



**Framework Partnership Agreement
concerning the European Topic Centre
on
Biological Diversity 2014-2018**

Reference: Open call for proposals EEA/NSV/13/001-ETC/BD

Closing date: 30.04.2013

1. Background information

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

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

Established in 1990 and operational in Copenhagen since 1994, the EEA is the hub of the European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet¹), a network of around 350 organisations across Europe through which it collects and disseminates environment-related data and information. This information is made available through various report series, briefings and the EEA website². The European Commission, the European Parliament, national and regional authorities in the member countries, the scientific world and a wide range of non-governmental organisations are among the regular users of the databases and information products.

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

The EEA and Eionet contribute to the European Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS), a distributed, integrated, web-enabled information system based on a network of public information providers sharing environmental data and information. It builds on

¹ <http://www.eionet.europa.eu>

² <http://www.eea.europa.eu>

³ (EC) Regulation No. 401/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the EEA and Eionet (codified version, OJ L126 of 21 May 2009, p13, see: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32009R0401:EN:NOT>

existing e-infrastructure, systems and services in the Member States and EU institutions. One key role is to manage five thematic Environmental Data Centres (Climate change, Air, Water, Land use and Biodiversity).

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

Having regard to the expiry of the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) concerning the ETC on Biological Diversity on 26 November 2013, the EEA launches this call with a view to identifying the consortium which will continue the work in the topic area from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2018⁴.

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

Biological Diversity (total): EUR 1,500,000

1.2 Role of European Topic Centres (ETCs)

ETCs are, according to the EEA regulation⁵ and in practice, an important instrument supporting the EEA through the execution of sizeable, continuous or one-off, well-defined tasks with the involvement of member countries. ETCs support the EEA Environmental Data Centres for the topics Air, Climate change, Water, Biodiversity and Land use referred to above, and may provide help to EEA in supporting other data centres coordinated by Eurostat and JRC. Tasks focus on the harmonisation of monitoring of the environment in the member countries, the compilation of the resulting data in international databases, the processing of the information including the use of models to describe and analyse the present and future state of the environment, and the production of indicators to communicate the findings to various users.

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

⁴ This call is subject to the EEA Financial Regulation and its Implementing Rules as determined by the EU's Financial Regulation (EU) No 966/2012 of 25.10.2012 (OJEU L 298/1 of 26.10.2012) and its Rules of application laid down in Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012 of 29.10.2012 (OJEU L 362/1 of 31.12.2012), in particular their respective Titles VI on Grants (Articles 121-137 FR and 173-210 RAP). It is also subject to the EEA regulation which stipulates in Article 4(5) that 'topic centres shall be designated by the Management Board ...for a period not exceeding the duration of each multiannual work programme...Each designation may, however, be renewed'.

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

The role of ETC's in supporting EU legislation implementation has been also a key element of EEA activities towards its support to Commission work. In some cases (as is the case of ETC-BD, a substantial amount of capacity building with MS is involved in these reporting and assessment activities.

In order to assume this role, ETCs are expected to assemble the best expertise covering the knowledge needs to assess the full European state and trends of the environment occurring in the EEA member countries, to handle data in their areas and analyse environmental data with regard to societal and economic developments relevant to environmental and sectoral policies.

1.3 Agreements

All activities of ETCs are based on Framework Partnership Agreements (FPAs) and Specific Agreements (SAs) concluded to implement the former. Annual work programmes, which serve as the basis for the award of grants, are decided upon by the EEA and ETCs taking into account the requirements of all parts of Eionet, Commission services and other stakeholders.

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

2. Future demands on EEA work in the area of Biological Diversity 2014-2018

2.1 Policy context

The Biodiversity policy context up to 2020 consists of new global and EU policy frameworks agreed respectively in 2010 and 2011.

The new EU [Biodiversity Strategy](#) (Communication from the Commission: [Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020 \(COM\(2011\) 244\)](#)) that follows on from the [2006 Biodiversity Action Plan](#) at EU level, and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Strategic Plan 2011-2020, including the Aichi targets⁶.

The new strategy to halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU by 2020 is in line with global commitments made in Nagoya in October 2010, in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), where a package of measures to address global biodiversity loss over the coming decade was agreed, including a set of global targets.

The EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 contains six main targets and respective actions. The six targets cover:

- Implementation of EU nature legislation including Natura 2000;
- Protection and restoration of ecosystems and ecosystems services;
- Integration of Biodiversity in agriculture and forestry policies;
- Integration of Biodiversity in the maritime and fisheries policies;
- Addressing the problem of invasive alien species;
- EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.

⁶ <http://www.cbd.int/doc/strategic-plan/2011-2020/Aichi-Targets-en.pdf>

The strategy is in line with two commitments made by EU leaders in March 2010. The first is the 2020 headline target: 'Halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss'. The second is the 2050 vision: 'By 2050, European Union biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides – its natural capital – are protected, valued and appropriately restored for biodiversity's intrinsic value and for their essential contribution to human wellbeing and economic prosperity, and so that catastrophic changes caused by the loss of biodiversity are avoided.'

The text of the EU Strategy should be read together with the following documents:

- The [European Parliament Resolution of 20 April 2012](#)
- The [Environment Council Conclusions of 19 December 2011](#)
- The [EESC opinion of 26 October 2011](#)
- The [Environment Council Conclusions of 21 June 2011](#)

The EU Strategy is also in line with global commitments made in Nagoya in October 2010, in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), where world leaders adopted a package of measures to address global biodiversity loss over the coming decade. The CBD Strategic Plan 2011-2020 includes 20 headline targets for 2015 or 2020 (the 'Aichi Biodiversity Targets') organized under five strategic goals. The goals and targets comprise both: (i) aspirations for achievement at the global level; and (ii) a flexible framework for the establishment of national or regional targets. Parties, including the EU, are invited to set their own targets within this flexible framework, taking into account national needs and priorities, while also bearing in mind national contributions to the achievement of the global targets. The above EU Biodiversity Strategy contributes to these global strategic goals, which are:

- *A. Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society*
- *B. Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use*
- *C. Improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity*
- *D. Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services*
- *E. Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity-building*

Meanwhile, an international agreement was reached on the establishment of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) earlier this year, recognizing the potential contribution it could make to enhance the effectiveness of the CBD and the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

2.2 EEA role in support of policy

The main objectives of EEA's biodiversity work, with the contributions and support of its ETCs, are to deliver streamlined data and information and prepare policy and thematic relevant assessments of biological diversity in terrestrial and marine ecosystems to track

progress towards the corresponding targets as defined in relevant EU and international policies and supporting the evaluation of the effectiveness of European policies and measures. From 2011 onwards, these included the EU Biodiversity Strategy and its interrelated 6 targets, including the support to the EU involvement in the CBD Strategic Plan and its targets.

The current five-year period of the EEA strategy witnessed a significant expansion of the EU biodiversity policy area, due to an increased awareness of the significance of biodiversity and ecosystem services for human well-being and the concomitant evolution of the respective policy tools.

The [7th EAP](#) (EU Environment Action Programme) adopted on 29 November 2012 refers 9 priority objectives, the first of which is to protect, conserve and enhance the EU's natural capital, while another one refers to the need to improve the evidence base for environment policy. Three basic streams of the future Action Programme refer to: better implementation of existing environmental legislation; the transition to a green economy; and new initiatives for issues not well-addressed by current legislation, namely climate adaptation, **biodiversity**, sustainable cities, and chemicals.

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

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

For the past years, the EEA has already been putting these principles in practise in the area of biodiversity. Two concrete key areas of work in support to the Commission already demonstrate this better Implementation Principle. These two main areas of on-going EEA work will continue in the future:

A - Support to the implementation of the Nature Directives, including Natura 2000. It includes, e.g.:

- Manage Natura2000 data in close coordination with countries and the Commission including develop, support and track automated procedures, QA/QC procedures, providing yearly databases, supporting periodical Natura2000 meetings and a reference portal within the EEA Environmental Biodiversity Data Centre;
- Dataflow and assessments of the conservation status of habitats and species under the Nature Directives (reporting under the Birds (Art. 12) and Habitats (Art. 17) Directives), including the consolidation of the EUNIS habitats classification.

B - Support to the 2020 EU Biodiversity Strategy. The new Biodiversity Strategy considers a Common Implementation Framework (CIF), the last version having been validated by the Nature Directors meeting in May 2012. It includes a reference to a coherent framework for monitoring, assessing and reporting on progress towards reaching the EU targets and

streamlining these with the obligations under the CBD (Aichi targets). As part of the CIF, the Commission is committed to undertake, with the Member States and the EEA, technical work to link existing biodiversity data, information and knowledge and use it to monitor the implementation of the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy streamlining reporting to avoid administrative burden. To fulfil these objectives, different actions need to be addressed:

- Use SEBI (Streamlining of European Biodiversity Indicators) experience on process and indicators in support of the six targets and revise the current set and mobilise the necessary expertise/*fora*;
- Interlink biodiversity, water and marine issues. Based on a discussion document presented both at the Nature and at the Water and Marine Directors meeting, a work plan will be developed, proposing actions and organising responsibilities at Commission level. These should be taken into account in future ETC-BD work linking to specific activities of ETC-ICM;
- Biodiversity Information System for Europe (BISE) in support of the Biodiversity Strategy (this requires further development). Revising the concept and linking it to a clear governance structure and Implementation Plan. Moreover, as a partnership project it requires a precise discussion on priorities for development and allocation of responsibilities among partners.

All the points mentioned demonstrate, on one hand, the high degree of involvement of EEA in biodiversity implementation issues and, on the other, their relevance for areas much beyond biodiversity, reaching out to ecosystems, agriculture, forests, marine, water, climate change vulnerability and adaptation and territorial aspects.

Furthermore, outcomes of Rio+20 and of CBD-COP11 still require further reading on how to shape the EEA work up to 2020 while the forthcoming EEA Strategy expected from 2014 onwards will require to be considered as well. Requirements arising from the EU clearly set the priorities in terms of future work.

3. Specific tasks of the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity

3.1 Organisation of the work

The European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity (ETC/BD) shall support the work of the EEA in this area in the period 2014-18. The key priority areas to be covered, which in turn, where relevant, are embedded in rolling plans established between EEA and European Commission services – in support of implementation of the EU and related global strategies - include:

- Support to the implementation of existing EU nature related legislation (Birds and Habitats directives), encompassing articulation with other key EU legislation in the marine and water area, streamlining as possible data and reporting activities and sharing expertise and knowledge;
- Support to the assessment and reporting on the Global and EU Biodiversity Strategies, while supporting implementation in data and information aspects, namely mapping and assessing ecosystems health and their services in Europe;
- Work on specific sectors related to the EU Biodiversity Strategy, not covered by other ETCs and strongly connected to the two first blocks of work. These include

agriculture and forests and require cooperation with JRC, DG AGRI and other EU, pan-European and global partners.

In recognition of the different expertise needed for the various types of work to be done under this topic, and in order to ensure the best allocation of available resources, the expected work is divided into three main areas: Biological Diversity and Nature; Ecosystems Assessments; and Agriculture and Forests.

Work package 1 – Biological Diversity

The EEA biodiversity work will be organised around four priorities:

- Support the implementation of the global and European biodiversity policies in general, and the implementation of the Birds and the Habitats Directives in particular;
- Organise data and information on species, habitats and sites;
- Support the preparation of Natura2000 seminars with a view to improving the conservation status (in connection with the implementation of targets 1 and 2 of the new Biodiversity Strategy);
- Assess progress to halt the loss of biodiversity in the EU by 2020 and report on progress using indicators and appropriate baselines;
- Prepare biodiversity assessments and support broader EEA integrated assessments addressing pressures and driving forces relevant for halting the loss of biodiversity, in support of both the EU and Global Biodiversity strategies and the EEA SOER reports.

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

- Further development of the EEA Environmental Data Centre on Biodiversity providing quality-assured data in support of European reporting initiatives using SEIS and INSPIRE principles (<http://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/biodiversity/about-data-centre>);
- Development of the Biodiversity Information System for Europe (BISE) integrating Data Centre data as well as information and reference systems from different sources, and fully including the Biodiversity Clearing House Mechanism (<http://biodiversity-chm.eea.europa.eu/>, <http://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/biodiversity/bise-2013-the-biodiversity-information>); to this effect link with other knowledge management initiatives, including WISE (Inland Waters and Marine), Climate-ADAPT as well as with other relevant partners both at EU (e.g. JRC) and global (e.g. IUCN) levels; to this end reinforce the knowledge base for agriculture, forest and marine biodiversity and incorporate GMES local component results
- Support to the implementation of existing EU nature related legislation (Birds and Habitats directives), including yearly update of the Natura 2000 sufficiency assessments and preparation of the Union's lists, including bio-geographical seminars for the assessment of the SCI network, and the preparation of required databases. This means assessing coherence and sufficiency of sites under the Birds and Habitats Directive, including preparing and streamlining technical procedures among relevant legislation, as well as other related expert relevant support subject to resources availability and inclusion into relevant annual planning;

- Produce analyses on the state and trends of individual species and habitats and their conservation status as required under relevant articles in the existing community legislation such as Art 12 on reporting under the Birds Directive. Art. 17 of the Habitats Directive is the key product that has been developed by the EEA, ETC/BD and DG ENV (<http://bd.eionet.europa.eu/article17/>);
- Report on progress towards the EU and global targets on halting/reducing the loss of biodiversity using indicators including the Streamlining European Biodiversity Indicators (SEBI) 2010 set, as well as other sets or initiatives (<http://biodiversity.europa.eu/topics/sebi-indicators>);
- Support policy evaluation and target assessment for the period up to 2020 by using the European 2010 Biodiversity Baseline, set as the benchmark to evaluate progress in the current policy cycle (<http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/eu-2010-biodiversity-baseline/>); the two previous points are key contributions to the development of the common implementation framework through its support to monitoring progress in implementing the EU 2020 Biodiversity strategy and reaching EU and AICHI targets;
- Support the EEA's regular state and outlook of the environment reports (SOER) and other major integrated assessments using EEA generated datasets, indicators and other sources of information, generated by various research projects and networks (<http://www.eea.europa.eu/soer/europe/biodiversity>);
- Improve the EEA communication on species, habitats and ecosystems via diversified products and media channels (<http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/10-messages-for-2010>, <http://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/biodiversity>), including on Invasive alien species;
- Assistance to the platform on the management of Natura 2000;
- Maintain, complementarily, data on nationally protected areas gathered as part of the Common Database on Designated Areas (CDDA), which is part of Eionet priority data flow;
- Under established cooperation with the Council of Europe, support data reporting by Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention on Emerald sites; information on EU Red lists of species will also be covered; and,
- Establish the relevant interfaces with other ETCs as well as to other key partners as relevant and defined in the annual work programme.

Work package 2 – Ecosystems Assessments

On ecosystems and their services, a wider understanding of the concept in Europe as a follow-up of the 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA-SGAs) is required in particular in support of the activities underlying Target 2 of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, and its action 5. These require:

- Assess and gather knowledge on methodologies required for ecosystems assessment for Europe, including environmental accounting, based on country and global organisation experiences;
- ETC will actively support EEA in its participation in the Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services (MAES) Working group and Steering group through support information sharing on mapping and assessing ecosystems and their services, give expert advice on restoration as support to the target 2

- Assess pressures on ecosystems and ecosystem services from a wide range of socio-economic activities, linking to the resource efficiency road map and in support of awareness about the value of ecosystems and use of natural resources;
- Improve the knowledge about ecosystems in Europe, including quantitative and qualitative analyses of Europe's ecosystems, in particular in relation to impacts of pressures including climate change and landscape fragmentation, and support assessments on the restrictions such pressures pose on services delivery by specific ecosystems;
- Compile current MS activities on ecosystems and ecosystems services, in support of assessment and knowledge management activities and projects
- Integrate this knowledge into the assessment of progress of Targets 1, 2 and 3 of the EU Biodiversity Strategy (Agriculture and Forests);
- Support the work on green infrastructure and biophysical mapping of ecosystems and their services done by other ETCs, including Work Package 1 of ETC-Inland, Coastal and Marine Waters;
- Maximise the use of existing data and spatial modelling techniques to support analysis of the health of ecosystems in Europe and globally in terms of Europe's footprint and emerging sector demands;
- Further develop and update EEA indicator frameworks, including its core set of indicators (CSI), SEBI2010 and agri-environment indicators, and integrate them into EEA assessments;
- Maintain the ecosystems information platform within BISE while keeping countries and other stakeholders involved in building a European knowledge node. This needs to be done in close connection to the European contribution to IpBES and other globally-driven exercises (MA-SGAs);
- Establish the relevant interfaces, on the one hand, with other ETCs as well as to other key partners as relevant and defined in the annual work programmes and, on the other hand, with the research and scientific community via appropriate projects or networks.

Work package 3 – Agriculture and Forests biodiversity and ecosystems-related information

Addressing agriculture and forest multi-functionality and their many ecosystems services is key to achieving several of the biodiversity targets. Farmland and forest land occupy around 90% of EU territory, with forests and wooded land covering more than 42% of the EU's surface; 30% of Natura 2000 sites are forest habitat. EEA has specifically analysed agricultural and forests ecosystems through the generation of indicators and assessments.

In this respect, the EEA work on agri-environment indicators as well as the development of the concept of high nature value farmland (HNVF) has been a staple of integration of biodiversity considerations into this sector policy. Both have been also shaping the development of forest-related activities. Tasks to be developed will address the impact of agriculture and forests both in halting biodiversity and their role in protecting nature within and agro-ecological and spatial planning perspective and will include:

- Assess, through the use of EEA or other provider indicators, the driving forces behind the impacts on biodiversity of agriculture and forest in support of integrated assessments, including State of the Environment report 2015;
- Support the European Commission services / EEA Memorandum of Understanding on agri-environment indicators (with EEA having responsibility of nine out of 28 indicators) and streamline with other EEA sets (incl. SEBI and CSI);
- Support the biodiversity related reporting and assessment frameworks being established under the CAP, streamlining indicator development and information and data sharing according to SEIS principles;
- Further support the development of high nature value type indicators following the experience of HNVF (<http://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/figures/approximate-distribution-of-hnv-farmland>), and further develop a similar indicator for forests (<http://projects.eionet.europa.eu/hnv-forest-area/>);
- Undertake assessments of critical issues in the interface of conservation, restoration, agriculture and forest, including land use changes and soil, as well as the impact of alien species and climate change;
- Network with major players in these areas, both at EU and global level, and liaise with major assessments within an ecosystems assessments framework;
- Maintain the relevant information platforms in BISE in liaison with the Soils and Forests Data Centres, in close connection to the European contribution to IPBES and contribution to other globally-driven exercises (MA-SGAs).
- Establish the relevant interfaces with other ETCs as well as to other key partners as relevant and defined in the annual work programme.

3.2 General activities

Work package 4 - ETC management and capacity-building

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

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

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

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

Under the supervision, guidance and agreement of EEA the ETC shall maintain close links with the Eionet (EEA member countries and other ETCs), through:

- Strong communication efforts with the countries, including networking and country visits within defined processes;
- Dialogue with the countries identifying barriers to optimally perform their tasks (e.g. monitoring and reporting capacities, flows of data, knowledge gaps, indicator

developments), developing proposals to solve any issues that may emerge and providing training and capacity building in the countries as appropriate;

- Helping organising regular Eionet workshops and seminars to discuss the outcomes of the work and plan future activities with the member countries;
- Engaging actively in co-operation with other ETCs to strengthen the coherence of data and information, in particular regarding the implementation of relevant directives (MSFD, WFD, as examples), biodiversity and biodiversity-related indicators, adaptation to climate change, mapping and spatial analysis.

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

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

4.1 The structure of the ETC consortium

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

- As it can be difficult to manage many small partners (e.g. with contracts of less than EUR 50 000 per year) in a consortium, a core team can facilitate management and coherence of delivery. However, this has to be balanced against the need to cover the required field of expertise and to ensure good geographical coverage.
- The consortium should be organised around the following administrative functions:
 - a coordinator (ETC manager), having appropriate management and networking capabilities;
 - administrative support, able to work in English and organise European meetings and consultations; and,
 - accounting support, in order to ensure proper financial management.
- The consortium as a whole needs to cover the main work areas with the expertise listed under 4.2, but also to have proven links to wider European expertise. This is particularly important where specific skills are needed, e.g. for certain methodologies, modelling or for wider sector integration etc.
- Therefore, the ETC needs to be structured in a way to ensure the necessary flexibility to be able to adapt to changing needs and to be able to provide experts for specific projects.
- It should also have the capability to network and communicate with countries and also with relevant Commission and/or other international policy and scientific working groups and conferences

4.2 Technical and scientific expertise

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

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

- International, EU and national policy developments regarding nature and biodiversity, ecosystems assessments, including forests and agriculture;
- Legal provisions entailed by the EU Nature Directives, with especial emphasis on managing respective data flows;
- Reporting under the Nature Directives as well as under related EU environment legislation (MSFD, WFD), the CBD and other regional or global MEA (Bern Convention, Ramsar Convention, Barcelona Convention, as mere examples);
- Proven experience in assessing the conservation status of species and habitat including the different stages of the process;
- Proven knowledge and expertise on biogeographic processes, both at EU and pan-European scales;
- Relevant ecological expertise (e. ornithology, taxonomy, marine biodiversity) across the requirements imposed by Work Packages 1 to 3;
- Understanding of the EEA conceptual MDIAK (Monitoring-Data-Information-Assessment- Knowledge) chain for biodiversity;
- Demonstrable understanding of the EU and global Biodiversity targets and knowledge of relevant processes supporting its assessment and reporting (indicators, information and knowledge systems)
- Expertise and proven experience in conducting integrated assessments including the use and analysis of GIS data and indicators;
- Broad knowledge of the five key biodiversity pressures: overexploitation and unsustainable use; habitat loss and degradation; pollution; invasive alien species; climate change;
- Knowledge of ecosystems, their services, respective mapping and assessment conceptual and process frameworks in place (e.g. EEA ecosystems accounting method) or to be implemented in the near future (MAES, IPBES);
- Agriculture and forests associated Biodiversity including soil aspects;
- Indicator streamlining activities, including biodiversity, agriculture and forests indicator frameworks;
- QA/QC of data flows, indicators and assessments on ecosystems, biodiversity and nature;
- SEIS, Copernicus and their associated services, including spatial analysis (and Inspire);
- Networking and communicating with countries, including IPA and ENP, with relevant Commission and/or other international organisations and scientific bodies and working groups, including relevant MEA.

5. Mandatory requirements

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

- As the working language of the EEA is English, it will also be the working language of the FPA and SAs. More particularly, the ETC is expected to deliver documents

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

- Without exception, the ETC shall report to the EEA, the main contact points being the ETC Manager and the assigned EEA Project Manager.
- Subject to guidance from the EEA, the ETC shall ensure coherence and integration of its work with the work carried out by the EEA. To this effect and as far as specific tasks are concerned, the EEA Project Manager(s) will be in close contact with the future beneficiaries (ETC Manager and partners as needed).
- The ETC is also expected to provide input into the development of the EEA annual work programme. Furthermore it shall provide EEA with proposals for the continuous development of the working areas.
- While cooperation amongst ETCs is subject to respective requests and coordination from the EEA, ETCs shall be structured in a way which ensures proper linkages with other ETCs as cross-sectoral and cross-thematic cooperation and integration needs further attention in the future. Such integrated cooperation needs highly transparent ETC management in order to avoid duplication or disintegration of tasks across partners.
- Maintaining and improving the links to Eionet, in particular the Primary Contact Points (PCP) and National Reference Centres (NRC) appointed by the member countries, is the basic foundation for the work of the ETCs. This means, e.g., *ad hoc* technical support to member countries, reflecting the specific needs of all countries, to enable them to contribute to the reporting of 'priority data'. The ETC shall also assist the EEA in organising annual meetings with the Eionet partners.
- The EEA is committed to an internal Environmental Policy to ensure that the EEA operates in an environmentally sound manner. Since March 2005 the EEA is EMAS certified. It is thus required that the future beneficiaries take into consideration the reduction of environmental impact of ETC activities and develop Environmental Policies for the ETCs.

6. Criteria

6.1 Eligibility

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

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

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

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

6.2 Ne bis in idem

While partners may participate in consortia aiming at FPAs concerning different ETCs (see the parallel Open Calls EEA/ACC/13/001-ETC/ACM, EEA/ACC/13/002-ETC/CCA and EEA/NSV/13/002-ETC/ICM), **no partner** may participate **in more than one** consortium aiming at the FPA **concerning the ETC of this Open Call**, i.e. the ETC on Biological Diversity. Disregard of this rule leads to exclusion of all consortia concerned.

Similarly it is prohibited for proposed staff to sign letters of intent to participate in more than one consortium aiming at the FPA concerning this ETC, i.e. ETC on Biological Diversity. Disregard of this rule leads to exclusion of all consortia concerned.

6.3 Exclusion criteria

Apart from the situations under 6.2, consortia shall be excluded from participation in this procedure if any of its partners is in one of the situations referred to in Articles 106(1), 107 and 109(1)(b) of the Financial Rules applicable to the general budget of the European Union⁷.

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

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

6.4 Selection criteria

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

(a) Legal capacity

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

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

(b) Economic and financial capacity

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

⁷ Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25.10.2012, OJEU L 298/1 of 26.10.2012.

- proof of stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain the consortium's activity throughout the period 2014-2018;
- 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 year⁸).

(c) Technical and professional capacity

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

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

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

3. A list and brief account of work considered relevant and carried out by the partners forming the consortium in the past five years, with the sums, dates and recipients (public or private);
4. Letters of intent of all consortium partners to participate and provide co-financing up to at least 10% of the total eligible cost of the action⁹;
5. For each partner established in an EEA member country, letters of confirmation from the respective Member of the EEA Management Board that the relevant partner is able to perform the function of an ETC partner within Eionet;
6. For each partner, proof and description of their Quality Assurance and Quality Control systems;
7. For each partner, proof and description of their environmental policy.

6.5 Award criteria

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

⁸ Having regard to Article 196(3) RAP and the fact that all *consortium* partners will assume joint and several liability in accordance with the FPA, such audit reports are not required if consortia include any public bodies.

⁹ The 10%-rule of minimum co-financing is applied towards the *consortium* as a whole. To what extent partners contribute to this co-financing is an internal *consortium* matter.

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

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

7. Environmental considerations

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

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

8. Further information

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

9. Timing

Information briefing: **22 February 2013, 10 am – 1 pm at the EEA premises in Copenhagen: Kongens Nytorv 6, 1050 Copenhagen K**

Deadline for submitting proposals: **30 April 2013**

Opening of proposals: **7 May 2013**

Evaluation of proposals: **From 8 May to 30 May 2013 (indicative dates)**

Following the decision of the EEA Management Board on the designation of the successful consortium (foreseen for 26 June 2013) and prior to signature of the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) all consortia will be notified of the outcome of this call.

10. Presentation of the proposal

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

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

- The call for proposals reference No EEA/NSV/13/001-ETC/BD
- The call for proposals title “Framework partnership agreement concerning the European Topic Centre on Biological diversity 2014-2018”
- The name of the consortium’s coordinator
- The indication “Proposal – Not to be opened by the internal mail services”
- The address for submission of proposals (as specified in the letter of invitation to submit proposals)
- The date of submission shall be legible on the outer envelope or parcel

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

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

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

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

- The proposal submission form drawn up in accordance with the template in annex 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

11. Confidentiality and protection of personal data

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

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

ANNEXES

Annex 1 – Proposal submission form

Annex 2 – Declaration exclusion criteria

Annex 3 – Legal entity form

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

Annex 5 – Draft framework partnership agreement and specific agreement

BRIEFING MEETING and further information

A briefing meeting to provide more background information on the expectations for the ETC and the procedure for submitting a proposal will be organised on 22 February 2013 in Copenhagen. If you are interested, please register by sending an e-mail to procurement@eea.europa.eu. We will send you the meeting details in response.

Any immediate questions regarding this call for proposals should be sent by e-mail to the European Environment Agency: olivier.cornu@eea.europa.eu (general questions) or ronan.uhel@eea.europa.eu (technical questions).

All applicants are encouraged to consult the section 'contract opportunities' on the EEA website regularly before the deadline (<http://www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/tenders>).