

SAON H2020 Task Force meeting, 17th July 2019, 09:00-16:00 CEDT

Meeting notes

1. Background

The European Commission Horizon 2020 Work Programme 2018-2020 includes a call on *Supporting the implementation of GEOSS in the Arctic in collaboration with Copernicus* (LC-CLA-20-2020)[[1]](#footnote-1).

There is a reference to SAON in the call text: *The action should coordinate with projects stemming from the NSFs Arctic portfolio, such as the "Navigating the New Arctic" programme, and other actions of the Transatlantic Ocean Research Alliance, by establishing joint operational activities, in order to support the mission and objectives of the international initiative on Arctic observations brought forward by the Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON)*.

The scope as formulated in the call text is

1. *advancing the operationalisation of an integrated pan-Arctic Observing System in preparation for a possible future ArcticGEOSS initiative;*
2. *improving and extending the terrestrial, marine and cryospheric in-situ measurements and the community-based monitoring systems necessary for the monitoring of the Arctic;*
3. *setting up pilot services and implementing the coordinated network of those services necessary for the adaptation to climate change in the region;*
4. *contributing to the interoperability of Arctic Data systems; and*
5. *to make a positive contribution to national, regional and international decision-making processes and science strategies.*

On 17 July 2019, a small group met in Potsdam, Germany to discuss how SAON should be engaged in responding to the call. The agenda and the list of participants are found in Appendix 1 and 2.

At the time of the meeting two consortia were known:

* One led by the Alfred-Wegener Institute (Germany) and the British Antarctic Survey (UK) (tentative name: ArcticPassion)
* One from the existing INTAROS group – led by the Nansen Centre (Norway)

Both consortia were invited to participate in the second part of the meeting. The first consortium attended the second half of the meeting and gave a presentation, which included a series of questions (Appendix 3). The second consortium was not able to participate in the meeting.

At the meeting, these additional background points were shared/formulated:

* The Arctic strategy of the European Union has three pillars: Research, sustainable development and international cooperation.
* A response to the call should include at least three different European countries. In this case, probably 30+ institutions. The duration is decided by the consortium - 4 years, for example.
* The focus of the European Commission is always targeted at benefitting Europe, not only indigenous people, but citizens in general. The perspective is economic benefit in general, also with regards to impacts on lower-latitudes from changes in the Arctic.
* On the international cooperation part, SAON could play a role at the meta-level in linking components from Asia, Canada, Europe, Russia and USA.
* The call is an offer that the European Commission gives to SAON. If SAON cannot manage to engage, this will impact negatively the Commission’s view on SAON. The successful project must include SAON.
* It is known that the European Commission is not happy with the fact that there are two consortia. SAON is encouraging that only one consortium is established. Sometimes the European Commission will accept more than one project. The signal this time is that only one project will be accepted; if any.
* An application should make reference Societal Benefit Areas and to *The International Arctic Observations Assessment Framework (IAOAF)*[[2]](#footnote-2) and to the IMOBAR[[3]](#footnote-3) project.
* The outcome of the project should be *sustained*. This could be organised towards the end of the project through a dialogue with funding agencies. This aspect may also be embedded in the focus on *operationalising* and will require a dialogue with mission oriented agencies. Here there typically is a difference in how terrestrial stations, marine (ship-based) and remote (space-based) observing is funded.
* *Operationalisation* could also be about making sure that existing observation systems find their way into operational systems.
* Earlier calls have always had text about data management, interoperability, etc. This has resulted in a heterogeneous setup and has been abandoned. This call has formulations about it and is an appeal to the ADC to take an overall, leading role for all Arctic projects.
* European institutions (and developing countries) are eligible for funding. Special arrangements can be made with non-European institutions, but they are not eligible for funding. If, however, non-European participants are invited to workshops, etc. their travel costs can be covered.
* Every point in the project description has to be addressed – no more, no less. Evaluators are not necessarily experts, and will have a negative look at a project scope that is wider than the call text. Evaluation is based on *science*, *governance*, and *impact* and all are important.
* When it comes to the structure in the project, the project’s work package structure could be taken from the call scope formulation (the five points above). Point 4) on data could be targeted towards the ADC.

The project description makes reference to ArcticGEOSS. It is known that GEO is developing a concept of a unified GEOSS, not a region based one. SAON has submitted an application to GEO on an ArcticGEOSS[[4]](#footnote-4).

2. Level of engagement

It is important for SAON to maintain impartiality/neutrality towards consortia, and this should be a guiding principle for the engagement. It is anticipated that the consortia understand SAON’s situation and will accept this.

In order to be engaged in the project formulation, the consortia have to trust that information does not flow from one consortium to the other. This could prevent SAON to be engaged in both consortia in the project formulation phase. The consortia would not want to share information with SAON if SAON afterwards engages with the other consortium.

2.1 SAON Secretariat

One option outlined has been that the SAON Secretariat becomes a consortium partner. The SAON Secretariat is not a legal entity, and can as such not be a partner. The AMAP Secretariat is a legal entity, and in a contract context, it would be the AMAP Secretariat that would be the partner in a project. This arrangement will have to be described in the application.

The Secretariat could become a partner in more than one consortium, but this raises a question of capacity, since at the moment there is only one person in the SAON Secretariat. The AMAP Secretariat would be prepared to expand the capacity, but this could likely only happen after a project has been funded.

In any case, the SAON Secretariat cannot work with a consortium in isolation, but would need to work in cooperation with the SAON Board and/or Executive.

2.2 SAON Board

In order for the engagement to be of value to SAON, it should in reality be the SAON Board that is the partner in the project; if not from a legal point of view, then from a practical point of view. The reality is that some SAON countries/institutions are engaged in one of the consortia, and some are engaged in the other; some are engaged in both. One consequence is that only the non-European national Board members from Asia and North America would be seen as ‘neutral’.

3. Recommendations

The application process is a two-stage approach: By February 2020, a 10-15-page concept/summary document with objectives and anticipated impact will have to be delivered, but with only a few details about work package structure and deliverables. The consortia, however, will have formulated more details for themselves in order to prepare the first application.

In the second phase, focus will be on details, including governance. This will be end 2020.

It would be too late to seek engagement after the second phase. At this point in time, the consortia have engaged with all partners and the assignments and resources have been allocated.

3.1 First phase:

SAON Board should review the call text and develop its own interpretation.

In the first phase, the consortium gives very limited information about the project as such. In this phase, SAON should not directly be a partner, but stay neutral. It should maintain the dialogue with the consortia, keeping an eye (to the extent possible) on how they formulate the project and allocate resources. The SOAN Board should ask both consortia to earmark resources that can be allocated to SAON in the second phase.

An assignment for SAON in the first phase would be to formulate:

* What the role and assignment of SAON should be in the proposal. The responsibility that SAON would have and the 3-5 tasks that would be important for the SAON strategy. SAON may or may not want to or need to be engaged in all the listed tasks. This would require careful deliberations from SAON’s side, not to make the situation more complicated for the existing consortia.
* What SAON should get out of the proposal, also in terms of capacity and funding? The latter should formulated in terms of man-months, travel money, organising workshops, etc.
* How the roles of ArcticGEOSS, GEOCRI and EuroGEOSS should be formulated in the response.
* What impacts are expected based on the Arctic SBAs formulated in the IAOAF process.
* Following the *Guidelines for contributing to SAON’s Roadmap for Arctic Observing and Data Systems (ROADS)*, SAON may structure its engagement through identifying some essential variables that supports policy and decision making.
* The essential variable approach could also be aligned with ADC priorities: identifying use cases, where data interoperability can be established. This could be service case, linked to essential variables and policy drivers. The link between variables and services would among other things require 1) implementation of interoperability, and 2) engagement of subject matter experts that will define time, space, latency, monitoring strategies that need to be sustained and operationalised, etc.
* Various cases were discussed, including the UAF/NSF project *Research Networking Activities in Support of Sustained Coordinated Observations of Arctic Change* and an ongoing AMAP project to identify societal impacts of climate change, based on the AACA process.
* It will be a balance, if SAON should point to specific services or instead have focus on policy drivers.
* It could be a strategy to formulate a case on impacts on lower-level latitudes and another case about people living in the Arctic. The latter could for instance be adaptation to climate change (like sea level rise or erosion) or shipping. The strategy could work on three levels: local, regional and European/global.

This input to the consortia may or may not be structured as a work package. It would be up to the project coordinator to rephrase it and include it or not. A risk is that the coordinator would take the information and not include SAON.

4.2 Second phase:

This is the project writing phase, where the details are formulated.

In this phase, there are these options for engagement:

1. The SAON Board may want to evaluate the consortia and make a decision on which one to follow. In this case, the risk is that the wrong consortium is chosen.
2. Seek to be engaged with both consortia; this would require two independent ‘SAON partners’, for instance from the SAON Executive or Board and a confidentiality agreement. The relationship with the SAON Board is to be defined with this model, but will probably have to be based on a trust model. There is the risk that the two consortia formulate SAON’s engagement differently.
3. If one consortium fails after the first phase, go with the remaining consortium.

The approach, especially option 2) will require that phase one descriptions are made available. This may not be possible. In this case, there may be a specific role for the non-European national ‘neutral’ partners form North America and Asia.

Appendix 1. Agenda

SAON H2020 Task Force meeting, 17th July 2019, 09:00-16:00

Draft agenda

The purpose of the meeting is to get an overview of the situation and initiate the first dialogue with the two known consortia.

Meeting structure:

* Morning (9-12)
* Lunch (12-13)
* Consortium AWI/BAS (13-15)
* Coffee break (15-15:15)
* Follow-up task force meeting (15:15-16:30)

Morning session

The purpose of the morning session is to 1) Analyse the call text, 2) Define SAON’s envisaged role, 3) Defining funding, resource needs, and 4) Prepare for the afternoon session

The discussion would be structured around these items:

1. Background for proposal – why has it been formulated in the first place? [*10 min, Nicole*)

2. H2020 calls in general, addressing these questions (*20 min, Nicole*)

1. What is a H2020 call?
2. What is the structure?
3. Who can be engaged and how?
4. Is it possible to sub-contract work? Also to non-European sub-contractors?

3 The actual call: Review and discuss the actual call text as it is known. What does the text say about (*30 min, all*):

1. Envisaged objectives
2. Envisaged deliverables
3. Engagement of institutions and initiatives.
	1. European?
	2. Non-European?
	3. Indigenous (European and non-European)?
4. Timelines for the drafting of a response to the call

4. SAON’s role in the project - what does SAON want to gain from this? (*30 min, all*)

1. How does SAON wants to be engaged?
2. What would engagement mean in terms of what parts of the SAON structure that should be engaged? How to engage the SAON network, including non-European institutions? SAON could be the umbrella to establish links to the other initiative mentioned in the call text.

5. SAON’s role in the project – what is it SAON can offer (*30 min, all*)

1. What is it SAON can offer in terms of expertise, support, strength to the consortia?
2. Engagement of institutions and initiatives.
	1. European?
	2. Non-European (Asia, North America)?
	3. Indigenous (European and non-European)? AC Permanent Participants (ICC for example offers networks into Europa, North America and Russia , at least to some extent)?
	4. International partners, like WMO

*[Comment: It would be detrimental to SAON to ‘pick-and-choose’ among institutions; all members should be offered an opportunity to be engaged and contribute. On the other hand side, partners that will work within the envisaged work package should be specified by name and person. How should indigenous organisations (European and non-European) be involved?]*

6. Strategical consideration towards the two calls (*30 min, all*):

1. Should SAON seek to estimate the consortium with the highest probability of success?
2. Should SAON seek to be a partner in both calls?
3. If yes, would it be possible to formulate a generic work package description that can be offered to both consortia. And would it be possible to formulate this without detailed insight into the two proposals?
4. In any process, SAON needs to reserve the right to share any text with the Board.

7. Resources/funding (*15 min, all*)

8. Message to the consortia (*15 min, all*)
*[Comment: The message to the consortia afternoon session will be agreed]*

Agenda for afternoon- session with consortia

1. Consortium presentation (20 min)

Questions to the consortium: Please provide a presentation of what role would you like SAON to play. How do you see SAON in the proposal?

You will be asked only to share information that SAON can share publicly. It is realised that it is difficult for the consortium to share many details, but could you for instance share the list of partners? It will give SAON an overview of the ‘landscape’ that we are navigating in.

Could the consortia envisage a structure where SAON is a partner and lead for a generic work package, offered to both consortia? This could for instance be based on the Roadmap structure currently being developed within SAO.

What are the envisaged timelines?

2. SAON presentation (10 min)

An indication from SAON based on the outcome of the morning’s deliberations. What kind of role does SAON believe that it should play? What is it SAON can offer in terms of expertise, support and strength to the consortia. Funding/resource needs.

3. Joint discussion (90 min)

Joint discussion. What is the next step?

Appendix 2. List of participants

From SAON Board:

Jan Rene Larsen, SAON (meeting notes)

Mikko Strahlendorff , FMI, Finland (remotely, part-time)

Nicole Biebow, AWI, Germany

Rolf Rødven, AMAP Secretariat

Sandy Starkweather, NOAA, USA

Thorsteinn Gunnarsson, Rannis, Iceland

From AWI, Germany:

David Velazquez

From AWI/BAS consortium:

Jeremy P. Wilkinson, BAS, UK (remotely)

Volker Rachold, AWI, Germany

Appendix 3. Questions raised to SAON from AWI/BAS consortium

Where does SAON see the benefits and challenges associated with this EU call?

What can a winning bid do to best support and interact with SAON and support the ArcticGEOSS ambitions?

Co-production of knowledge with indigenous communities is key to the success of an Arctic observing network. Could SAON recommend people or organisations we could engage early with?

Which additional bodies would SAON foresee as inevitable to be involved for a strategy to implement an integrated Arctic Observing System of Systems?

Which international body does SAON at present envision to ‘run/steer’ an Observing System of Systems, would that be SAON itself (ArcticGEOSS)?

Value tree analysis is a methodology SAON has used to identify data and services that are required to support the 12 Arctic Societal Benefit Areas. How does SAON envisage taking this forward over the next few years?

What are the elements SAON sees as essential for an implementation process, from actual observations as part of the networks to a sustained funding?

Are there key elements which SAON misses in the present call but would appreciate a winning bid to take into account in addition?

1. <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/sites/horizon2020/files/climat_h2020_wp_2018-2020_draft.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.arcticobserving.org/news/268-international-arctic-observations-assessment-framework-released> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/news/observing-arctic-provides-benefits-beyond-climate-change-insights> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.arcticobserving.org/images/pdf/Board_meetings/20190911/05_Work_Plan_ArcticGEOSS_version_23AUG2019_track_changes.docx> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)