



FEDERAL SCIENCE POLICY

PROGRAMME FOR EARTH OBSERVATION TERRASCOPE II

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

INFORMATION PACKAGE

APRIL 2024

CLOSING DATE PROPOSAL SUBMISSION:

21 June 2024 before 4 p.m.

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FOREWORD

- This document features the information required for teams wishing to take part in the 2024 call for **partnership proposals for the operationalisation of EO products and services** in the context of the "TERRASCOPE II programme".
- The call is addressed to Belgian Federal Scientific Institutes.
- Applicants are required to observe the rules laid down in this information package, otherwise their proposals cannot be taken into account by the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office.
- Applicants must make sure that there is no overlap with this grant from other regional/national/European programs.
- Proposals should be presented in English.
- **Proposals must reach the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office no later than 21 June 2024 at 4 PM.**

For further details about the programme and this call please get in touch with:

TERRASCOPE PROGRAMME MANAGER @ BELSPO

Joost Vandenabeele – vdab@belspo.be

For technical questions regarding the TERRASCOPE architecture and the technical implementation requirements:

TERRASCOPE II PROJECT MANAGER @ VITO

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2 PRESENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME

2.1 INTRODUCTION

On 22 November 2019 the Council of Ministers approved phase II of the TERRASCOPE programme as part of the Belgian space strategy.

This programme will cover the period of 2024-2028.

This document concerns the call for proposals from Belgian Federal Scientific Institutions to participate in TERRASCOPE.

2.2 WHAT IS TERRASCOPE?

TERRASCOPE (<https://terrascope.be>) is the federal programme for the operation of the Belgian Earth observation data centre and platform of the same name. This international-level centre is recognised by the European Space Agency ESA as a *Copernicus Collaborative Ground Segment*. It provides low-threshold access to Copernicus data, historical Belgian satellite data and products derived from them, coupled with a unique service. It allows Earth observation data to be easily integrated with other data sources.

The TERRASCOPE datasets will be federated into the European Copernicus Data Space Ecosystem which on the one hand enhances the visibility of Belgian data and services internationally and on the other hand will allow TERRASCOPE users to take advantage of the federated resources available in Europe.

Finally, one of the innovative features of TERRASCOPE is EOPlaza, a platform which brings end users and service providers of high-quality EO services together.

2.3 PROGRAMME GOAL

The overall objective of TERRASCOPE is to embed and increase the use of Earth Observation data and products in order to make our society more sustainable.

This entails:

- Attracting more and more diverse users; in addition to traditional users from the research world;
- Offering easy access to additional data, services and information products, e.g. by means of further integration in European networks of data providers;
- Intensifying cooperation with Belgian actors from the research, public and industrial sectors active in the field of Earth observation and geo-information, in particular with the Federal Scientific Institutions. For the latter, operationalisation of products and services using the TERRASCOPE infrastructure and expertise is envisaged;
- Cooperation with the Belgian Climate Centre and European Green Deal initiatives in which Earth Observation can play a role.

To achieve this goal, the activities of TERRASCOPE focus on following tasks:

- Processing and provision of data
- Scientific support to product quality
- Technical support and platform improvement
- Support of users
- Support of platform partners

2.4 PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE

Within the Belgian Science Policy Office, a programme manager is in charge of managing the TERRASCOPE programme.

Monitoring of the programme is done in consultation with an Advisory Board (Advisory Board). This is a body composed of representatives from industry, administrations, international organisations such as ESA, ... which meets annually.

The role of the Advisory Board is to:

- review TERRASCOPE developments and activities;
- assess its dissemination and valorisation approach;
- make recommendations for future developments;
- assess applications for partnerships.

2.5 PARTNERSHIPS

Efforts will be made to establish partnerships with Belgian actors.

This will focus primarily on the Federal Scientific Institutes (FSIs), for which the operationalisation and development of products and services using the TERRASCOPE infrastructure and expertise is envisaged.

2.6 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECTS

- The selected project proposals are covered by a **contract** between the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office and the Federal Scientific Institute.
- The practical requirements for the project implementation process are described in the technical annex of the contract. The contract describes in particular the part played by all the parties, the funding, the project follow-up procedures, the ownership rights concerning the project the data and project results, the input of all the parties and the legal provisions in the event of disputes.
- The results developed in the context of the project shall be the property of the partner responsible for these results. The State shall nonetheless reserve the right to use these results for its own needs without any charge and on a non-exclusive and irrevocable basis.

3 2024 CALL

3.1 OBJECT AND BUDGET OF THIS CALL

This call applies to **TERRASCOPE partnership projects** only. These are small scale projects for the operationalisation of EO products and services lasting 2-3 years and carried out by a Federal Scientific Institute or a partnership thereof with a well established expertise in satellite remote sensing.

The proposals must address following tasks:

- Making in-house developed and validated products and algorithms compatible with the TERRASCOPE infrastructure in accordance with the FAIR principle: data should be

Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable. The products and services should be based upon satellite Sentinel and Belgian heritage data available at TERRASCOPE or other satellite which can be accessed through TERRASCOPE. The initial implementation on TERRASCOPE should be done by mid-2026;

- Validation of test datasets generated by TERRASCOPE;
- Preparing scientific documentation on said products and algorithms (including validation reports);
- Elaboration of use cases;
- Publicize the products and services.

The **budget** for this call is set at **500.000 EURO**.

3.2 TIMETABLE

▪ Submission of proposals	21 June 2024
▪ Written evaluation	Summer 2024
▪ Oral defence of proposals in front of Advisory Committee	Autumn 2024
▪ Selection of proposals by State Secretary upon advice Advisory Committee	Autumn 2024
▪ Start of contracts	December 2024

4 PROFILE OF THE PROPOSALS

4.1 TARGET GROUPS

Only Belgian Federal Scientific Institutes with a well established expertise in satellite remote sensing qualify for funding.

4.2 BUDGET BREAKDOWN

4.2.1 STAFF

- The staff costs cover: index-linked gross salaries, employer's social security contributions and statutory insurance charges, plus any other legally due compensation or payments as amounts added to the salary.
- Preferably, at least 60% of the total proposal's budget should be devoted to staff.

4.2.2 OPERATIONS

The eligible operations costs eligible are:

all specific operations costs linked to the execution of the project like costs for analysis, organisation of workshops, maintenance and repair of equipment acquired by the project, surveys, missions under the project, costs for dissemination of project results, etc. ...

4.2.3 GENERAL EXPENSES

General expenses ("overheads") are tentatively set at 15% of the total staff and operating costs of the project. This calculation formula will apply for all BELSPO research contracts and is currently being negotiated. Any change occurring after the launch of this call will be implemented in the contracts to be concluded at the end of 2024.

5 PROCEDURES

5.1 PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Proposals should be submitted solely via the form intended for this purpose, which can be accessed via the STEREO and BELSPO website.

- Applicants are required to meet the conditions set forth in the information documents.
- Attachments to the submission file will be disregarded during the assessment and selection procedure.
- Proposals should be submitted in English.
- Only a digital word version of the proposal should be submitted to the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office via vdab@belspo.be.
- The proposal has to reach the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office no later than:

21 June 2024 at 4 PM

- The Belgian Federal Science Policy Office may disregard any proposals that are submitted after the deadline.

5.2 ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION

5.2.1 ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSAL

Note that proposals will not be considered for evaluation if they do not meet the requirements of the call.

The evaluation of the proposals is divided into two steps. The first step is a written evaluation by 3 international experts. The criteria used for this first part of the evaluation are:

The criteria for the expert evaluation of the proposals are:

- Compliance with the guidelines of this call and the programme aims
- Scientific and technical quality of the project proposal:
 - clarity of the aims and the tasks
 - quality of the and maturity of proposed products and services

- demonstratable user need for said products and services
- Calibre of the applicant(s)
 - relevant expertise and publications of the laboratory
- Feasibility of the proposal
 - realistic preparation of the work plan (including SWOT analysis)
 - realistic assessment of the resources required (duration, budget, staff)
- Exploitation
 - plan for disseminating project results, visibility given to the project

The second step of the evaluation consists of an oral defence in front of members of the TERRASCOPE Advisory Board, optionally supplemented with external international experts. This second step is only carried out for the proposals that successfully passed the first part of the evaluation.

- Presentation
 - Clarity of presentation
 - Motivation
 - Clarity and relevance of answers

5.2.2 SELECTION OF THE PROPOSAL

The TERRASCOPE Advisory Board will propose a selection of proposal to be funded on the basis of:

- The ranking of the proposals by the panel of experts (based on the written evaluation and on the oral defence)
- The budget available

The final decision is taken by the State Secretary of Science Policy.