



OPINION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON THE EEA SINGLE PROGRAMMING DOCUMENT 2023-2025

Article 8, paragraph 4-5 of the Regulation (EC) No 401/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the European Environment Agency (EEA), requires the Agency's Scientific Committee (SC) to be consulted on the Multi Annual Work Programme (MAWP) and on the Annual Work Programme (AWP), respectively, before their submission by the Executive Director to the Management Board for adoption.

On 31 March 2022, the Scientific Committee was invited to provide its opinion on the draft Single Programming Document (SPD) for the multi-annual period 2023-2025, which includes the 2023 AWP.

Following discussions at the 82nd SC meeting on 17-18 May 2022, we agreed the following.

We welcome the draft SPD 2023-25 and congratulate the Agency for being assigned the secretariat of the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change, established by the European Climate Law, and the prospects of new responsibilities on LULUCF inventory data. Still, considering the absence of any inflation adjustment to the core budget over several years, the 2% annual increases over the programming period provide only partial relief, and will most certainly be superseded by actual price developments. Hence, the Scientific Committee reiterates its concerns that the Agency's capacity to engage and deliver on the European Green Deal continues to suffer from inadequate budgetary allocations by the EU institutions. The Scientific Committee endorses the requests made for additional resources for any new tasks delegated to the Agency and fully supports the European Parliament's proposals to increase the core budget of the Agency.

Still, the Scientific Committee wishes to reiterate concerns expressed in its Opinion from last year, that most activities of the five main work areas are described in rather generic terms, so that it is not easy for the reader to understand what the actual priorities and outputs of Agency activities will be. Even when relating to the year immediately ahead, section 4 on the annual work programme for 2023, under the subtitles of 'Summary description of output', for each work area provides very few indications of what specific reports, datasets and communication activities that are planned for. Despite a common template, these important sections are also rather heterogenous, from 2-3 pages on biodiversity to less than ½ page on human health and environment (Moreover, it is confusing to the reader that the heading that follows the sections with so-called Actions repeats the main heading, rather than indicate that it is now about 'Summary description of output'). The Scientific Committee would especially request detail on how the EEA is planning to conduct environmental management activities (including climate related) and implement participatory approaches (e.g. citizen science).

While it may have been a challenge to define outputs already during the first months of 2022, the Scientific Committee recommends the Agency and its programmes to use the months ahead to update the draft SPD to address these shortcomings and make SPD a transparent document for setting priorities on the best use of the Agency's resources, prior to the submission for adoption by the Management Board. This will enable stakeholders to take stock of Agency efforts underway, which may help provide further resonance for the most important datasets and reports to be published.

Specific comments:

The Topic Centre activities are an essential component of the networked structure EEA operates within, and the Scientific Committee recommends that they should be described and reflected directly in the MAWP/AWP by indicating key outputs that can be expected from their activities. This may be straightforward, as their operations are anyway broken down into specific deliverables. Dialogue with and opportunities for inputs from the Topic Centre consortia for the planning should be a helpful and significant approach to facilitate planning for more concrete AWP-content. In recognition of the significant cross-cutting aspects across the Strategic Objectives, the Multi-annual activities, and the themes of the Topic Centres, the Scientific Committee encourages EEA to explore ways to address such aspects, for example by a more systemic approach to relevant exchanges, for example by horizontal workshops, joint thematic analyses on opportunities, synergies and goal conflicts that may connect the existing work areas set out in the EEA-Eionet strategy 2021-2030, and new tasks. The Scientific Committee moreover encourages EEA to consider a joint seminar between SC and the new Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change.

The Scientific Committee takes note that the number of EEA Reports decreased somewhat during 2021 compared to previous years and encourages EEA to keep up production of its valuable reports, providing "objective, reliable and comparable information at European level" (EEA Regulation art. 1), thereby setting the agenda for decision-making by in-depth analysis and synthesis of a knowledge base that frequently is scattered across many specialist publications and journals. For this purpose, the Annual Work Programme is the appropriate mechanism for planning and to make specific commitments on the EEA reports for which resources will be committed, and we reiterate our recommendation from last year that all the planned reports for the coming year be listed with a preliminary title, as well as with an indication of their timing and what policy processes they are relevant for. The shorter briefings tailored more closely to evolving policy developments as linked with EEA outputs should be continued.

The Scientific Committee appreciates the specification of key performance indicators to qualify the performance of the Annual Work Programme. However, the KPI's relating to its five work areas are not easy to understand, and it is unclear whether these are useful to trace progress in reaching the Strategic Objectives of the Multi Annual Work Programme. A column recapping achievements in the previous year would be helpful, and a clearer prioritization of objectives and specifications of the KPI is recommended. Such specification will be specifically welcomed

with respect to data reporting activities and the effectiveness of reporting infrastructure linking with the EIONET community.

During the past year, the EEA has successfully been reaching out beyond its main partners in DG ENV and CLIMA to other Commission services such as RTD, SANTE and REGIO to provide services tailored to their needs. Similar partnerships should be envisaged with even more DGs such as MOVE, AGRI and TAXUD. By pursuing a mandate for monitoring of environmental aspects in these domains EEA could contribute to improving policy integration in important areas of community policies.

Considering the external aspects of the European Green Deal, we would welcome if the EEA extended its collaboration with international organizations to also include UNDESA, UNSTAT, UNDP and UNDRR for example.

We congratulate the EEA for the SPD2023-2025 with AWP2023 and look forward to supporting the EEA during its implementation.

Copenhagen, May 2022

Per Mickwitz, Chair of the Scientific Committee