



Guidelines for Prospective Organisations

How to become a Topic Centre Organisation?

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Last updated: 27/08/2025

Disclaimer

These guidelines are intended for information purposes only and the EEA is not responsible for the use that may be made of their contents. They are offered to support the identification of future topic centre organisations. However, they should not be construed as a formal commitment on behalf of the EEA. These guidelines will be adjusted as needed and should not be seen as exhaustive, at this point in time.

Changes to these guidelines

The EEA may update these guidelines to reflect changes in our practices or for other operational, legal, or regulatory reasons. We will post the updated guidelines on the EEA website with a revised "*last updated*" date. For significant changes, we will provide a more prominent notice.

Processing of personal data

Any personal data provided by the prospective organisation shall be processed pursuant to European regulations related to personal data protection, notably [Regulation \(EU\) 2018/1725](#).

Personal data shall be processed solely for the purposes of the identification and designation processes of Topic Centre Organisations. The only personal data collected and further processed are the data provided in the digital form and include the name and contact details of the designated contact person(s) within the prospective organisations in the volunteering EEA member countries.

The designated contact person within the prospective organisations shall have the right of access to their personal data and the right to rectify or update any such data that is inaccurate or incomplete at any time during the identification process. After the submission deadline, any request for access, rectification, or erasure of personal data shall be addressed in writing to the EEA, acting as data controller, at cei.topiccentre@eea.europa.eu.

Definitions

Eionet Representative – An individual designated by their country’s Management Board member to function as the link between national organisations and the EEA.

European Topic Centre(s) – ETC(s) – refers to the seven consortia in place until end of 2026.

Participating country – refers to one of the twelve countries (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, and Switzerland) participating in the first phase of the new Topic Centre design model.

Interested organisation – any organisation indicating their interest with their national Eionet Representative.

Prospective TCO/Prospective organisations – any organisation which has expressed their interest in becoming a TCO with their national Eionet Representative. Once an organisation has expressed their interest, they become prospective TCOs/Organisations.

Topic Centre Organisation(s) – TCO(s) – refers to an organisation designated by the Management Board to be on the list of Topic Centre Organisations. These organisations are eligible to be contracted as Topic Centres. Inclusion on the list of Topic Centre Organisations does not constitute any contractual commitment by the EEA.

Topic Centre – TC – refers to a single TCO which has been contracted as a Topic Centre via a contractual agreement with the EEA. The TC may subcontract to other TCOs or organisations outside the Eionet.

Topic Centre Consortium – TCC – refers to a joint group of TCOs which has been contracted as a joint Topic Centre via a contractual agreement with the EEA. The TCC may subcontract to other TCOs or organisations outside the Eionet.

Legal entity – refers to an institution or other organisation, as referred to in Article 4(4) of the EEA-Eionet founding Regulation ([Regulation \(EC\) No 401/2009](#)), that possesses legal capacity separate from their owner(s) and can enter into binding agreements on their own rights and can be held accountable under the law.

Introduction and Context

The EEA, Eionet and Topic Centres

The **European Environment Agency (EEA)**, operational since 1994, is the EU agency responsible for providing information on the European environment. The aim of the EEA is to support sustainable development and help achieve significant and measurable improvement in Europe's environment by delivering timely, targeted, relevant, and reliable information to policymakers and the public.

To fulfil this mission, the EEA collects and analyses environmental data from its Member Countries, EU institutions, and international organisations through the **European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet)**. Eionet comprises the EEA's member and cooperating countries and operates through four key components: national focal points, data flow coordination, Eionet groups, and the European Topic Centres (ETCs), as outlined in Regulation (EC) No 401/2009. The ETCs are centres of thematic expertise, contracted and funded by the EEA to carry out specific tasks identified in the EEA-Eionet Strategy. They play a central role in supporting the EEA's work, particularly in managing, verifying, and assessing environment and climate data reported by Member States under EU legislation, thereby strengthening the science-policy interface.

Topic centre design 2027-2030

In June 2024, the EEA Management Board launched a process to designate new European Topic Centres from 2027 onwards via a new model. The goal is to ensure that the future generation of Topic Centres is well-equipped to support the EEA's evolving priorities and respond to new policy and organisational needs through to 2030. The new model is built around three key elements:

1. **Decentralised identification** by Eionet representatives in member countries aiming at increasing national engagement and diversity in topic centre work;
2. **Simplified regular designation** by the EEA Management Board without requiring pre-formed consortia, thus lowering entry barriers;
3. **Agile contracting** whereby the EEA may use a broader mix of contractual arrangements, including performance-based models, to reduce complexity and align with service needs.

On 18 June 2025, the EEA Management Board approved a first phase to pilot the proposed new model before making a final decision in December 2025. Member countries were invited to

volunteer to support the EEA in assessing and streamlining the operationalisation of this identification step in a first phase. The countries participating in this first phase are **Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, and Switzerland.**

Purpose and Scope

These guidelines have been created to support any organisation interested in becoming a Topic Centre Organisation (TCO) that could carry out scientific and/or technical support tasks in one or several priority areas of EEA work; and that could be entrusted with the task of cooperating with EEA and act as a Topic Centre of the European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet) under the new Topic Centre design model. Please note that only legal entities with headquarters or registered office in one of the twelve participating countries are eligible to participate in piloting the first phase of the new model.

The new model refers to a change in the way in which the EEA designates and contracts organisations as Topic Centres. The model is divided into an **establishment cycle** and a **contracting cycle**. These guidelines focus on the establishment cycle and the designation of organisations as TCOs, as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

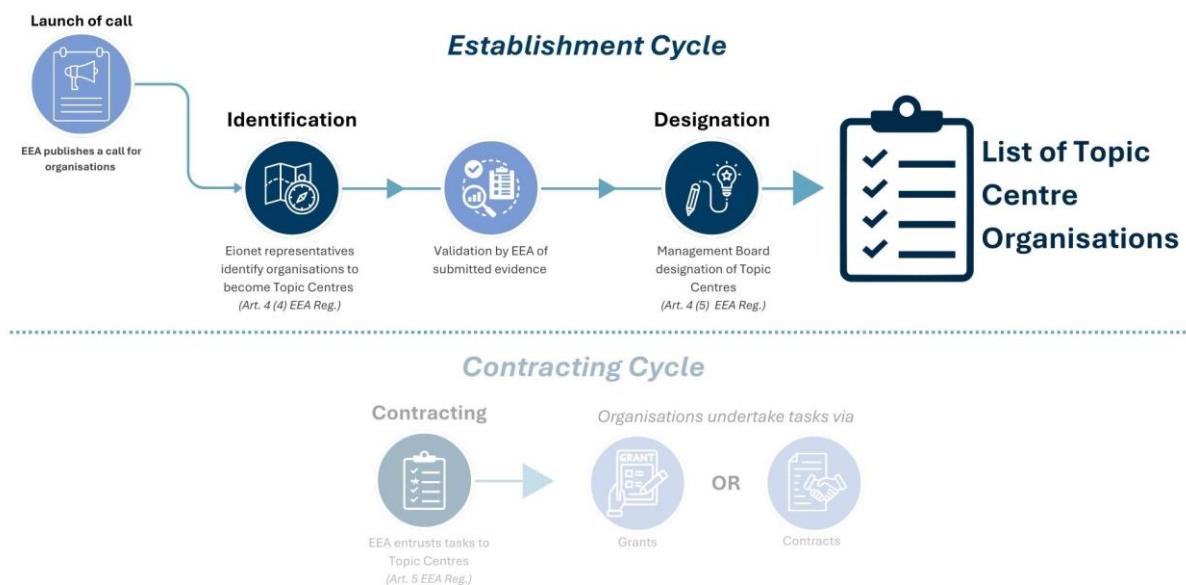


Figure 1 Overview of the Topic Centre Design Model

Please note that participation to this call for expressions of interest is entirely voluntary and in no way binding on the EEA.

Becoming a designated Topic Centre Organisation

To become a designated TCO, an individual organisation must indicate its interest in the call by contacting the Eionet representative in the country where it is based. In doing so, the organisation becomes a **prospective TCO** and initiates the process to become a **designated TCO** via the establishment cycle. Being a designated TCO means that the organisation has been designated by the EEA Management Board and therefore included in the list of designated Topic Centre Organisations. Once designated as a Topic Centre Organisation, the EEA has the possibility to enter into contractual agreements with the organisation. Being designated as a TCO does however, not entail any obligation on the EEA to enter contractual arrangements with the TCO. It is the legal prerequisite, which needs to be in place to conclude contracts, as relevant.

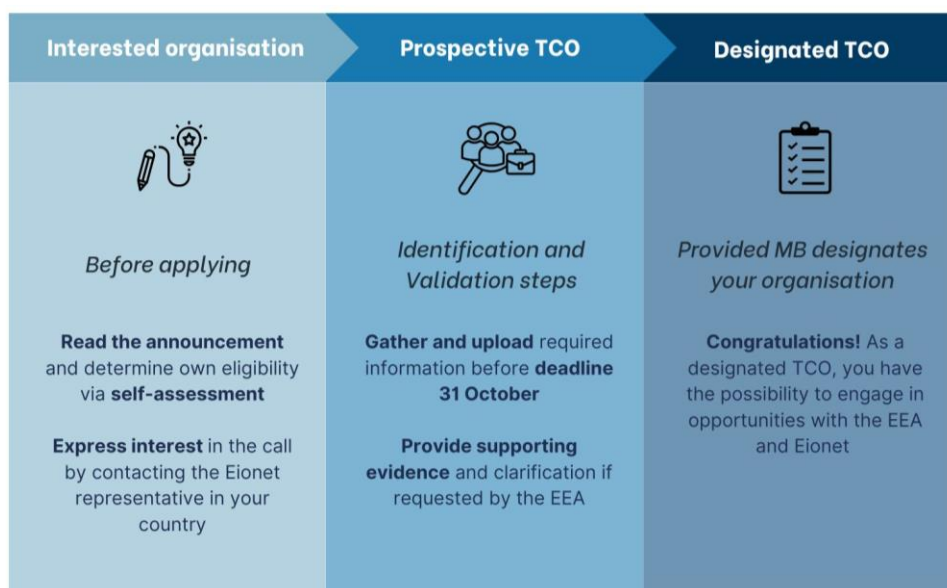


Figure 2 Overview of the different stages an organisation moves through to become a TCO

Please note that if an organisation fails to upload the supporting evidence and information required by the deadline or does not become designated as a Topic Centre Organisation by the EEA Management Board, the organisation may apply in subsequent calls.

The main mission of the designated Topic Centre Organisation is to provide quality support to the EEA's evolving priorities and respond to new policy and organisational needs through to 2030. This is done by being available for contractual arrangements with the EEA to support the various Thematic and Transverse work areas (see Annex 2).

The benefits for an organisation to be designated as a Topic Centre Organisation can be summarised as follows:

- ◆ *Opportunity to operate at the science/policy interface as part of the EEA/Eionet/Topic Centre delivery of data and knowledge supporting Europe's environment and climate ambitions;*
- ◆ *Access to the Eionet network, including Eionet Groups, network events and organisations in other European countries;*
- ◆ *Branding of own organisation as a Topic Centre Organisation and part of the Eionet;*
- ◆ *Exposure to/visibility in European Environment and Climate fora.*

Eligibility criteria

For an organisation to be designated as a TCO, it must demonstrate that it meets all of the following criteria:

- a) it carries out scientific and/or technical support tasks listed in Article 2 of [Regulation \(EC\) No 401/2009](#) in the priority areas of work of the EEA referred to in Article 3(2) of that Regulation and/or in line with the [EEA-Eionet Strategy 2021-2030](#);
- b) it is a legal entity having its headquarters or registered office in one of the twelve EEA member countries participating in the first phase of the design model, whose activities support the objectives of the EEA and Eionet as laid down in Article 1(2) of Regulation (EC) No 401/2009;
- c) it possesses relevant and demonstrated expertise in one or several of the priority areas of work referred to in Article 3(2) of Regulation (EC) No 401/2009;
- d) it has the capacity to operate in Eionet as referred to in Articles 1 and 4 of Regulation (EC) No 401/2009.

To that end, the interested organisation shall perform a self-assessment and collect the following supporting evidence:

- ◆ An official document attesting the legal status of the organisation (e.g. extract from a national trade and/or VAT register, article of incorporation, status, etc.);
- ◆ Information on the [NACE code](#)¹ of the organisation;

¹ [Statistical classification of economic activities in the European Community.](#)

- ◆ The organisation profile including an organigramme and/or the organisation’s last annual activity report.

Please find below an overview of the different documents, the supporting evidence they contain, and the criterion fulfilled by the evidence. Please note that single evidence might support several criteria and vice versa. All evidence must be provided as outlined above.

Document	Evidence	Criteria			
		<i>a) Scientific and/or technical support tasks listed in Article 2 of Regulation (EC) No 401/2009</i>	<i>b) Legal entities having their headquarters or registered office in an EEA member country,</i>	<i>c) Possess relevant and demonstrated expertise in one or several of the priority areas of work</i>	<i>d) Have the capacity to operate in Eionet</i>
<i>Electronic form</i>	NACE code	●		●	
	URL address			●	
	Address of registration/headquarters		●		
	Thematic and transverse areas list checked off	●		●	
<i>Uploaded as attachment to the electronic form</i>	Extract from national trade register and/or VAT register; or articles of incorporation, or status, etc,		●	●	
<i>Uploaded as attachment to the electronic form</i>	Organisation profile including organigram	●		●	●
	Annual activity report ²	●		●	●

Submission period August – 31 October 2025

Upon receipt of written confirmation that the prospective organisation meets all of the above-mentioned criteria, the EEA will send a link to the digital tool where the application and the requested supporting evidence must be uploaded. The digital tool for the selection of TCOs is

² The prospective organisation shall provide a company profile including either an organigramme or the last annual activity report.

expected to be launched on **12 September 2025**. The tool is an independent space on teams, providing a secure environment for uploading and managing submissions. Once launched, the tool will be the sole channel for submitting the required evidence.

All submissions must be **completed by 31 October 2025 at 14:00 pm (CET)**.

Good to Know

When the organisation applies to become a Topic Centre Organisation, the following practical points are important to keep in mind:

Access: Organisations must request access via the Eionet representative in their respective country. The EEA will provide a link to the digital tool. Each organisation must designate a single contact point with editing and uploading rights during the submission period.

Login: Access requires a personal email address. Shared or group accounts are not accepted. Information may be updated directly on the digital tool if necessary, up to the deadline **31/10/2025 at 14:00 pm (CET)**.

Submission: Organisations are added to a dedicated Microsoft Teams space where a digital form is available for uploading required documents and information. All information is visible to the EEA. Submission is complete once the form and documents are uploaded. Organisations can edit their contributions throughout the submission period. Once the submission period has ended, applications will be locked regardless of their state of play.

Validation: After the submission deadline, the EEA will assess the application by reference to the eligibility criteria outlined in the call for expressions of interest. Should further clarification become necessary, the EEA may contact the prospective organisation for further information and evidence. In this case, the organisation will be able to edit the initial submission and add the requested information and evidence.

Changes in contact point: If the designated contact person leaves the organisation, the Eionet representative must be informed. A new contact point must be assigned, a new login has to be created, and the relevant information and evidence will need to be re-uploaded. It is the organisations responsibility to ensure that the application and evidence is accurate and complete, as well as accessible for the organisation to edit if requested.

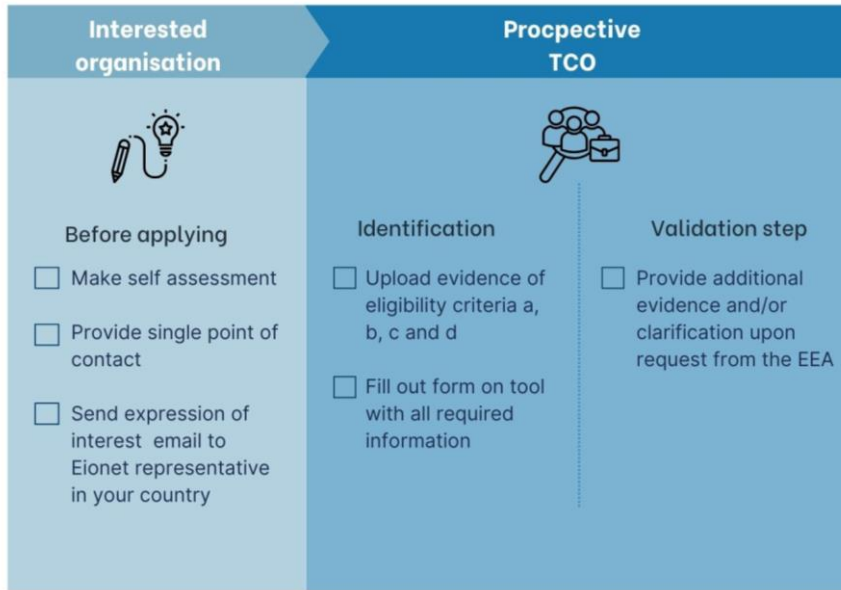


Figure 3 – Checklist for organisation interested in becoming a TCO

Form Design

Organisation details

Name of the Organisation *

Test Organisation DK

Provide the official name of the organisation in English

Address *

Gade 21
2mf
Copenhagen

Organisation address

Country *

DK

Select the country the the organisation should be associated to in ISO format.

NACE code *

12.23

Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community. The code needs to be in the following format: two digits, a full stop, and two digits (e.g. 12.34)

Website *

https://google.deasdsa

Please provide the full url of the organisations website

Work areas

Thematic Areas

Air emissions Biodiversity
 Carbon removals

Choose at least one from thematic or transverse work areas

Transverse areas

Broader sustainability issues
 Digital transition / transformation
 Artificial intelligence

Choose at least one from thematic or transverse work areas

Upload attachments

Attachments

Invite1Limited.csv

TaskmanUserInviteTemp...

Add attachments

Declaration

Declaration that all information is accurate and correct *


Yes


Please confirm by checking the box

Apply label

None

 Please upload relevant supporting documents as listed in the guidelines using the attachment field above. This is required to proceed.

 [Learn more about NACE classification](#)

 By saving the form, I declare that the organisation I represent does not pursue objectives or engage in activities that conflict with the objectives and activities of the EEA and Eionet including advocacy activities.

Save

Cancel

Good to Know

When filling in the digital form, the following practical points are important to keep in mind:

- ◆ Some fields have specific validation rules, e.g., NACE code;
- ◆ Specific instructions are provided in the form's footer;
- ◆ Note that "Attachments" field cannot be modified. There is only one option to upload files, however multiple files are possible;
- ◆ The "Apply label" field does not have any use; please ignore.

Questions?

Below you will find the relevant contact points at the EEA. Please address enquiries as follows:

- ◆ Related to the registration tool: servicedesk@eea.europa.eu
- ◆ Related to the call for expressions of interest and the process: cei.topic.centre@eea.europa.eu
- ◆ Related to data protection and privacy: DPO@eea.europa.eu

When addressing either email, please indicate the topic line as follows

Country - Organisation name: Topic of email

Example for the EEA: "*Denmark – EEA: Expression of interest in becoming a TCO*"

Annexes

- ◆ Annex 1: Topic Centre Organisation (TCO) workflow
- ◆ Annex 2: Template table of thematic and transverse areas

Annex 1 – Topic Centre Organisations (TCOs) workflow

Status	Task	Checklist of completion
Interested Organisation	<i>Read and understand the announcement and notice for the call for expression of interest</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Conduct self-assessment for evidence:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>An official document attesting the legal status of the organisation (e.g. extract from a national trade and/or VAT register, article of incorporation, status, etc.)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Information on the NACE code of the organisation</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Organisation profile including an organigram and/or organisation's last annual activity report</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Contact national Eionet representative and indicate interest	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Confirm that the organisation meets all the criteria	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prospective TCO	Receive log-in to submission platform	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Work on application	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Submit all required information and documentary evidence to the submission digital tool at the latest by 31 October 2025 at 14:00 pm (CET) .	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Respond to requests for further documentation if requested by the EEA	<input type="checkbox"/>
Designated TCO/ Declined application	Receive notification on the result of the application and if the organisation has been designated as a TCO after the Management Board meeting beginning of December.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Annex 2 – Template table of thematic and transverse work areas

(part of the digital selection form to be filled in by prospective organisations)

Thematic areas:

- Agriculture and food system
- Air emissions
- Air quality
- Biodiversity
- Building systems
- Carbon removals
- Chemicals
- Circular economy
- Climate and health
- Climate change impacts, vulnerability and risks
- Climate change resilience and adaptation
- Climate mitigation in the land sector

Transverse areas:

- 8th EAP and indicators
- Artificial intelligence
- Broader sustainability issues
- Digital transition / transformation
- Earth observation
- Foresight
- Geospatial
- Governance
- Just and fair transitions
- Skills strengthening
- State of the Environment
- Communication products and outreach

- Energy systems
 - Finance and economics
 - Fisheries and aquaculture
 - Forests and forestry
 - Freshwater
 - GHG monitoring, reporting and verification
 - Health Impacts and inequalities
 - Industrial accidents
 - Industry
 - Land use
 - Marine environment
 - Maritime sectors
 - Mobility Systems
 - Noise
 - Offshore renewable energy
 - One Health
- General³

³ The purpose of 'General' is for organisations to identify willingness to provide support for the different categories of tasks in Article 4(2) where this support would not be for any of the thematic or transversal areas listed.

- Ozone depleting substances and F gases
- Soil
- Urban
- Waste