and public discussions, by organising and communicating knowledge on responses, including innovative solutions to societal challenges;
- SO3 Strengthen our network through more active engagement at the country level and work with other leading organisations in order to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and expertise;
- SO4 Embrace digitalisation, including new technologies, big data, artificial intelligence and earth observation that will complement and potentially replace established information sources to better support decision making; and
- SO5 Develop structures, expertise and capacity across our network to meet evolving knowledge needs, securing and diversifying the resources needed to achieve our joint vision.

The EEA-Eionet Strategy 2030 outlines five areas of work that strongly relate to European policy priorities and form the overall structure for the broad division of ETC support roles. The five areas of work identified in the strategy are:

1. Biodiversity and ecosystems;
2. Climate change mitigation and adaptation;
3. Human health and the environment;
4. Circular economy and resource use; and
5. Sustainability trends, prospects and responses.

Europe’s production sectors (including agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and industry) as well as consumption and production systems (energy, mobility, food, and buildings) will be addressed through the five interlinked work areas.

The EEA-Eionet Strategy underlines the role of data and understanding for the pivotal decade to come. It sets out how EEA and Eionet will work together with other knowledge providers at European level and with Eionet countries in support of Europe’s environment and climate ambitions.

⁵ [EEA-Eionet Strategy 2021-2030: delivering data and knowledge to achieve Europe’s climate and environment ambitions — European Environment Agency \(europa.eu\)](#)

1.1.3 Role of European Topic Centres

Under the overall leadership of EEA, ETCs provide expertise and capacity to support the EEA and its member countries with implementing the EEA-Eionet Strategy. ETCs, working together with Eionet countries, facilitate the provision of data and information from the countries and deliver assessments, reports and other services to the EEA and Eionet. ETCs are extensively involved in acquiring, processing and quality assuring data for EEA. However, the nature of the data, the sources and challenges vary significantly between topics of work.

ETC work on indicator analysis and assessments involves both the development of new indicators in response to policy requirements as well as the regular processing and updating of indicators which requires networking with experts in member countries.

The role of ETCs in supporting implementation of EU legislation and policies is also a key element of EEA activities towards Member States and the European Commission. ETCs gather expertise to cover the knowledge needs for EU policies, to handle and analyse data, to assess the European state and trends of the environment occurring in EEA member countries.

In addition to expertise on specific topics, ETCs have, to differing extents, competency in digitalisation, social sciences, systemic analysis, modelling literacy, knowledge of prospective tools, co-creation methods and capacity-building in order to fulfil their roles.

Despite the different areas of expertise, ETCs need to cooperate extensively with each other and it is expected that cross-cutting cooperation will be reinforced and an important element of all ETC work for the coming years. ETCs cooperate to both respond to cross-cutting policy requirements and in relation to dependencies in their work to other ETCs.

In the past the Monitoring, Data, Information, Assessments, Knowledge (MDIAK) chain was the core EEA business model. The new EEA-Eionet Strategy sees MDIAK as a value adding chain within a wider set of business models. This change reflects an appreciation by EEA and its stakeholders that EEA can frequently add value in individual components, for example, only managing data or, instead by only providing expert assessment on data or information provided directly to EEA. This change in emphasis means that ETCs in different topic areas may work in more focused ways, or even exclusively on certain parts of the chain.

Integration across traditional topic domains to respond to specific environmental challenges is becoming a key feature of the European environmental policy support landscape. Integration and associated cross-cutting cooperation are intrinsic features in EEA work such as on SOER, indicators, LULUCF, Copernicus, Urban/city sustainability, etc. In order to achieve the necessary level of integration, good practice, including on data, within and across topics is needed.

1.1.4 Agreements

ETC activities are based on framework partnership agreements (FPAs) and specific agreements (SAs) concluded with the EEA to implement the former. Specific (usually annual) action plans (APs) agreed between the EEA and the consortium will form the basis for the SAs.

The organisation and commissioning of work will be based on an annual budget allocation cycle (grants). All grants are subject to co-financing by the consortium concerned (minimum 10% of the total eligible

costs⁶). Action plans will be jointly agreed, based on proposals from the ETC in response to EEA requirements.

The FPA will be concluded for a maximum period of up to 60 months starting from the date of signature and not exceeding 31 December 2026. 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 (see annex 7) for the purposes of submission of the proposal and signature of the FPA and SAs in case the proposal is selected. For further details, reference is made to the draft FPA and draft SA attached as annex 5.

1.1.5 Estimated value (Budget)

The total annual budget for SAs to be concluded based on the FPA will be subject to available funds from the General Budget of the EU and priorities set in the EEA Single Programming Document (SPD). During the period 2022 – 2026, the indicative total budget allocated to ETC CE is 6M⁷ Euros excluding contributions from assigned revenues and other contracts.

1.2 Future demands on EEA work in the area of circular economy and resource use 2022-2026

1.2.1 General policy context

In December 2019, shortly before the corona virus crisis struck Europe, the EEA presented its report *The European Environment – State and Outlook 2020* (SOER) which detailed the unprecedented scale and urgency of Europe’s current environmental, climate and sustainability challenges.

Many persistent challenges rooted back in the past are coupled and amplified by emerging and systemic issues, associated with uncertainty, ambiguity and conflicts of interests. Issues range from exceeding planetary boundaries and tipping points, through global drivers of change, the functioning of complex systems of production and consumption and establishing fair, society-wide transformational outcomes.

The European Green Deal⁸, proposed by the new European Commission in December 2019, endorsed in Council and European Parliament conclusions, is the European response to these systemic challenges. It provides a framework for ambitious actions and measures to position Europe firmly onto a path towards sustainability. It places the EU as a world leader in the implementation of the UN Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals, demonstrating that sustainability and prosperity could be achieved together.

The European Green Deal proposal acknowledges the work of the EEA in highlighting the extent and urgency of the challenges and sets out a roadmap of around 50 key policies and measures needed

⁶ The 10%-rule of minimum co-financing is applied towards the ETC as a whole. To what extent partners contribute to this co-financing is an internal ETC matter.

⁷ This figure may vary depending on actual budgets allocated to EEA and inflation.

⁸ The European Green Deal COM(2019) 640 final

to address the challenges. It sets out several long-term strategic objectives transforming the EU's economy for a sustainable future:

- Increasing the EU's Climate ambition for 2030 and 2050;
- Supplying clean, affordable and secure energy;
- Mobilizing industry for a clean and circular economy;
- Building and renovating in an energy and resource efficient way;
- A zero-pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment;
- Preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity;
- From Farm to Fork: a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system;
- Accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility.

Amongst the measures proposed, the European Green Deal also proposed the adoption of an 8th Environment Action Programme in 2020. This is to help ensure implementation, enforcement and effective delivery of environmental and climate policies and legislation and also introduces a new monitoring framework.

As set out in the EEA-Eionet Strategy, EEA and the Eionet will play a key role in supporting actions under the European Green Deal, the implementation of the proposed 8th Environment Action Programme, as well as Europe's global commitments.

1.2.2 Topic-specific policy context

At the EU and national levels, waste and material resource management challenges are integral to environmental strategies and broader resource efficiency policies. The EU's 2011 Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe ⁽⁹⁾, for example, prioritises using waste as a resource, improving material resource efficiency, achieving sustainable consumption and production, phasing out harmful subsidies, and 'getting the prices right'.

A number of initiatives followed and reinforced policies around sustainable resource use in Europe. In particular, the concept of circularity has gained policy traction across Europe and embeds now not only resource use but also a range of other aspects to improve the environmental performance of material and energy cycles in Europe's Economy.

The European Green Deal is revitalising that Circular Economy and resource use agenda, lifting the ambition level, and making a more concrete policy proposition. Building on the progress made through the 2015 Circular Economy Package, a new 2020 Action Plan ⁽¹⁰⁾ which recognises that Europe "needs to accelerate the transition towards a regenerative growth model that gives back to the planet more than it takes, advance towards keeping its resource consumption within planetary boundaries, and therefore strive to reduce its consumption footprint and double its circular material use rate in the coming decade.

A number of issues will be in focus as the 2020 Circular Economy Action Plan develops its various elements, in particular the following ones:

⁹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0571>

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/pdf/new_circular_economy_action_plan.pdf

- Sustainable Product Policies will receive additional attention with the aim to make products fit for a climate-neutral, resource-efficient and circular economy;
- Specific key-product value chains will be subject of dedicated policies, namely electronics, batteries and vehicles, packaging, plastics, textiles, construction, food, water and nutrients;
- Policies to empower consumers, both private and public, will enable the uptake of more sustainable consumption patterns;
- A large-scale transformation of European Industry, consistent with the broader European Industrial Strategy, will enhance circularity in industrial production and their associated supply chains;
- A greater focus on waste prevention policies;
- A stronger consistency between circular economy policies and toxic-free policy principles;
- Addressing waste exports as a generally undesired manner to tackle waste management as well as improving the quality and functioning of secondary raw material markets;
- Reaping the co-benefits with other policies, in particular, climate neutrality and digitalisation;
- Scaling Circular Economy principles across Europe's global partners.

Circular Economy is therefore consolidated as a cross-cutting policy that aims at ensuring a climate-neutral, low-emission and resource-efficient economic model which delivers also in terms of jobs, well-being and prosperity as a whole.

The circular economy model is, thus, closely linked to the EU low carbon agenda as efficient use of energy and materials is instrumental in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It is also of relevance for the EU bio-economy strategy, that aims for economic growth through more efficient use of biomass and innovation in the relevant sectors. In an integrated sustainable development perspective, both access to resources and exposure to environmental pressures resulting from resource use, are key elements of consideration.

Recognising that the economy, ecosystems and human well-being are intrinsically linked, the circular economy concept promises considerable economic, environmental and social co-benefits. A transition to a circular economy will consider socio-economic and environmental factors, and the linkages between environmental trends and emerging issues, associated uncertainties and the resulting systemic risks. The circular economy agenda thus calls for coherence across a number of policy domains and topics. Incentivising consumers to select more resource-efficient and environmentally sustainable products and services, as well as incentivising innovation on the production side are two priorities for improving environmental outcomes across the areas of resource supply and material resource efficiency, waste management, and waste prevention. The cross-links between these and other goals, such as climate mitigation and adaptation, avoiding biodiversity loss or a zero-pollution ambition, are particularly strong.

Another novelty of these recent policy developments is the need to reinforce monitoring systems that ensure that we understand how these policies are being implemented and whether and how they transform Europe's environmental footprint. A range of initiatives are addressing this need. The European Commission is embedding resource use and circular economy as an integral part of the European Semester process. The current Monitoring Framework for the Circular Economy will be subject of further investments and resource use indicators will be explored. However, available data and knowledge in this area is still lacking and, the European Environment Agency has a clear role to play to improve the existing knowledge base. A framework of principles has been discussed with EEA's member countries through the so-called Bellagio Process, an expert dialogue for establishing stronger Circular Economy monitoring

mechanisms, which will set the scene for knowledge investments at EEA on this area for the years to come.

1.2.3 EEA role in support of policy¹¹

The EEA has laid down its strategic direction in its new EEA/Eionet Strategy for the period 2021-2030, including Circular Economy and resource use as one of the five areas of work.

In this domain, recent years have seen a number of new and revised legislative instruments addressing waste management and prevention being adopted. This includes the revised **Waste Framework Directive** (2018), **Packaging Waste Directive** (2018), **Landfill Directive** (2018), **Single use Plastics Directive** (2019) etc. These revised pieces of EU law provide concrete mandate for the EEA to work. On the one hand, the EEA/ETC will support one of these mandates, which is providing input to the European Commission's so-called Early warning procedure, for which Early warning reports are to be published on the 2025 recycling targets for municipal solid waste (MSW) and packaging waste in 2022, and subsequently. On the other hand, a second explicit mandate from the EU-law on waste, is a responsibility to prepare biennial reports on waste prevention. These reports aim at compiling policies and measures at national level, identifying good practice, and showcasing matters of specific focus as this policy is strengthened alongside the implementation of the Circular Economy Action Plan.

A further major development over past years is the increasing recognition of Europe's need to systematically shift to a low carbon and more circular production and consumption system. Part of the **European Green Deal**, the new **Circular Economy Action Plan**, published in March 2020, sets out future directions of a number of foreseen EU initiatives on the circular economy in the coming years. Focus is given to improving circularity across a series of key value chains, including electronics and ICT, batteries and vehicles, packaging, plastics, textiles, construction and buildings, food, water and nutrients. The EEA will be investing in creating a body of knowledge on these key-product value chains, using a consumption and production lens. This ETC, in that regard, will consolidate knowledge and know-how around understanding production and consumption systems holistically.

Another key aspect where EEA intends to support policy implementation, is by reinforcing the monitoring mechanisms and the establishment of targets, in line with the new impulse given by the Circular Economy Action Plan and the previously mentioned Bellagio process. In relation to this, EEA can assist the European Commission and Eionet countries with monitoring the uptake of circular economy actions within these chains including identifying examples of best practice, and barriers to implementation etc. But investments on monitoring will go beyond supply-chain analysis. Understanding material and waste flows, innovative business models, value-retention strategies and the so-called inner-circles, together with consumption aspects, will enrich our understanding of progress towards the EU vision of a more **Circular Economy**. A future update of the current **Monitoring Framework for the Circular Economy**, responsibility of DG ESTAT, is foreseen, and synergies with that process will be explored by EEA.

¹¹ Within the scope of this FPA.

1.3 Specific tasks of the European Topic Centre on Circular Economy and Resource Use (ETC CE)

The European Topic Centre on circular economy and resource use (ETC CE) shall support the work of the EEA in the period 2022-26, The EEA Single Programming Document will serve as the basis for the identification of priorities and work packages set out in the ETC annual action plans.

Three key features of EEA and ETC work in 2022 – 2026 will be:

1. Supporting the preparation of the EEA State and Outlook of the Environment report 2025 which will already be in preparation in 2022 and 2023.
2. Much greater focus on systemic challenges. The European Green Deal is the European approach to addressing sustainability challenges from a systemic perspective. As such, the demand for knowledge on sustainability, both for monitoring progress and designing solutions will grow.
3. Providing support for monitoring requirements for the implementation of the 8th EAP and relevant European Green Deal components.

These areas will be embedded in specific action plans. In order to ensure the best allocation of available resources, the expected work is divided into 5 work packages:

1.3.1 Work package 1 – Monitoring and assessing the uptake of circular economy in Europe

The EEA has undertaken a range of activities to further develop knowledge of circular economy principles and their uptake. EEA will continue to support the monitoring of the Circular Economy from a perspective of policy assessment and analysis of the underlying realities associated with shifting from a largely linear production and consumption model in Europe to a circular one.

This work package will consist of the following tasks:

- Supporting the improvement of circular economy monitoring in Europe. This includes contributing to networking and partnership initiatives following the agreement of the so-called Bellagio principles, involving efforts by countries and the EU institutions, to implement the principles into monitoring frameworks;
- Strengthening the EEA indicator set on circular economy and sustainable production and consumption and the potential consolidation of an EEA monitoring system for Circular Economy aspects in cooperation with key European and national institutions;
- Assessing circular economy policies, identifying good practices, disseminating them and building capacities across the EEA member countries;
- Consolidating and enhancing the knowledge base on the interlinkages between Circular Economy and other environmental and climate goals.

1.3.2 Work package 2 – Informing the implementation of waste policies

The EEA will support implementation of EU legislation on waste. This includes the assessment of progress towards waste prevention, identification of best practice for this area and sectoral studies. In addition, support will be provided to the European Commission and EU Member States in the so-called “early warning mechanism”, which identifies how countries are progressing towards the targets established in

the EU law on waste for specific waste streams. These two lines of work are key to support the implementation of EU law on waste.

Additionally, the EEA plans work to increase the understanding around the upcoming priorities on waste as also outlined in the new Circular Economy Action Plan. These include, *inter alia*, a strengthened focus on waste prevention, measures to improve the functioning of secondary raw material markets and focus on specific waste streams of concern.

This work package will consist of the following tasks:

- Delivering on the early warning mechanism;
- Assessing policies in the area of waste prevention;
- Enhancing the knowledge base on specific waste streams, waste technologies and secondary raw material markets;

1.3.3 Work package 3 – Consumption and production systems, key-product value chains, emerging business models and social innovations

The transition to a more circular economy implies a profound transformation of consumption and production systems. This transformation is also embedded with other key policy agendas, namely the energy transition in the context of climate mitigation efforts. The work on this package interacts strongly with other ETCs, as the underlying policy agendas on biodiversity, climate action and environment and health are fundamentally linked to the transition to a more circular model of economic and wellbeing growth.

This ETC will lead on the study of production and consumption systems, benefiting from accepted techniques of foot-printing, input-output and life cycle analysis. At the same time, specific systems, under the label of key-product value chains (textiles, construction, electronics, plastics, batteries, vehicles, furniture...), will be subject of assessment alongside the established policies on Circular Economy are fully deployed in Europe.

This work package will consist of the following tasks:

- Leading on EEA work on production and consumption systems;
- Enhancing the knowledge base on specific key-product value chains;
- Identifying good practice and building capacities on emerging business models, social innovations and more sustainable consumption patterns.

1.3.4 Work package 4 – Sustainable resource supply and use

The ETC will support the further development of knowledge on material flows and the embedded environmental pressures of Europe's resource supply. This includes supporting the EEA in an ongoing cooperation with the European Commission's JRC, on the environmental aspects of raw materials, which is designed to consolidate knowledge produced through the so-called Raw Material Information System (RMIS).

This work package will consist of the following tasks:

- Understanding Europe's resource supply and its embedded environmental pressures;
- Supporting the cooperation with other EU bodies and relevant international organisations;
- Strengthening the EEA indicator set on circular economy and sustainable production and consumption in aspects relating to resource supply and material resource efficiency.

1.3.5 Work package 5 – ETC management, networking and outreach

This work package includes the activities and tasks necessary for the management of the ETC, outreach and capacity building. The work package includes the following tasks:

ETC Management

- ETC consortium designates a manager who is the primary contact in the ETC for the EEA, NFPs from member countries and other relevant organizations.

The manager:

- Represents the interests of those planning and delivering ETC tasks across the consortium. They assume overall accountability for ETC deliverables and services provided, including adherence to EEA corporate standards.
- Sets up and maintains procedures for quality assurance undertaken with reference to EEA standards, including documentation and language-checking of all its deliverables.
- Ensures the ETC is in compliance with legal requirements, such as in relation to data protection.
- Reports to EEA on overall progress of ETC activities against the objectives of the annual action and communication plans as well as on risks.
- Ensures that structured work plans are prepared in sufficient time by project managers within the consortia.
- Maintains oversight on state of preparation of deliverables, including critical dependencies leading to potential delays, where needed escalating needs for preventative measures or corrective actions.
- Manages change request process in relation to deliverables agreed by ETC and EEA.
- Maintains financial records in accordance with requirements.
- May be supported by core management team that may include a deputy and administrative manager.

ETC Networking and Outreach

Under the supervision, guidance, and agreement of EEA, the ETC shall support the modernisation of Eionet and maintain close links with the Eionet (EEA member countries and other ETCs) as well as support dissemination of EEA and ETC products. Main tasks are to:

- Support EEA in organizing Eionet workshops and seminars to discuss the outcomes of work and plan future activities with the member countries; build upon the discussion results of relevant Eionet groups (i.e. National Reference Centres).
- Support EEA in dialogue with countries to identify barriers to optimally performing their tasks (e.g. monitoring and reporting capacities, flows of data, knowledge gaps, indicator development, responsiveness), developing proposals for improvements to solve any issues that emerge.
- Engage in communication efforts with the countries, including networking and country visits within defined processes.
- Contribute to Eionet modernisation initiatives.
- Provide training and capacity building in the countries in response to identified and agreed priorities and needs, including where relevant on solutions to support meeting EU policy targets.
- Engage actively in co-operation with other ETCs to strengthen the coherence of data and information, based on priorities of EEA work programme.
- Undertake publishing and outreach, including through social media, in alignment with EEA communication framework and based on agreed annual priorities.
- Maintain and regularly update the consortium website (including brief description of ETC consortia, list of members of the consortia, overview of work plans) as well as an inventory and access point to ETC knowledge products (indicating any relation between the ETC product and supported EEA products).
- Make use of ETC graphical design elements and guidance on products.
- Where possible, publish deliverables and results of ETC work, accepted by EEA, in open access repositories with a public copyright license, such as creative commons.

1.4 General guidance on the organisation of European Topic Centres

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

The ETC shall comprise one coordinating organisation and several partners. The organisation and functioning of this grouping shall be documented in a consortium agreement. The following points shall be considered when establishing the consortium:

- EEA member country coverage is 32 countries. The consortium should be constructed in a way that gives access to partners with experience in EU and regional level work, international networks etc. without necessarily representing all EEA member countries.
- It is important that some leadership roles within the consortium are from organisations which either have experience in participating in Eionet or in working closely with and supporting EU Institutions and that their organisations are actively engaged in the policy area. The number of partners shall be

balanced against the need to cover the required field of expertise and to ensure good geographical coverage

- The consortium needs 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 and reporting.
- Effective practice has been that at least the manager and some of a designated core team work for the ETC 100%, with a group of key experts, working mainly for the ETC (ie>50%) supported by a broader group of experts available to provide specific expertise or work on specific tasks.

1.5 Mandatory requirements

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

1.5.1 General requirements

- The ETC shall report to the EEA, the primary contact points being the ETC manager and the assigned EEA lead for the ETC.
- The ETC coordinator shall put in place and maintain an agreed internal ETC management structure that ensures delivery of outputs and services requested as well as efficient communication and coordination with all partners.
- The ETC shall be structured in a way which ensures proper linkages with other ETCs in order to respond to cross-sectoral and cross-thematic cooperation and integration needs and to avoid duplication or disintegration of tasks across partners.
- The ETC needs to be structured in a way to ensure flexibility to be able to adapt to changing needs and to be able to provide experts for specific projects.
- The ETC needs the capability to network and communicate with stakeholders in national or regional environmental administrations, European wide environmental networks, and international organisations, including regional cooperation bodies and conferences. The ETC needs to have proven links to wider European knowledge and expertise.
- The working language of the FPA and SAs is English. More particularly, the ETC is expected to deliver management documents and results ready for use or publication in English.
- ETC management must have in place procedures for quality assurance undertaken with reference to EEA standards, including documentation and language-checking of its deliverables.
- Subject to guidance from the EEA, the ETC coordinator shall ensure coherence and integration of ETC work with the work carried out by the EEA.

- ETCs shall, unless otherwise agreed with the EEA, publish the results of ETC work, accepted by EEA, in open access repositories with a public copyright license, such as creative commons.
- As a contribution to the overall EEA continuous improvement framework, ETC management shall, support EEA by identifying opportunities for innovation and improvements in specific working areas and in agreement with EEA, support their implementation.
- The EEA operates an environmental management system framed around minimizing its environmental footprint and is EMAS certified¹². EEA offsets travel related greenhouse gas emissions, procures green energy and aims to reduce its electricity consumption as well as being active in waste minimisation. The environmental performance of contractors and partners is nested within EEA's environmental performance, which is part of the overall EEA continuous improvement framework. Thus, it is a requirement that the ETC has, or develops specific environmental policies and can document and report on steps taken to reduce environmental impact during the life of the FPA.

1.5.2 Technical and scientific expertise requirements

The consortium is expected to have demonstrated excellent technical and scientific knowledge, expertise and experience to be able to fulfil the tasks set out in the work packages mentioned in 1.3 above and to provide the necessary science-policy support as follows:

- Knowledge of relevant international, EU, national and local policy developments regarding sustainable consumption and production, circular economy and resource efficiency.
- Expertise and experience in conducting integrated assessments along the DPSIR cause-effect conceptual chain (Driver-Pressure-State-Impact-Response), both within and across different policy areas including the use and analysis of projections and scenarios and policy effectiveness assessments performed using appropriate techniques and tools.
- Knowledge of environmental impacts from the extraction, production and consumption of material resources, as well as technical knowledge on generation and management of the most relevant specific waste streams (e.g. municipal waste, hazardous waste, WEEE etc.).
- Knowledge of related concepts and policy tools, such as the waste hierarchy, circular and green economy concepts, regulatory frameworks and market-based instruments, as well as of the overall sustainability and green growth frameworks used by international organisations (UNEP, OECD, etc.) as well as national approaches.
- Knowledge and application of environmentally-extended input-output analysis, environmental footprints and life-cycle analysis methods to assess the embedded environmental and climate impacts associated with production and consumption
- Experience in forward-looking analysis, such as horizon scanning, scenario building and ex-ante policy effectiveness evaluations.
- Experience of handling and analysing environmental and socio-economic data sets available from EEA and from other sources in the relevant areas of production-consumption systems, resource use, industrial emissions, energy and climate, waste, other environmental aspects, and economy, including

¹² [Environmental management \(EMAS\) — European Environment Agency \(europa.eu\)](https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/emas).

collecting, linking and assessing cross-cutting datasets, projections and scenarios regarding these matters.

- Experience preparing assessments and indicators in the area of circular economy and industrial transformation (transformation towards a low-emission, resource-efficient and circular industry) addressing the past and forward-looking perspectives, covering drivers, pressures, state, impacts on environment, and policy responses to these.
- Experience preparing assessments relevant to the production and consumption systems from a systemic perspective, including consideration of internal and external factors that influence these systems, implications for the environment and natural resources, interlinkages with other socio-economic systems (e.g. food system), lock-ins and barriers to change, and 'niches' and policies designed to encourage sustainability transitions, at different governance scales.
- Assessing existing and innovative technological measures, social innovations and emerging circular business models being developed to foster circularity and mitigate the impact of environmental pressures associated with production and consumption.
- Assessing different innovation and sustainability transition actions including financial and fiscal measures, examples of best practice being undertaken in sectors/systems relevant for the circular economy, and the estimated environmental and climate change impacts (i.e. benefits, systemic risks, adverse implications on health, climate, biodiversity and ecosystem services, etc), socio-economic costs and benefits (the so-called just transition), or possible trade-offs associated with these.
- Evaluating relevant policies and measures adopted at European, national and local level addressing the circular economy and broader industrial transformation aspects, including new business models, assessments of policy interactions, policy coherence and integration, policy effectiveness and efficiency (including ex-post evaluation), and related economic implications.
- Supporting work to describe and/or develop improved metrics and indicators for monitoring the implementation of the circular economy within Europe, including assessments of potential new, alternative methods of assessing progress and use of data from e.g. non-state actors, citizen-science, new data streams and big data.
- Experience in preparing, facilitating and documenting workshops and meetings through using of advanced participatory processes.
- Experience in using web-based-multimedia and social platforms.
- Data handling and processing methods, ensuring assuring quality of data, and including analytical skills regarding statistical and geo-spatial analysis of environmental data. This includes a general requirement to ensure alignment with EEA corporate standards in particular use the EEA common workspace as central infrastructure for data management and data analytics and to manage technical documentation in a central collaborative environment in accordance with EEA data steward and data custodian roles.

2 Evaluation of the proposals

2.1 Participation in the award procedure

2.1.1 Eligibility

Consortia consisting of at least two partners (natural/legal persons, private or public), these partners being established in different EEA member countries¹³, are eligible to submit proposals, subject to 2.1.2 and 2.2.1 below. Consortia must identify one of their partners as the 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.

Partners not established in one of the EEA member countries referred to above may exceptionally participate in a consortium, provided that the other eligibility requirement is respected, and they complied with exclusion and selection criteria listed under sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 below. A maximum of two partners from non-EEA member countries may be involved in a consortium submitting a proposal under this call for proposals.

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, dated and signed.

2.1.2 *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 Resource Use and Circular Economy. 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 Resource Use and Circular Economy. Disregard of these rules will lead to exclusion of all consortia concerned.

2.2 Criteria

2.2.1 Exclusion criteria

Apart from the situations under 2.1.2, consortia shall be excluded from participation in this procedure if any of its partners is in one of the situations referred to in Articles 136 and 141 of the Financial Rules applicable to the general budget of the European Union¹⁴.

When submitting their application, each partner of the consortium (including any subcontractor) must provide a declaration on their honour in accordance with the form attached as annex 2, duly

¹³ the 27 EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.

¹⁴ Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18.7.2018, OJEU L 193/1 of 30.7.2018.

signed and dated, stating that they are not in any of the situations specified in the above-mentioned provisions.

The initial verification of non-exclusion of partners will be done based on the submitted declarations and consultation of the [European Union's Early Detection and Exclusion System](#). 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 paragraph VI of annex 2).

2.2.2 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 frame.

2.2.2.1 Legal capacity

- **Requirement:**

Any consortium is required to prove that all its members are authorised to perform the FPA under national law.

- **Evidence to be provided:**

Each consortium partner shall submit a legal entity form (see annex 3 for the link to the form and instructions) dully filled out and signed, accompanied by either a copy of inscription in a trade register and/or VAT register, or a sworn declaration, or a certificate, or membership of a specific organisation, or express authorisation, or any other statutory document allowing verification of the partner's legal status.

2.2.2.2 Economic and financial capacity

- **Requirements:**

- The consortium must be in a stable financial position and have the economic and financial capacity to perform the FPA.
- In accordance with Article 190 of the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the European Union, implementation of the FPA shall involve co-financing from the consortium.

- **Evidence to be provided:**

- The partner assuming the role of coordinator of the consortium shall provide a financial identification form (see annex 4 for link to the form and instructions) duly filled out and signed.
- Each consortium partner shall provide a duly completed and signed simplified Financial Statement in accordance with the template provided as annex 6;

- 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 year¹⁵);
- 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 jointly agreed annual action plans¹⁶;

2.2.2.3 *Technical and professional capacity*

○ **Requirements:**

1. Relevant experience in terms of human resources;
2. Relevant experience in the provision of similar services;
3. Application of adequate quality standard;
4. Application of environmental management measures.

○ **Evidence to be provided:**

1) Human resources:

a) CVs detailing the educational and professional qualifications of the partner's managerial staff as well as those of the staff designated to perform the tasks listed under section 1.3, indicating language skills and the required professional experience as follows:

- Managerial staff: Minimum 2 CVs, each documenting a minimum of 10 years' relevant experience
- Experts responsible for performing the tasks:
 - Minimum 10 CVs of senior experts, each documenting at least 10 years' relevant experience
 - Minimum 12 CVs of Junior experts, each documenting at least 3 years' relevant experience

b) Signed letters of intent of:

- the ETC Manager and core staff of the consortium's coordinator; as well as
 - all the key experts¹⁷ of each consortium partner,
- proving that the consortium as a whole has sufficient technical, scientific and management (including financial) experience to assume the role of an ETC;

¹⁵ Having regard to Article 196(1)(d) FR 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.

¹⁶ The 10%-rule of minimum co-financing is applied towards the *ETC* as a whole. To what extent partners contribute to this co-financing is an internal ETC matter.

¹⁷ i.e. experts from the partners in the consortium who would be entrusted with the performance of activities in the main work areas should anticipate allocating between 50 to 75% of their time for that purpose.

2) Past experience:
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);

3) Quality standards:

For each consortium partner, proof and description of their Quality Assurance and Quality Control systems;

4) Environmental management measures:

For each consortium partner, proof and description of their environmental policy specifying the status of implementation.

2.2.3 Award criteria

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

No	Award criteria	Max. points
1	<p>General understanding</p> <p>Demonstrated knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EEA’s role in supporting policy implementation and developing knowledge to support Europe’s sustainability objectives, • the stakeholders that the EEA and the Eionet are supporting and cooperating with within the topic area • the tasks requested across all work packages, the respective roles of data, indicators and assessment/information products and systems in delivering these, and the technical methodologies and frameworks necessary for their development • how the different dimensions of the topic area are interconnected, and how they relate to thematic and cross-cutting issues outside the topic area of this ETC • how different dimensions of the topic area differ or connect across global, EU, national, and sub-national scales. • EU environment and climate policy initiatives and objectives in the topic area, as well as impacts and variability of their implementation in countries. 	20

2	<p>Data and information systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated knowledge of relevant official and non-official data sources, such as statistics, expert surveys, research, earth observation (Copernicus) and citizen science, and the different processing requirements associated with these. • Experience and expertise in data collection design, quality control, and content management of data and information systems to support assessment products. • Demonstrated experience applying appropriate data analysis including geospatial analysis to support assessments, such as summarising complex data and information, data near-casting techniques etc. to inform policy makers and other stakeholders. 	15
3	<p>Assessments</p> <p>Demonstrated experience and expertise in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting the preparation, production, and management of assessment knowledge products (i.e. reports, policy briefings, indicators, web-based products...) in the specific topic areas to be addressed by the ETC; • preparing and contributing to cross-thematic and cross-sectoral assessments, including preparation of integrated assessments that capture dimensions of policy integration, socio-economic dependencies and links across relevant economic production systems and sectors; • developing thematic assessments that combine ‘new’ innovative data sources with traditional sources of data. 	25
4	<p>Policy support</p> <p>Demonstrated experience and expertise in providing knowledge to inform the development and implementation of local, national, EU and relevant international policy processes.</p> <p>Experience in ex-ante and ex-post analysis of the effectiveness of strategies and policies in the topic area and understanding of the links with other policies in other relevant topic areas.</p>	15
5	<p>Cooperation and networking</p> <p>Sound and innovative approaches to cooperating, sharing knowledge and supporting Eionet member organisations in member countries.</p> <p>Proposals for approaches and opportunities for collaborating with other ETCs on joint activities and how these will add value to the work of this ETC.</p> <p>Experience and expertise in accessing and working together with relevant expert networks and institutes external to the Eionet, including relevant communities of practice and the scientific community.</p>	15

6	<p>Consortium management</p> <p>Sound arrangements for implementing transparent, effective, and quality-assured management of the ETC consortium, including financial management.</p> <p>Sound approach to managing different thematic and regional dimensions of the topic area individually and as a coherent whole.</p> <p>Adequate level of manpower, resources and output corresponding to the indicative budget.</p> <p>Arrangements to allow the consortium to respond to specific requests at short notice.</p>	10
Total		100

Proposals which do not obtain at least 50% of the maximum score for each award criterion and at least 70% of the overall score for all criteria, will be deemed of insufficient quality and therefore not considered for the award of the framework partnership agreement.

Should proposals obtain the same final score and tie for first place, the winning proposal will be decided based on the highest score achieved for award criterion No 1 (general understanding of the tasks), and if these scores are equal, on the highest score achieved for award criterion No 3 (assessment). If necessary, any further prioritisation will be based on the highest score achieved for award criterion No 6 (ETC management), then the remaining award criteria taken in numerical order.

3 Submission of proposals and additional information

3.1 Submission of proposals

Proposals must be submitted through the electronic submission system ETHICS at [European Environment Agency](#) (the Contracting authority page), in one of the official languages of the European Union, preferably in English (supporting evidence does not need to be translated). Proposals submitted in any other way (e.g. by e-mail or mail) will be disregarded.

Make sure you submit your proposal on time: the time limit for submission of proposals is **Thursday 29 April 2021 at 14:00** (UTC + 1). You are advised to start completing your proposal early. To avoid any complications with regard to late receipt/non-receipt of proposals within the deadline, please ensure that you submit your proposal several hours before the deadline. A proposal received after the deadline indicated in the call for proposal documents will be rejected.

For detailed instructions on how to submit a proposal, please consult [ETHICS for economic operators](#) (see section 7 for English).

The submission report provided by ETHICS with the official date and time of receipt of the submission (timestamp) constitutes proof of compliance with the time limit of proposals.

In case of technical problems, please contact the ETHICS Technical support (button available on the main page of the platform).

3.2 Legal effects of the call for proposals

This call for proposals is in no way binding on the EEA. The EEA's contractual obligation commences only when the FPA with the successful consortium is signed by both parties. Up to the signature of the FPA, the EEA may cancel the award procedure without applicants being entitled to claim any compensation. Any such decision must be substantiated, and applicants notified.

The period of validity of the proposal, during which the consortium partners may not modify the terms of their proposals in any respect, is 6 months from the deadline for the submission of proposals.

Submitting a proposal implies acceptance by the *consortium* of all terms and conditions of the standard Framework Partnership Agreement and its Annexes, attached as annex 5 to these terms of reference, in particular those on performance of the agreement, confidentiality, eligible costs, justification of costs, cost statements, payments, checks and audits, and processing of personal data. Any limitation, amendment, or denial of the terms of the agreement will lead to the automatic exclusion from the award procedure. The submitted proposal is binding on the consortium to whom the agreement is awarded for the duration of the FPA.

3.3 Contacts during the award procedure

Contacts between the EEA and interested applicants (consortia/partners) are prohibited throughout the award procedure save in exceptional circumstances and under the following conditions only:

3.3.1 Submission phase (before the time limit for submission of proposals)

Upon request, the EEA may provide additional information solely for the purpose of clarifying the call for proposals documents.

Any request for additional information must be made in writing only through the above-mentioned ETHICS website in the "Communication" tab by clicking "Send question". The EEA is not bound to reply to requests for additional information received less than 6 working days before the time limit for submission of proposals.

The EEA may, on its own initiative, inform interested parties of any error, inaccuracy, omission or any other type of clerical error in the context of the call for proposals documents. Any additional information will be published on the above-mentioned ETHICS website. The website will be updated regularly, and it is the applicants' responsibility to check for updates and notifications during the submission period.

3.3.2 Opening of proposals

Proposals will be opened in public, remotely, at the time and place indicated in paragraph 3.4 below. A maximum of one representative per applicant may attend the remote opening session. For organisational reasons, applicants are requested to inform the EEA in advance (at least 2 working days before the date of the opening session) by e-mail to procurement@eea.europa.eu.

The public part of the opening session will be strictly limited to the following aspects:

- Verification that each proposal has been submitted in accordance with the submission requirements of this call for proposals;
- Announcement of the proposals received: the names of the consortium partners will be announced.

Applicants not present at the opening session may be informed of the outcome of the process by visiting the EEA website (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/tenders>).

3.3.3 Evaluation phase (after opening of the proposals)

Except in duly justified cases, applicants who have failed to submit evidence or to make statements as required in the call for proposals documents, shall be contacted by the EEA to provide the missing information or clarify supporting documents.

The EEA may correct obvious clerical errors in the proposal after confirmation of the correction by the applicant.

Such information, clarification or correction shall not substantially alter the proposal.

3.3.4 Award phase

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of the award procedure by e-mail. The notification will be sent to the e-mail address of the consortium's coordinator provided in the proposal submission form. The same e-mail address will be used by the EEA for all other communications with the applicant. It is the applicant's responsibility to provide a valid e-mail address and check it regularly.

3.4 Timetable

	Date	Comments
Call for proposals launch date	1 February 2021	On the EEA website
Last date for submission of clarifications to which the EEA is bound to reply	23 April 2021	
Time limit for submission of proposals	29 April 2021	At 14:00 (UTC+1)

Opening session	3 May 2021	At 10:00 (UTC+1)
Evaluation of proposals	From 5 May to 28 May 2021	Estimated
Designation by the EEA Management Board of the successful consortium	17 June 2021	Estimated
Award decision and notification of evaluation results	24 June 2021	Estimated
Framework partnership agreement signature	30 September 2021	Estimated
Approval of the annual action plan for the 1 st specific grant agreement	15 November 2021	At the latest
Signature and implementation of the 1 st specific agreement	January 2022	

3.5 Protection of personal data

Processing replies to this call for proposals will involve the recording and processing of personal data (such as name, address and CV). Such data will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2018/1725¹⁸ on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data. Unless indicated otherwise, applicants' replies to the questions and any personal data requested are required to evaluate their proposal in accordance with the specifications of the call for proposals and will be processed solely for that purposes by the EEA. Under Regulation (EU) 2018/1725, applicants are entitled to obtain access to their personal data on request and to rectify any such data that is inaccurate or incomplete. Further details concerning the processing of personal data can be found in the privacy statement available on the EEA website: <https://www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/tenders>.

Applicants have the right of recourse at any time to the European Data Protection Supervisor (<https://edps.europa.eu>; edps@edps.europa.eu) for matters relating to the processing of their personal data by the EEA.

Applicants' personal data may be registered in the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES), if they are in one of the situations mentioned in Article 136 of the Financial Regulation. For more information, see the privacy statement at [privacy statement edes en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#).

3.6 Means of redress

Applicants may submit any observations concerning the award procedure to the EEA using the e-mail address procurement@eea.europa.eu. If applicants believe that there is maladministration, they may lodge a complaint to the European Ombudsman within two years of the date from which they become

¹⁸ OJEU L 295 of 21.11.2018, p. 39-98.

aware of the facts which form the basis for the complaint (see <https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu; eo@ombudsman.europa.eu>).

Within two months of notification of the outcome of the procedure (award decision), applicants may launch an action for its annulment. Any request applicants may have and any reply from the EEA, or any complaint for maladministration, will have neither the purpose nor the effect of suspending the time limit for launching an action for annulment nor open a new period for launching an action for annulment. The body responsible for hearing annulment procedures is the General Court of the European Union (<https://curia.europa.eu; generalcourt.registry@curia.europa.eu>).

3.7 Annexes

Annex 1 – Proposal submission form

Annex 2 – Declaration on exclusion criteria

Annex 3 – Legal entity form

Annex 4 – Financial Identification Form

Annex 5 – Draft Framework Partnership Agreement (including annexes)

Annex 6 – Simplified financial statement

Annex 7 – Power of attorney template

Annex 8 – Corporate standards

Annex 9 – List of abbreviations and acronyms

Annex 10 – Proposal executive summary template