



ACCESS BASS Programme Line

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

“Responsible Fishing”

THEMATIC CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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Table of Acronyms

ACCESS	Accelerating Commercialisation and Competitiveness of the European Space sector
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIS	Automatic Identification System
APQ	Activity Pitch Questionnaire
AoF	Authorisation of Funding
BASS	Business Applications and Space Solutions
DG	Director General
EAPo	European Association of Fish Producers Organisations
ESA	European Space Agency
FP	Full Proposal
HAB	Harmful Algae Bloom
ISSF	International Seafood Sustainability Foundation
IUU	Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported Fishing
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MSC	Marine Stewardship Council
OP	Outline Proposal
OSIP	Open Space Innovation Platform
SME	Small and Medium sized Enterprise
VDE	VHF Data Exchange System

1. OVERVIEW

This document presents an overview of “Responsible Fishing”, thematic call for proposals issued under the ACCESS Business Applications - Space Solutions (BASS) programme line. The call offers the opportunity to companies to bring forward their business propositions for the development of space-based services to support sustainable fisheries management, enhancing marine health, tackling illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing and increasing traceability.

2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Fishing plays a crucial role in our food security, serving as a sustainable source of protein which are essential components of a healthy and balanced diet. However, the fishing industry faces significant threats from illegal fishing, pollution and climate change. The ocean has absorbed more than 90% of the additional heat generated by climate change and around 30% of carbon emissions^{1,2} By 2100, ocean temperatures are expected to rise by 1-4 degrees Celsius³. These changes will heavily impact the marine ecosystems and biodiversity. On the other hand, consumers are changing their behaviour becoming more conscious of their carbon footprint and seeking sustainable diets that promote health. This shift has led to a growing demand for fish and fish-derived products therefore urgent solutions are required to meet the current demand for food and address the future increase in food demand over the coming years.

New regulations are surging to support the transition to sustainable fisheries. The revised EU fisheries control regulation, for instances, or the Electronic Monitoring and Vessel Tracking for UK aim to protect fish stocks and marine life, to ensure traceable and sustainable seafood and enhance law enforcement with advanced technology. New regulations aim to digitalize and improve the system for controlling fisheries activities by introducing mandatory electronic reporting for all catches. These regulations will support sustainable practices, enhance traceability and protect biodiversity. Once fully adopted, a complete digitalization of the sector is expected and a huge amount of data coming e.g. from electronic logging or on-board cameras will be available. The availability of the information will offer the opportunity to build solid solutions which are expected to benefit honest fishers, support the climate and biodiversity commitments and also serve the law enforcement bodies. The added value of the data coming from the vessels will even be higher when such data are integrated with space-based data as explained in the section below.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE CALL

The objective of the Call is to support industry in the development of pre-operational services which are based on the combination of terrestrial and space technologies, and which are focused on the optimization of responsible fishing practises which help the community while contributing to sustainable fisheries. Services could target (but are not limited to): monitoring

¹ [Impact of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture, FAO.](#)

² [How climate change affect fisheries? Ocean Consevancy](#)

³ [Climate change nd fishin. Marine Stewardship Council](#)



of Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) Fishing and monitoring of Harmful Algae Blooms (HABs), overfishing and stock depletion, reduction of habitat destruction and bycatch, monitoring of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), improving product traceability and certification and tracking ghost gears and monitoring marine pollution and increasing worker safety.

Such services shall be economically sustainable for the company(ies) in charge of their development, deployment and provision and also be environmentally sustainable.

4. SPACE ASSETS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Satellite technologies and data have a significant role to play within prospective services:

SatEO plays an essential role in promoting sustainable fisheries by continuously providing data on ocean conditions, fish populations, and illegal fishing activities. By monitoring water quality, detecting pollution, and assessing habitat health, SatEO enables timely interventions to protect aquatic ecosystems. Further, SatEO supports fish stock assessments and ecosystem management by offering crucial environmental indicators including sea surface temperature and chlorophyll concentration, which are vital for understanding fish habitats and predicting their distribution.

SatNav plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable fishing by improving vessel tracking and management, ensuring that regulations are followed, and helping to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. By allowing real-time monitoring of fishing activities, SatNav can optimise fleet operations, reduce fuel consumption, and enhance safety. It also aids in detecting illegal fishing by identifying suspicious vessel behaviour and enabling targeted inspections. In this context, Automatic Identification System (AIS) can be exploited. AIS transporters transmit the ships' position, their speed and course limited to coastal areas. Satellite AIS (SAT-AIS) overcomes the limitation and allows for a global coverage.

SatCom enables real-time tracking and management of fishing vessels. This technology enhances surveillance to combat IUU fishing, and improves safety at sea. Authorities receive timely updates on vessel positions, allowing for efficient monitoring and enforcement of regulations. For future applications, VHF Data Exchange System Satellite (VDE-SAT) can be leveraged. It enables two-way communication between vessels and ports also in areas where terrestrial communication is lacking. VDEs communication is encrypted, protecting fishermen's fishing ground from being known by their competitors. SatCom also supports accurate fish stock assessments and environmental monitoring, ensuring transparent and responsible fishing practices. By offering critical weather and ocean condition information, SatCom not only reduces risks for fishermen but also helps optimise their operations, supporting the long-term sustainability of marine resources.

5. SCOPE OF THE CALL

The proposals submitted under this Call for Proposals shall address problems related to but not limited to): monitoring of Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) Fishing and monitoring of Harmful Algae Blooms (HABs), overfishing and stock depletion, reduction of



habitat destruction and bycatch, monitoring of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), improving product traceability and certification and tracking ghost gears and monitoring marine pollution and increasing worker safety.

These areas of interest have been defined by ESA in consultation with representatives of the sector.

The Bidder has two options for addressing areas of interest in their proposal: either address the ones proposed by ESA and included in the Annexes ([available on the website](#)), or address new areas of interest. In both cases, the Bidder must involve customers or users and provide letters of interest from these potential customers as evidence of their support, which should be attached to the Outline Proposal (the second step in the application process). In both cases, the Bidder must have identified a concrete business opportunity and has a credible commercial plan; this includes e.g. the identification of potential customers, a good understanding of the targeted market, a relevant analysis of competitors.

Both options will be considered equally in the evaluation process

The service provider shall be identified and be part of the bidding team to ensure the commercial operational roll-out of the proposed service following completion of a demonstration project.

This Call for Proposal covers two types of activities:

1. **Proof of concept Studies** which provide the preparatory framework to identify, analyse and define new potentially sustainable services.

They aim to reduce risks and validate the market opportunity by designing the service concept, engaging users, and developing a Minimum Viable Product (MVP). In the context of this call for proposals, an MVP is defined as the simplest usable version of a service or application, containing only the essential features needed to test the riskiest business assumptions, such as hypotheses about customer needs or willingness to pay. The starting point is the identification of a significant potential business opportunity for a space-based application or service, with preliminary customer/user interest, and initial positive considerations on the technical feasibility.

The expected outcome is the confirmation that the proposed solution is both technically feasible and economically viable, with key technical and business assumptions validated through the development of an MVP, and supported by strong customer interest and early commercial traction.

2. **Pilot Projects** dedicated to the implementation and demonstration of pre-operational services. They focus on integrating, developing, and testing the service or application with customers in the primary target market. The pilot demonstrates the solution in a real operational setting, confirming the value-propositions of the proposed solution.



The starting point is the confirmation that the proposed space-based application or service is both technically feasible and economically viable with demonstrated customers' interest, established partnerships for commercialisation, and a credible commercialisation strategy backed by a solid financial plan.

The expected outcome is a fully operational service supported by key customers, ideally achieving initial sales with identified clients, while demonstrating a clear pathway to commercialisation and potential for scalability, with proven potential to generate socio-economic impact at scale.

6. PROCUREMENT APPROACH

The proposals submitted in reply to the call shall be implemented in the context of the Standard Call for Proposals for Downstream Applications in ACCESS-BASS .

The Bidder shall submit first an Activity Pitch Questionnaire, and following evaluation, may be invited to submit the Outline and Full Proposal. The APQ enables the Tenderer to present a preliminary concept to ESA in a concise and standardised format. The APQ constitutes the initial step of engagement between the Tenderer and ESA. The APQ allows ESA to quickly take an informed decision on the next steps pointing the Tenderer to the most appropriate activity type (Proof of Concept Study, Pilot Project) and providing support on the further implementation steps. Based on ESA's recommendation, activities may also be structured in phases that include both Proof of Concept Study and Pilot Project tasks.

The APQ template can be downloaded from: <https://business.esa.int/bass-documents>

According to the rules of the ACCESS Programme, the cost of activities carried out in a given State are charged against the contribution of that State to the programme element "Business Applications - Space Solutions". Companies (both Prime and Subcontractor(s)) intending to respond to this Standard Call for Proposals are therefore requested to inform their National Delegation(s) of their intention to submit a proposal as soon as possible. The contact information of the National Delegates can be found here: <https://business.esa.int/national-delegations>.

Your tender may consist of a combination of entities from the Participating States that have indicated their willingness to support this activity. In addition, the tender can also identify Strategic Partners that may implement specific tasks/work-packages under the responsibility of the Prime. Such Strategic Partners can also be from non-Participating States as long as funding is not requested.

The Agency will admit for evaluation only (Outline and Full) proposals from a bidding team composed of a company and/or organisations (be it Prime or Subcontractor) residing in any of those states that subscribe to the Programme under which you wish you submit your proposal: To date the following Countries have subscribed to Business Applications and Space Solutions (BASS) element of ACCESS programme, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Canada.

7. PROCESS AND SCHEDULE

For this Call for Proposals, the submission of the APQ will be open from **02 February** until **07 April 2026 at 13:00 CET**.

7.1 Timeline and procedure

The Bidder shall submit first an **Activity Pitch Questionnaire**, and following evaluation, may be invited to submit the **Outline Proposal** and subsequent **Full Proposal**. The Activity Pitch Questionnaire (APQ) template provided by ESA shall be used, which is considered as entry point for companies to submit their idea. The details of the APQ can be found here: [Open Space Innovation Platform - OSIP - Channel: APQ for BASS Proof of Concept Studies and Pilot Projects](#)



Figure 11: Application steps

This Call is planned to be implemented according to the following stepwise approach.

Step 1: APQ Submission

In Step 1, the interested Bidders are requested to submit their proposal(s) based on a short Activity Pitch Questionnaire (APQ) template made available by ESA that can be downloaded from the Thematic Call website. The pitch should provide the initial idea of what the Bidder would like to propose, elaborated on the basis of the thematic areas and either the use cases proposed by ESA’s partners or others selected by the Bidder.

Should the bidder wish to cooperate with any of the listed partners in the annexes, they shall give to the Agency the authorisation to distribute the activity pitch questionnaire to these stakeholders by explicitly stating it in the Activity Pitch Questionnaire. Subject to such authorisation, the Agency will follow up distributing the APQ to the bidder’s authorised stakeholder(s) and liaise with them to facilitate interactions with the Bidder.

The completed Activity Pitch Questionnaire (APQ) shall be uploaded using the online web submitter, ESA’s open space innovation platform (OSIP) in the channel named “[_”.APQ for BASS Proof of Concept Studies and Pilot Projects](#)”

According to the rules of the ACCESS Programme, each tenderer is permitted to submit a maximum of two (2) APQs per calendar year in reply to any BASS Call for proposals. Any submission exceeding this limit shall be deemed inadmissible and automatically rejected, without assessment or further consideration by ESA.



It is strongly recommended that the interested Bidder liaises from the beginning with the relevant ESA Member States Delegates.

APQ Evaluation

Following an assessment of the pitch by ESA, ESA will provide feedback to the company, aiming to provide a reply within 10 working days following the deadline for submission of the pitch.

It is recognised that some interactions with the Bidder may be required, and ESA may therefore consult with the Bidder and may offer support in providing further clarifications, aimed at better shaping the Outline Proposal(s). Dialogue sessions may be organised individually with potential partners prior to Step 2.

ESA might also consult, when necessary, with the relevant National Delegation(s) for orientation and will provide key information (e.g. title, cost, price, subcontractor) to the relevant National Delegation(s).

Subject to a positive evaluation of the pitch and the Bidder having informed the National Delegation(s), the Bidder will be notified by ESA and invited to submit an Outline Proposal.

Step 2: Outline Proposal Submission

In Step 2, the Bidder will submit the Outline Proposal, based on a template provided by ESA, with letter(s) of interest from users/stakeholders. The Outline Proposal expands upon the pitch with a more extensive level of details. The Bidder will be allowed 2 months from ESA's approval of the APQ to the submission of their Outline Proposal in OSIP.

Step 3: Full Proposal Submission

In Step 3, subject to a positive assessment from ESA and in-principle support from the National Delegations, the Bidder will be invited to submit a Full Proposal on ESA-STAR in accordance with BASS programme line. The Bidder will be allowed 4 months from submission of their Outline Proposal to submit their Full Proposal on ESA-STAR.

A written Authorisation of ESA Funding (AoF) from the relevant ESA National Delegation is required as part of the Full Proposal. The Bidder is however advised to inform the relevant National Delegation(s) when submitting the Pitch. The details of the National Delegates can be found here: <https://business.esa.int/national-delegations>.

After the Bidder have submitted a Full Proposal with the Authorisation of ESA Funding (AoF) from the relevant National Delegation(s) and following a positive assessment by ESA, the proposed activity will be approved for implementation.

7.2 Evaluation Criteria



More information for the assessment of the APQ (**Step 1**) and outline proposal (**Step 2**) stages can be found on the OSIP page [“ APQ for BASS Proof of Concept Studies and Pilot Projects”](#).

More information on the evaluation criteria for the final proposals (**Step 3**) can be found within the Cover Letter of the Call for Proposals, [link](#) under "Letter of invitation".

The evaluation process is non-competitive, as each proposal will be assessed individually on its own merits, according to the evaluation criteria applicable for [PROOF OF CONCEPT STUDIES/PILOT PROJECTS IN ACCESS BASS - DOWNSTREAM APPLICATIONS - STANDARD CALL FOR PROPOSALS](#) (esa star ref.: 4-40034).

8. GENERAL CONDITIONS

The submissions and all correspondence relating to it shall be in English.

The tender shall not contain any Classified Information, whether in the APQ, Outline Proposal or in the Full Proposal. To avoid any confusion with Classified security markings, the unclassified protective marking used by the Tenderer in the proposal shall not contain the terms: "Restricted", "Confidential", or "Secret".

However, should the Tenderer consider necessary to include Classified Information in the tender, the Tenderer shall inform beforehand the ESA Security Officer.

The Tenderers are informed that Classified Information can be shared with ESA only in compliance with the Project Security Instruction (PSI) duly established by the Agency beforehand and subject to the approval by the ESA Member States.

The Agency will treat commercially sensitive or proprietary information confidentially and solely for the purpose of the assessment of the response.

Expenses incurred in the preparation and dispatch of the response to the announcement will not be reimbursed. This includes any expenses connected with a potential dialogue phase. The announcement does not bind the Agency in any way to place a cooperative agreement. The Agency reserves the right to issue amendments to the announcement.