



Framework Partnership Agreement concerning the European Topic Centre on Sustainability Trends, Prospects and Responses 2022-2026

Reference: Open call for proposals OCP/EEA/CAS/21/007-ETC ST

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.

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.e. articles 4 and 5).

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: Sustainability trends, prospects and responses.

1.1.2 The 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.

⁵ [EEA-Eionet Strategy 2021-2030: delivering data and knowledge to achieve Europe's climate and environment ambitions — European Environment Agency \(europa.eu\).](https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/press/news/2021/09/01/eea-eionet-strategy-2021-2030-delivering-data-and-knowledge-to-achieve-europe-s-climate-and-environment-ambitions)

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.

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 ST is 4M⁷ Euros excluding contributions from assigned revenues and other contracts.

1.2 Future demands on EEA work in the area of sustainability trends, prospects and responses 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

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.

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 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;
- Mobilising 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

SOER 2020 calls for systemic responses to environment and climate challenges through wide-ranging policy actions. Full implementation of existing environment and climate policies is essential to deliver significant improvements. Complete integration of sustainability objectives into socio-economic policies and measures will be needed to achieve cost-effective and just transitions. Europe also needs to create the conditions for more sustainable lifestyles, including by increasing public awareness and engaging companies in transitions. Many goals will not be achieved without

⁸ The European Green Deal COM(2019) 640 final.

coordinated, global efforts, so Europe will need to use its diplomatic leverage and influence in its neighbourhood and at the global level.

Responding to these challenges, EU sustainable development policy has evolved rapidly during recent years. Following the adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, the EU has introduced a series of long-term, systemic and transformative policy frameworks, such as the Circular Economy Action Plan, the Energy Union strategy and the 'Europe on the move' strategy. These frameworks are characterised by multidimensional goals, addressing themes such as jobs, competitiveness, fair access to resources and sustainability; a focus on diverse societal actors and creating stakeholder platforms; and increasing use of system transitions approaches, including particular emphasis on innovation.

The adoption of the European Green Deal in December 2019 marked a further advance in this agenda. The European Green Deal creates a unified framework, bringing together the different system-oriented and transformative strategies and combining them with additional strategies and measures addressing environmental pressures and ecosystems, and cross-cutting priorities such as innovation, finance and the 'just transition'. It acknowledges that transition is 'needed in all sectors' and emphasises the need to rethink fundamentally EU policies and actions across a broad range of policy areas.

More recently, the corona virus (COVID 19) crisis and Europe's response, in particular the Next Generation EU recovery package, provide additional impetus to EU efforts to enhance Europe's resilience and sustainability. While these disruptions create major challenges for European societies, they may also offer opportunities to advance transformative change. In knowledge terms, they necessitate greater understanding of the environmental and socio-economic impacts of the crisis, and the ways in which short-term responses create openings for more long-term change.

EEA work on 'sustainability trends, prospects and responses' aims to support overarching EU policy priorities such as the European Green Deal, the UN Agenda 2030 and the 8th Environment Action Programme, recognising the many interlinkages between these different frameworks. Necessarily, this work will also connect with the broad range of EU policy frameworks that collectively aim to enable sustainability transitions in Europe. These include the EU Climate Law, the Circular Economy Action Plan, the Bio-economy Strategy, the EU Industrial Strategy, the EU Adaptation Strategy, the Europe on the Move package, the Sustainable Finance Initiative and the Urban Agenda for the EU.

Following this logic, the work of the ETC on Sustainability Trends, Prospects and Responses will connect with the activities of the other ETCs and will focus on interlinkages and overarching, integrated, forward-looking assessment. It will also address specific themes, such as innovations and enablers of transitions, sustainable finance, urban sustainability, foresight and outlooks, and stakeholder engagement.

1.2.3 EEA role in support of policy

The EEA has laid down its strategic direction in its new EEA/Eionet Strategy for the period 2021-2030, including 'Sustainability trends, prospects and responses' as one of the five areas of work. As

set out there, the EEA will inform policy on sustainability challenges and transitions by assessing the synergies and trade-offs inherent in balancing environmental, social and economic objectives. In doing so, EEA activities in this area of work will support many of the key elements of the European Green Deal, the 8th Environment Action Programme and the Sustainable Development Goals, for example:

- developing frameworks to monitor and assess production-consumption systems (e.g. food, energy, mobility, buildings) in a consistent and coherent way, and exploring the challenges, synergies and trade-offs associated with achieving systemic transitions in line with the goals of the European Green Deal;
- analysing how research and innovation contributes to sustainability transitions, including exploring diverse forms of innovation and the roles of different actors within innovation systems;
- assessing how finance currently constrains or enables the transformation of the EU's economy, and how the financial system can be transformed to make it sustainable;
- assessing the role of public policy and institutions at different levels of governance in enabling transitions, as well as the role of non-state actors;
- analysing the socio-economic implications of transitions and the 'just transition', for example in terms of impacts on employment, urban and regional development and fiscal sustainability.

In the context of EU sustainable finance policy, the EEA has two legally defined roles: first, as a permanent Member of the Platform on Sustainable Finance under EU regulation (EU) 2020/852 ('The Taxonomy regulation'); second as an advisory to the European Supervisory Authorities under Regulation (EU) 2019/2088 (on sustainability disclosures in the financial services sector).

All these activities will put particular emphasis on engaging across the EEA and with stakeholders to co-create knowledge to support assessments and policymaking. Such stakeholders include Eionet NFPs, NRCs for foresight and state of environment reporting, the EEA Scientific Committee, Environment Knowledge Community⁹ and other European Commission services, international organisation such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the United Nations, and non-governmental organisations.

1.3 Specific tasks of the European Topic Centre on Sustainability Trends, Prospects and Responses (ETC ST)

The European Topic Centre on Sustainability Trends, Prospects and Responses (ETC ST) 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.

⁹ The Environment Knowledge Community is an informal platform of five Commission Directorates-General (for Environment, Climate Action and Research and Innovation, the Joint Research Centre, Eurostat) and the EEA that was set up in 2015 with the objective of improving the generation and sharing of environmental knowledge for EU policies.

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

1. The EEA State of Environment report 2025, which will already be in preparation in 2022 and 2023.
2. Much greater focus on forward-looking aspects, systemic challenges and responses. The European Green Deal and the Digital Agenda for Europe together provide the European approach to addressing green growth and sustainability challenges from a systemic perspective. This includes links to Agenda 2030 and SDG implementation. As such, the demand for knowledge on sustainability, both for monitoring progress, designing solutions and looking beyond the current cycle of European Green Deal will grow.
3. Designing and providing support for monitoring requirements for the implementation of the 8th Environment Action Programme and the European Green Deal.

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 that aim to produce contrasting but complementary insights into Europe's current and future sustainability. This includes developing measurement and assessment frameworks to understand the sustainability and transformation of core societal systems (WP1); exploring and analysing the role of innovations, policies, actors and other enablers of sustainability transitions (WP2); developing forward-looking knowledge to support transitions governance (WP3); and analysing the economic and financial dimensions of sustainability transitions (WP4). While these work packages differ significantly in focus, they all aim to provide a broad set of insights into sustainability, linking together diverse topics, policy areas, timescales and levels of governance. The final work package (WP5) addresses ETC management, communication and dissemination of work.

1.3.1 Work package 1 – Measurement and assessment of systems and transitions

The EU's growing set of systemic and transformative policy frameworks, including the European Green Deal and the related twin transitions (green and digital), create the need for new knowledge and competencies to support policy and transitions governance. While the EU has developed an effective knowledge system to support the design, implementation and monitoring of environmental policies during recent decades, the existing evidence base provides only partial and fragmented insights into the state, trends and outlook of the systems targeted by EU policy, or the effects of governance actions.

The EEA has reoriented towards developing more systems-oriented and forward-looking knowledge in recent years, culminating in the systems assessment in Part 3 of SOER 2020. In coming years it plans to build on this, assessing sustainability trends, prospects and responses through systemic lenses. In doing so, it will support EU strategic policies, in particular the European Green Deal and 8th Environment Action Programme, and emerging policy issues, as well as providing a coherent framework for use in SOER 2025. This work will draw on existing and ongoing EEA work, insights from research programmes and other initiatives, and interactions with stakeholders.

This work package will consist of the following tasks:

- Contributing to monitoring and assessing, with countries, progress towards EU strategic policy priorities. This would include using improved frameworks and indicators to support the European Green Deal and the 8th Environment Action Programme, EU Digital Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Supporting the development of sustainability-oriented, integrated, multi-dimensional frameworks to monitor and assess the state, trends, impacts and prospects of key societal systems driving sustainability challenges and opportunities, in particular core production-consumption systems (e.g. food, energy, mobility, buildings).
- Supporting the development of assessment frameworks to analyse the interactions and cumulative impacts of production-consumption systems. Using transdisciplinary knowledge and methods to address interlinkages and integrated perspectives on sustainability (including SDGs and policy goals, in Europe and in connection with other world regions).
- Supporting the development of integrated assessments of production-consumption systems and ex-ante assessment of impacts, potential risks, synergies and trade-offs arising from innovations and governance interventions across multiple systems and scales, as well as potential risks and risk migration.
- Supporting the development of integrated and systemic assessments of the social, economic, environmental and governance dimensions of sustainability to help define policy responses and increase resilience. Such assessments would also explore, for example, the multiple drivers of change (e.g. megatrends, trends, wild cards), multiple sustainability pathways and their complex and uncertain implications for production and consumption systems and sustainability transitions.
- Supporting the development of uncertainty and quality appraisal capacities and approaches for use in integrated assessments and accounting, and to support the development of guidelines. Examples of such tools and techniques include uncertainty and sensitivity analysis, knowledge quality assurance, sensitivity auditing and pedigree analysis (NUSAP).
- Supporting the development of assessment frameworks and approaches for assessing innovation and transformations at city and regional scales.
- Facilitating the use and development of specific data (e.g. Copernicus data, Urban Atlas) and their application to systemic challenges and responses, together with relevant European stakeholders, EEA programmes and the ETC on data integration and digitalisation (ETC/DDI), which coordinates Copernicus data management. The ETC/STPR should also support the EEA in investigating possible uses of novel data sources, artificial intelligence, advanced data mining or automation for sustainability assessments. The ETC/STPR needs to proactively promote such developments and integrate them into its assessments, where possible.
- Supporting engagement with stakeholders, for example in policy, business and civil society to develop and review knowledge on measurement and assessment of systems and transitions.
- Supporting the development of competencies and skills needed to measure and assess systems and transitions.

1.3.2 Work package 2 – Enablers of sustainability transitions

Following SOER 2015, the EEA has reoriented its knowledge development, extending its focus on Europe's environmental challenges to include more solutions-oriented knowledge. This work has included a series of reports, produced across the EEA, on how European societies can enable sustainability transitions. The uptake of transitions thinking in EU policy has increased the demand for this kind of evidence from across diverse policy areas and levels of governance.

In building towards SOER 2025, the EEA plans to deepen its knowledge on enablers of transitions, including analysing and illustrating different forms of innovation and exploring the role of policies, institutions and other governance mechanisms at different scales, including the role of cities and local communities. In doing so, it will need to draw on knowledge and experiences from across Eionet, in particular via the EEA's National Reference Centres for Forward-Looking Information and Services (NRC FLIS) and State of Environment Reporting (NRC SOE).

This work package will consist of the following tasks:

- Building evidence and developing assessments on different forms of innovation (technological, social, organisational etc.), how they contribute to enabling sustainability transitions and how they influence environmental outcomes.
- Analysing the role of diverse policies and policy mixes in enabling system innovation and achieving the EU's long-term sustainability objectives.
- Assessing existing policies and policy mixes in terms of their ability to enable or hinder sustainability transitions and identifying and assessing emerging policy issues. This includes assessment of horizontal and vertical coherence, environmental policy integration and cumulative policy impacts.
- Assessing the role of cities, local communities and networks in enabling transitions, including their role in supporting experimentation, innovation and learning, and their capacity to deliver transitions at local or regional scales.
- Supporting the development of geospatial data for green infrastructure deployment, nature-based solutions, urban adaptation analysis and integrated sustainability analysis.
- Supporting engagement with stakeholders, for example in policy (including cities, local authorities and their networks), business and civil society to develop and review knowledge on enablers of transitions.
- Supporting the development of understanding and knowledge about the competencies and skills needed to enable transitions, both within public administrations and across society more broadly.

1.3.3 Work package 3 – Foresight for action

As set out in the EU's Better Regulations Toolbox,¹⁰ foresight can contribute to policymaking in a variety of ways, including helping define policy options, informing policy design, facilitating implementation, shaping directionality and enabling participation. Foresight is now firmly embedded in the institutional structure of the European Commission 2019-2024, for example in the appointment of a Vice-President for Interinstitutional Affairs and Foresight. This reflects recognition of foresight's key role in the supporting transitions governance, for example in providing mechanisms to explore risks and opportunities in complex and uncertain situations, identify innovative solutions, engage stakeholders and work across policy silos, and collectively define desired visions and pathways.

The EEA and NRC FLIS have developed significant foresight knowledge and outputs in recent years and will continue developing them co-creatively. This work will focus in particular on better integrating foresight into EEA and national assessments, supporting policymaking in the context of the European Green Deal and its potential successor, and further developing skills and competencies across Eionet.

The overarching aim of this work package is timely and effective support to long-term aspects of policymaking, especially the European Green Deal and Digital Agenda and the policy packages that will follow the European Green Deal after 2024. It also aims to address precautionary actions and rapid responses to emerging risks and urgent policy challenges. This work package also aims to support capacity-building activities and facilitate strategic foresight processes.

This work package will consist of the following tasks:

- Exploring alternative futures and pathways for a sustainable Europe in 2030, 2040 and 2050, in line with EU sustainability objectives.
- Scanning and synthesising foresight literature and data sources, identifying new opportunities and challenges, and stimulating innovative thinking and innovative solutions.
- Designing and using variety of foresight methods (expert based, participatory based, quantitative and qualitative), especially horizon scanning, scenarios building, future workshops, online approaches and modelling.
- Analysing and illustrating the role of foresight in supporting policy and governance, including its role in managing risks and applying precautionary and adaptive governance approaches. This task will draw in particular on experiences and expertise across Eionet.
- Producing analysis to help future-proof policies, exploring policy options and their socio-economic-environmental impacts; developing scenarios based on a range of policies and plausible future events

¹⁰ The EU Better Regulation Toolbox complements the main 'Guidelines on better regulation' in European Commission Staff Working Document SWD (2017) 350.

and comparing them with 'business-as-usual' scenarios; and assessing whether policy objectives will be met.

- Establishing reflexive, participatory processes to engage stakeholders in developing forward-looking knowledge, and developing outreach and communications approaches that support the use and uptake of foresight in assessments and policymaking.
- Supporting knowledge development and capacity-building across the EEA and Eionet in the use and application of foresight approaches in assessments and governance.
- Supporting EEA in developing on-line presentation of foresight outcomes relevant to delivering sustainability outcomes, like forward-looking components of dashboards, visualisations, infographics and narratives for the future.

1.3.4 Work package 4 – Economic and financial transformations for sustainability

The EU's prospects of achieving its long-term sustainability objectives are shaped by the wider economic context and the functioning of the European and global financial system. Structural change to European systems of production and consumption will have widespread macroeconomic implications, impacting society (e.g. employment and earnings) and governments (e.g. fiscal revenues and expenditures). Such effects may call into question the social and political feasibility of transitions.

The European Green Deal acknowledges that 'Reorienting private capital to more sustainable investments requires a comprehensive shift in how the financial system works'. Policies aimed at greening the financial and fiscal systems are therefore critical. The European Commission's Sustainable Finance Action Plan from 2018 has three general objectives: reorienting capital flows towards sustainable investment to achieve sustainable growth; managing financial risks stemming from climate change and environmental degradation; and fostering transparency and long-termism. The forthcoming Renewed Sustainable Finance Strategy under EU's New Green Deal will further strengthen the financial sector's contribution to meeting climate and environmental objectives.

This work package will consist of the following tasks:

- Assessing how European and global financial systems currently constrain or enable transitions to sustainability and the changes needed to enable Europe to achieve its long-term sustainability objectives.
- Assessing economic policy options for supporting transitions, including sustainable financing of European Green Deal priorities from public and private sources, and evaluating the environmental effectiveness of sustainable finance and fiscal policy measures and their links to EU and national environmental programmes.
- Analysing the macroeconomic dimensions of sustainability transitions, e.g. implications of systemic change for economic growth, employment, prices etc., and exploring policy options to increase

Europe's resilience in the context of macroeconomic change and associated trends (e.g. population ageing, technological unemployment).

- Contributing to the EEA's work streams under the Platform on Sustainable Finance, including taxonomy development in cooperation with other ETCs, addressing usability issues, and developing and deploying methods, data and indicators for monitoring capital flows into sustainable investments.
- Contributing to the EEA's advisory function to the European Supervisory Authorities, in particular regarding metrics and indicators for assessing adverse impacts from investment decisions.
- Supporting the EEA in relation to any new or expanded tasks associated with e.g. the forthcoming Renewed Sustainable Finance Strategy and the EU Green Deal Investment Plan.
- Supporting stakeholder interactions and capacity development to enable EEA activities on economic and financial transformations for sustainability.

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 organisations.

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 organising 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 requirement

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 minimising its environmental footprint and is EMAS certified¹¹. 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 and national policy developments regarding sustainable development, system innovation, sustainability transitions and sustainable finance, as well as the EU and global urban agendas and of respective networks and bodies including broad strategic territorial and spatial issues;
- expertise and knowledge in policy analysis, including ex ante policy effectiveness assessments performed using appropriate techniques and tools;

¹¹ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/emas>.

- expertise in environmental and socio-economic analysis coupled with indicator-based assessment of progress across environment and climate priorities, EU strategic frameworks such as the European Green Deal, EU Digital Agenda and the SDGs;
- expertise and knowledge in foresight and forward-looking approaches, both within and across different policy areas, including horizon scanning, use of projections and scenarios, and combining quantitative and qualitative foresight methods in integrated assessments;
- expertise and knowledge in developing integrated, transdisciplinary, solutions-oriented assessments linking environment, technological and socio-economic issues (e.g. relating to the functioning and impacts of production-consumption systems, and links to national resources and policies);
- expertise and knowledge in applying qualitative and quantitative integrated approaches for assessing systems and cross-system interactions, such as systems analysis, life cycle assessment, multi-scale metabolism accounting, environmental input-output analysis, material flow accounting, eMergy analysis, integrated modelling, system dynamics, nexus approaches (e.g. resource nexus), cross-impact matrices, multi-criteria methods and indicators, as well as literature review, meta-analysis and controversy studies.
- expertise and knowledge in management tools and techniques, data mining, data analytics and network analysis in support to information extraction and analysis from large databases (e.g. academic publications, social media, web articles);
- expertise in data handling and processing methods, ensuring quality of reported data, including analytical skills regarding statistical and geo-spatial analysis of environmental data;
- experience with spatial data handling and analysis, requirements laid down by the INSPIRE Directive (2007/2/EC) and its implementing rules, as well as expertise in Copernicus services and uptake of their products, including requirements for transparent use of approved EEA reference data sets from the EEA spatial data infrastructure;
- strong skills in analysing of economic and financial systems, instruments, tools, methods and theories, and in assessing the role of public and private finance in enabling sustainability transitions;
- experience in indicator framework development, maintenance and updating, statistical analysis and trend analysis in support of policy (including distance to target analysis);
- strong synthesising, writing and communication competencies;
- experience and expertise in designing and facilitating stakeholder interaction approaches including stakeholders from national to European level, combining IT and knowledge skills and use of online systems and tools;
- experience in preparing, facilitating and documenting workshops and meetings, and enabling participatory processes, specifically online.

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 countries¹², 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 Sustainability trends, prospects and responses. 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 Sustainability trends, prospects and responses. Disregard of these rules will lead to exclusion of all consortia concerned.

2.2 Criteria

2.2.1 Exclusion criteria

¹² The 27 EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.

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 Union¹³.

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 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:**

¹³ 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.

- 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 year¹⁴);
 - 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 plans¹⁵;

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

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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.

- Experts responsible for performing the tasks:
 - Minimum 10 CVs of senior experts, each documenting at least 10 years' relevant experience
 - Minimum 15 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 experts¹⁶ 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;

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	General understanding Demonstrated knowledge of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EEA's role in supporting policy implementation and developing knowledge to support Europe's sustainability objectives, 	20

¹⁶ 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.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	
2	<p>Data and information systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	10
3	<p>Assessments</p> <p>Demonstrated experience and expertise in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing integrated and systemic assessments that capture the interdependencies of social, economic, environmental and governance dimensions of sustainability; • synthesising and developing solution-oriented assessments to support policy actions; • integrating environment and climate-related dimensions of economic production and consumption systems in overall integrated assessments for sustainability; • developing integrated assessments that combine ‘new’ innovative data sources with traditional sources of data. • developing forward-looking integrated assessments based upon foresight and other participatory based processes, as well as development and use of qualitative and quantitative outlooks. . 	30
4	<p>Policy support</p>	15

	<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>	
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. 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 receipt 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	
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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) 2018/1725¹⁷ 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 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

¹⁷ OJEU L 295 of 21.11.2018, p. 39-98.

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