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Technopolis Effectiveness Evaluation of the European Environment Agency

Revised Final Report

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Executive Summary

1.1 Background and purpose of the study

This evaluation was commissioned by the European Environment Agency, in line with the requirements of its founding Regulation and to meet the wishes of the European Parliament. The timing of the evaluation reflects the desire of the Management Board to be able to use the results in the development of the new multi-annual strategy.

The evaluation addresses:

- The effectiveness of the EEA corporate strategy and its impact on the relevant policymaking processes – thus focussing on the external perspective

- The efficiency of the EEA in delivering its corporate strategy, focusing mainly on internal and managerial issues

The report is the results of wide consultation with the stakeholders and the users of the Agency's information, together with internal consultation. This took the form of a series of surveys, interviews with users, network members and key users in the Commission and the Parliament, with external users such as major NGOs and the press, and with staff in the Agency. A series of case studies of specific products and activities was also carried out to look at issues in more depth.

The regulation gives the Agency the tasks of providing the Community and the Member States with:

- Objective, reliable and comparable information at a European level enabling them to take the requisite measures to protect the environment, to assess the results of such measures and to ensure that the public is properly informed about the state of the environment

- The necessary technical and scientific support to achieve the aims of environmental protection and improvement laid down by the Treaty and by successive Community action programmes on the environment, as well as of sustainable development

It does this via its multi-annual strategy and it is implemented through the annual management plans.

The current strategy covers the period 2004-2008, and follows the structure of the 6th Environmental Action Plan of the European Community[1]. It is structured across four major thematic areas:

- Tackling climate change

- Tackling biodiversity loss/understanding spatial change

- Protecting human health and quality of life

- Use and management of natural resources and waste

It focuses on links between these issues and cross-sectoral impacts on the environment. The Agency reports on the impacts of the sectors on environmental trends and ecosystem health, using the limited set of core indicators developed with the member countries. The strategy provides a list of activities to be carried out in

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[1] Decision No 1600/2002/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 July 2002

support of these overall goals. The Agency reports annually on these activities, both financially and in terms of implementation. However, the projects themselves are often either of an on-going nature or cover several years of activity, even though the funding is on an annual basis.

1.2 Evaluation findings

The main findings of the evaluation covered the following areas:

- Strategy design and implementation

- Effectiveness

- Efficiency and internal management

- Quality management

- Future requirements

The Agency's strategy was specifically structured to be coherent with the European policy arena, and its planning and reporting procedures have been adapted to make this coherence more explicit to enable policy makers to follow the logic of the activities. The process of designing the strategy involves wide consultation with stakeholders. The inclusiveness of the process has been praised, but also results in a lengthy process which other stakeholders found slightly frustrating. Nevertheless there was overall support for the approach.

The strategy covers the interests of the range of stakeholders. However tying the activities to policy objectives rather than explicit objectives for the Agency itself means that the resulting activities take the form of a list of actions without indicators against which to prioritise or assess them. The balanced scorecard indicators have also been limited in this respect, although these are constantly under review.

Implementation is through the annual management plans. These are seen as effective tools by the Management Board. However it was apparent from internal consultations that the origins of the priorities in the plans, and the role of the governance structures in drawing up the plans was not always clearly visible.

The effectiveness of the Agency was assessed against two criteria – the extent to which it achieved the tasks it set itself, and whether it has had any effect on the development of environmental policy at European, national and wider levels.

There was a unanimous view from all consulted that the EEA has a well-established role in the policy process as an information Agency providing focused information and analysis. Its flexibility and forward thinking, as well as its freedom to think and act, primarily due to the way it was established, have contributed to its establishment in the policy process. In the last five years, the EEA has emerged as a mature organization and consolidated its position.

The performance of the Executive Director and the senior staff has contributed to the Agency being a recognised player and highly visible in Europe. It is considered very prominent in the public mind and from the EU institutions' point of view it is perhaps the best-known Agency in the EU.

During the period covered by the strategy the Agency has moved from being primarily an information collection body to one having a strong role in adding value to the information – reflecting the developmental maturity of the Agency itself – being able to move away from the establishment of the collection mechanisms to looking at best use of the results. The Agency has been involved in developments within SEIS. These will also give rise to new needs for training and quality management within the Agency and its networks.

The State of the Environment Report, as the flagship product of the Agency, has a good reputation. However, the process of producing it is extremely resource intensive. The production of subsequent versions do not seem to draw effectively on the learning

from previous editions. The development of the role of the Agency and the emergence of new communications tools mean that the next edition could be produced in a number of different ways.

Looking at whether the stakeholders' expectations were met (and thus, by proxy, whether the Agency is contributing to policy development), the study shows that the needs of the Commission seem to be met, on the whole, although this is more the case in DG Environment than in some of the other DGs. It is more difficult to judge whether the Parliament's expectations were met as the relationship with the Parliament is different in nature – the Parliament is not able to work directly with the Agency in the same manner as the European Commission. The Agency takes a more proactive approach to the development of its products and activities for the Parliament.

The Agency has achieved a distinct position from an external perspective, and has built good links with other international organisations with a role or interest in the field. Building on this is important for skills development and international coherence, as well as building on the international standing achieved.

During the life of the strategy a number of new EU Agencies have been set up which may have interests in common with aspects of the EEA's work. Some joint work has been undertaken but collaboration mechanisms have not been formally set in place.

Eionet is now a well-established network, some members having been involved for more than 10 years. It is therefore extremely well embedded in the work of the Agency, and there appears to be respect on both sides contributing to the standing of the Agency in the member countries.

The EEA regulation also requires the Agency to disseminate information on the state of the environment to the general public. The European public is a heterogeneous group with different needs and interests. The EEA cannot hope to satisfy all these interests with its available resources, especially as many of their products and services are quite technical in nature and are either of limited interest or require significant interpretation to be of use to the general public. The survey of website users and the follow-up of the main publications carried out by the Agency showed a general level of satisfaction, however, among the main types of public users of the information.

The Agency has addressed the role of the press (and others) in helping information to reach wider circles by focusing on some key contacts. This approach seemed to be bearing fruit but was a relatively slow process of developing relationships.

Overall there is widespread satisfaction with the work of the Agency. The Agency's planning and management systems have increased the transparency of the internal processes. However, it is still difficult to link some activities back to the overall strategy objectives. This lack of explicit links, and the perceived lack of a consistent view of the role of the Agency, is reflected in the view from internal staff relating to issues of internal communication. There are steps being taken to address this so that EEA staff are better able to understand how activities fit within the wider perspective. This in turn should contribute to the coherence of the external communication activities of the Agency.

Efficiency and internal management

Within the Agency itself, there is some lack of understanding of the role of the Management Board within the governance process, especially its involvement in the annual planning process. The Scientific Committee is in a period of transition. However there was agreement from the staff and the Committee itself that opportunities to benefit from the expertise of the Committee are not being fully exploited.

The EEA has been working with the JRC, Eurostat and DG Environment to co-ordinate their work, and especially to avoid duplication of effort. At the operational level, the links between staff in these bodies are numerous and have been in place for some time. However, they are not transparent throughout the Agency, resulting in

potential loss of effective relationships. From the user perspective within the wider Commission, there was still some confusion as to who to approach on specific topics.

At the strategic level, the last few years have also seen an increase in cooperation with the European Parliament. The Executive Director reports regularly to the Parliament and the EEA has produced various reports and briefings for them. The Parliament representatives on the Management Board have an active role in the strategic-level planning processes. At the operational level within the EEA, the relationship is not as well developed.

The Agency's management system enables detailed follow-up of work from the project level up to the overall Agency level, and it appears that now that this system is fully in place it does enable more efficient management of resources and provide clarity for staff on the level of resources planned and used for activities. It also enables decisions to be taken on the reallocation of resources when this is required in order to respond to specific issues, needs or problems.

However, the Agency has to work in a way that involves complicated processes and multiple partners, which limits achievable efficiency – there is a trade-off between efficiency and inclusiveness that is inevitable, given the framework within which the Agency has to work. The Agency has, however, taken steps to ensure that, within this constraint, the work is undertaken as efficiently as possible. The new management system is evidence of the commitment to this. There are some areas where the situation could be improved, particularly in terms of maintaining institutional knowledge. But overall the Agency demonstrates a reasonable level of efficiency and a commitment to maintaining improvement in this respect.

Another way of assessing efficiency is to look at whether the results could be achieved more efficiently or at lower cost through some other mechanism. This is unlikely. None of the solutions that might be envisaged– even were they feasible – seem likely to produce any increases in efficiency or savings in costs. The Agency is therefore the most efficient way to deliver the products and services required by the stakeholders.

In the view of most stakeholders interviewed, it is quality of information that differentiates the EEA from some other information providers, (particularly lobbies and NGOs). The value in EEA information, when compared to that of international and regional organisations, is that it is targeted. Other contributions to European added value include the potential to transfer knowledge across Member States, and the development of EU methodological standards.

Quality management

Future requirements result from changes in policy emphasis, the move towards seeking more integrated information and thus a demand for value-added services. The main implications of this shift relate to the fact that such an approach should be largely user-driven. This provides a number of challenges for the Agency:

Future requirements

- It would become increasingly difficult for the Agency to stick to its own defined agenda

- The stakeholders have different demands that are not always compatible

- The demands lead to expectations that cannot be met, which would adversely affect the Agency's reputation

- The culture of the Agency and the expert/scientific nature of many of the staff might make this a difficult approach to accept

- The approach would require new skills and working methods

The impact of new technology and new data provision mechanisms also give rise to new challenges. It raises expectations of users as to what data they feel should be available and when. These expectations need to be managed, as the resource implications here affect not only the Agency itself but also the members of Eionet.

Overall, the underlying requirement is not for more data but for more and better analyses of existing data held by, or made available to, the EEA.

To achieve this, the Agency needs to increase focus into its work programme, particularly by defining assessed needs and setting medium-term and impact objectives, together with performance indicators. That it has achieved most of its planned list of outputs is impressive. However, with the increasing call for information and the increases in the potential uses of the data, this wide scope is not really sustainable.

Summary of recommendations

1. The Agency needs to have a clearer and more consistent view of its role, and for this view to be communicated to staff. This should encompass the fact that the role may be different for each of its key users.

2. The new Strategy needs to be more focused, more explicit on how planned activities relate to the objectives of the Agency (as opposed to European environmental policy in general) and to state clearly how operational priorities should be set. In particular, it needs to set out the medium- to long-term objectives of the Agency, and associated indicators.

3. The Management Board should be more involved in priority setting for the annual management plans but should continue to avoid micro-management of activities.

4. The Agency should look at developing new relationships and working methods with other Community Agencies. This may require agreements on how the Agencies can add value to each other's work.

5. The Agency should be clearer on its target users and their priority so that it can focus its products for their specific needs – particularly in the case of the Parliament.

6. The current approach to work with the press should also be continued. More thought needs to be given to less direct targets and the extent to which resources should be devoted to them.

7. Within the Group of Four, the Agency should increase the understanding of users, particularly within the Commission, of the respective roles of its members.

8. The Agency needs to improve internal communication. In particular, it is recommended that the Agency instil a common understanding of what the Agency does across the organisation. Although there is need for an overall understanding of the networking and relationships the EEA has with partners and the wider world, the Agency should not attempt to centralise the management of this function.

9. The Agency should review and address the issue that the staff, as a whole, do not have a good understanding of the work of the Management Board, in general, and of the strategic decision making processes of the Agency.

10. The training needs of non-permanent staff need to be addressed in a structured way, ensuring that they can contribute most effectively to the work of the Agency both during their time there and (in the case of Seconded Experts) once they return to their own institutions. Additional actions that should be undertaken include training in networking skills for staff due to increasing need for networking throughout the Agency. Another training method could be encouraged through staff exchanges across the Group of Four.

11. More thought should be given to how the Agency can best benefit from the willingness of the Scientific Committee to become more involved, in principle, and how this can be most effectively achieved within the constraints of time and budget.

12. The Agency should continue to develop its activities in relation to supporting the work of the European Parliament. In addition, the European Commission needs to recognise that the Agency also has a role in supporting the Parliament, that its information needs may be different both in format and content.

13. The State of the Environment Report is one of the flagship products of the Agency and has a good reputation. However, there is a need to look at how this product could be produced in a more digestible and readable format, given the new dissemination tools and channels that are now available. The Agency also needs to address the level of effort involved in its production, and the potential for the Agency to build on its work in the production of the report rather than making a major additional effort.

14. In terms of monitoring and feedback, the Agency needs to address the client perspective and to review their metrics in the balanced scorecard to see if they could be improved or better linked to the strategy. It also needs to set medium term objectives and associated indicators.

15. The Agency needs to be clear that it cannot address all the potential demands on it and ensure that the method of prioritisation, linked to specific objectives, is set out transparently in the new strategy. These limitations should also be recognised by the Commission and the Parliament. This may also mean that the Agency has to discontinue some of its current activities that are not so linked to its core activities, or which have achieved their objectives.

16. The Agency needs to continue to be aware of the potential impacts of the introduction of SEIS on the network and the Agency itself, and to prioritise the necessary internal actions to address these, including staff training needs, and the maintenance of quality standards.

17. The Agency should continue its joint activities but should take care that its visibility is not compromised in this type of work.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background and purpose of the study

The Founding Regulation of the EEA, together with the Financial Regulation and the principles of sound and efficient management require that the Agency be evaluated on a regular basis. Two previous evaluations have been carried out following the establishment and development of the Agency.

When the European Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted its draft opinion on the budget discharge for 2005 for the EEA, the following amendment was adopted:

> *"[The European Parliament] requests that before 1 January 2010 and every five years thereafter, the Agency shall commission an independent external evaluation of its achievements on the basis of the Regulation and the work programmes decided by the Management Board. The evaluation will assess the working practices and the impact of the Agency. The evaluation will take into account the views of the stakeholders at both Community and national level.*
>
> *The Management Board of the Agency shall examine the conclusions of the evaluation and shall draft recommendations issued to the Commission and the European Parliament as may be necessary regarding changes in the Agency, its working practices and programmes. The evaluation and the recommendations shall be made public, for example on their website."*

In addition, the Budgetary Committee of the European Parliament called for the added value of already existing decentralised agencies to be regularly evaluated. In their joint statement on Community agencies agreed at the Trialogue of 18 April 2007, the two arms of the budgetary authority "*invite the Commission to regularly evaluate the existing Community agencies, focussing particularly on their cost-benefit, and agree to assess the evaluation of the analysis prepared by the Commission for a selected number of agencies*"[2].

The Management Board of the Agency made the decision to accelerate the carrying out of this evaluation in order to be able to take findings into account when preparing the new strategy 2009-2013.

2.1.1 Scope of the work

This evaluation focuses on the achievements of the Agency on the basis of its Founding Regulation and the work programmes. This also involves assessing the extent to which the Agency has achieved its main strategic goals as set out in its corporate strategy 2004-2008. It further includes examining the impact of certain actions begun under previous work programmes that have only now produced their full effects.

The evaluation does not address the underlying question of whether the EEA serves a useful purpose – this has been addressed in previous evaluations which have

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[2] European Parliament working document on a meeting with the decentralised agencies on the PDB for 2008

established that there is a clear need for the Agency and Eionet[3]. This evaluation therefore focuses on the optimisation of their role. Equally it does not set out to review the legal base in the understanding that this would be a major undertaking and not to be approached lightly or without strong underpinning evidence for proposed changes being needed.

2.1.2 Key issues to be addressed

This study addresses two key issues:

- The effectiveness of the EEA corporate strategy and the impact on the relevant policymaking processes – focusing on the external perspective.

- The efficiency of the EEA in delivering its corporate strategy, focusing mainly on internal and managerial issues

The two activities have different time horizons – the efficiency issues relate to fairly recent and current activities, whereas the effectiveness and, more importantly, impact issues will involve activities that may have occurred or begun some time ago where impacts may be discernable, or more recent activities where real impacts cannot yet be measured but indications of potential change may be identifiable.

The purpose of the evaluation is to enable the Agency to make judgements that can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its activities and outputs; as part of this to improve its planning and programming through strengthening its systematic approach to evaluation and enhancing a results orientated approach to management. All these are crucial in tuning the Agency's performance based on assessments of the past. The most important factor, however is to be able to use this and the wider results of the study to help in the preparation of the corporate strategy for the next programming period from 2009-2013 – a process which is already under way.

2.1.3 Methodology

The study methodology is set out in Appendix C. It was based on a wide consultation with the stakeholders and users of the Agency information together with internal consultations and a series of case studies of specific products or activities. A steering group set up by the Agency was closely involved in the study and made detailed contributions at all stages of the work.

The methodology included four main stages:

The first, or scoping stage was devoted to understanding the operation and governance of the Agency and in particular its strategy and objectives. This enabled the construction of the basic logic model for the Agency. It consisted of a series of scoping interviews with key staff, the construction and refinement of the main questions to be addressed in the course of the evaluation, and the identification of the main data sources. Lists of interviewees and people to be surveyed were also prepared. This was carried out in consultation with the steering group who agreed the final evaluation plan.

On the basis of this work, a series of questionnaires and interview guides were drawn up for the various target groups – ensuring that as far as possible there was a common approach so that where appropriate answers could be aggregated or compared between the groups.

Consultation took the form of web-based surveys of the Management Board, the Scientific Committee and the National Focal Points. A specific questionnaire was also

The study addresses the effectiveness of the EEA corporate strategy and the impact on policy-making processes, and the efficiency of delivery of the strategy

Guided by a steering group appointed by the EEA

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[3] Evaluation of the European Environment Agency: An IEEP/EIPA Study August 2003

sent to the Parliament for circulation to the members of the Environment and climate change committees. A final questionnaire aimed at the general public was placed on the EEA website. This latter questionnaire was designed to provide continuity as far as possible with the EEA's own regular monitoring of the Website and its users.

Figure 1 Web based questionnaire response rates

Stakeholder group	Total number of responses
Management Board	25
Scientific Committee	15
National Focal points	19
European Parliament	4[4]
The General Public	159

Interviews, both face to face and by telephone were carried out with these groups, and with EEA staff, the European Commission, major environmental NGOs and press representatives

We carried out 47 interviews with staff of the Commission (DG Environment and other policy DGs, JRC and Eurostat), 10 with members of the Parliament or their assistants and 22 with other interested parties. Twenty two staff were interviewed as part of the evaluation. Another two were also involved in the focus group.   They cover all programmes and priority areas.

Two focus groups were held towards the end of the study to test some of the emerging conclusions – one with the Commission and one with the EEA staff.

A set of case studies of individual activities was also carried out to investigate issues and processes in more detail. The purpose of the case studies was to bring together the views collected in a more concrete form, by looking at specific products or activities, highlighting any issues that arose and exploring them in slightly more depth. For each case-study as well as bringing together the wider comments on the topic, there were a small number of interviews with those directly involved, or directly targeted by the product/activity.

As well as this primary data collection, a set of existing information was collected and reviewed including plans, reports, financial and monitoring data, agreements, contracts and operational procedures for the networks and experts, the previous evaluations of the Agency and some of its activities. This included documents from the Agency, the Parliament, the Court of Auditors and the Commission, together with external policy documents from international player and researchers.

The analysis phase brought together the data and enabled the required judgements to be made. At this point the questions in the original tender documents were answered, based on the data collected. The analysis fell into a number of stages – initial analysis of the information collected and a general review of the key issues, in depth analysis using this and other data to explore the issues arising through the case studies, and a final analysis bringing these aspects together.

Qualitative information has been used throughout the final report to answer the questions and evidence the key conclusions and recommendations.

The conclusions were drawn based on the above analysis and the key recommendations are made. The product of this phase was first the draft final report and, following the comments from the steering group, the bureau and the

Wide consultation with information users, policy makers, information providers and staff

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[4] A further 6 telephone interviews were completed to complement this number.

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Management Board, the final report will be produced for publication or circulation in line with the wishes of the EEA.

2.2 The EEA

The European Environment Agency's establishing Regulation[5] was adopted in 1990, the decision on the Agency's seat was taken in 1993 and EEA operations started the following year. The EEA is therefore one of the longer-established European Agencies, and is now a mature organisation that can claim an accepted position in the European landscape.

2.2.1 Objectives and corporate strategy

The EEA's objective as set out in the Regulation is to provide the Community and the Member States with:

- objective, reliable and comparable information at European level enabling them to take the requisite measures to protect the environment, to assess the results of such measures and to ensure that the public is properly informed about the state of the environment

- the necessary technical and scientific support to achieve the aims of environmental protection and improvement laid down by the Treaty and by successive Community action programmes on the environment, as well as of sustainable development

This high level mission is restated in various ways throughout the documentation of the Agency, and translated into concrete terms as the EEA mission:

- To be the leading public body in Europe committed to providing environmental information to policy-makers and the public, to support sustainable development, and to help achieve significant and measurable improvements in Europe's environment

- To assist the European Community institutions and EEA member countries to identify, frame, prepare and implement sound and effective environmental policy measures and legislation; and to monitor, evaluate and assess actual and expected progress in the implementation and results of such measures

- To establish and coordinate the European environment information and observation network (Eionet), based on the infrastructure for collection, analysis, assessment and management of data shared with the European Commission services, EEA member countries and international organisations, agreements and conventions

Based on this, the Agency has a set of goals set out in its 2004-2008 corporate strategy and operational objectives set in annual work plans.

The corporate strategy was aligned with the 6th Environmental Action Plan of the European Community[6], which sets out the framework for environmental policy-making in the European Union for the period 2002-2012 and outlines actions that need to be taken to achieve them.

The 6th EAP identifies four priority areas:

- Climate change

The EEA should provide the Community and the Member States with "objective, reliable and comparable information at European level"

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[5] Regulation 1210/1990/EEC, as amended by Regulation 933/1999/EEC.

[6] Decision No 1600/2002/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 July 2002

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- Nature and biodiversity

- Environment and health

- Natural resources and waste

It aimed to promote full integration of environmental protection requirements into all Community policies and actions and provides the environmental component of the Community's strategy for sustainable development. The link is made between environment and European objectives for growth, competitiveness and employment.

The Agency strategy was thus structured across these four major thematic areas:

- Tackling climate change

- Tackling biodiversity loss/understanding spatial change

- Protecting human health and quality of life

- Use and management of natural resources and waste

It looks particularly at the links between these issues and cross-sectoral impacts on the environment. The strategy aimed to use the limited set of core indicators developed with the member countries to report on the impacts of sectors on environmental trends and ecosystem health.

The Agency also reorganised its internal structure to reflect the structure of the strategy document.

The Agency set itself 10 major goals in the strategy[7]:

- To have Eionet fully developed

- The development of an integrated spatial information system

- To put an increased emphasis on communication

- To have an established role for the EEA in EU policy cycles

- Sectoral policy integration

- Economic analyses of policy interventions

- Assessments of health and quality of life

- Development of future environmental scenarios

- Assessments of Europe's impact on the global environment

- Support for the environment in sustainable development

In addition to these "external" objectives, the Agency had a set of objectives with regard to its own internal operations and management:

- A more modern approach to human resource management including a focus on training and career development, the further building up of management skills and on a better understanding of the "pulse of the organisation"

- The use of a balanced scorecard system to monitor performance internally and communicate it externally

- To improve and refine management of projects with a move to full activity based management and budgeting

- To achieve EMAS registration

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[7] Seminar of the EEA management Board, November 2007

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2.2.2 Structure

The EEA is a Community Agency, one of the specialised and decentralised EU agencies established to support the EU Member States and their citizens. A Community Agency is a body governed by European public law; it is distinct from the Community Institutions (Council, Parliament, Commission, etc.) and has its own legal personality. It is set up by an act of secondary legislation in order to accomplish a very specific technical, scientific or managerial task, in the framework of the European Union's "first pillar". The Agency has its offices in Copenhagen, Denmark, but maintains a Brussels liaison office dealing with inter-institutional relations on a day-to-day basis.

The Agency currently has 32 member countries

- 27 European Union Member States: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, Spain and the United Kingdom

- Turkey (EU candidate country)

- Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway (European Economic Area countries)

- Switzerland

It also has 7 co-operating countries

- Monaco

- The West Balkan countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

2.2.2.1 Governance

The EEA could be described as one of the middle-sized EU Agencies, both in terms of budget and staffing[8]. Its governance structures are, as for several other agencies of similar vintage, with a Management Board, a Bureau, which prepares the Board meetings, and a Scientific Committee.

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[8] Agency sizes vary from ±40 to 675 in terms of authorised staff (2006 figures). While the budgets range from 4.8 million euro to 271 million euro this is not a particularly useful benchmark, as it does not reflect the vast differences in the roles and activities of the various bodies.

Figure 2 EEA Structure
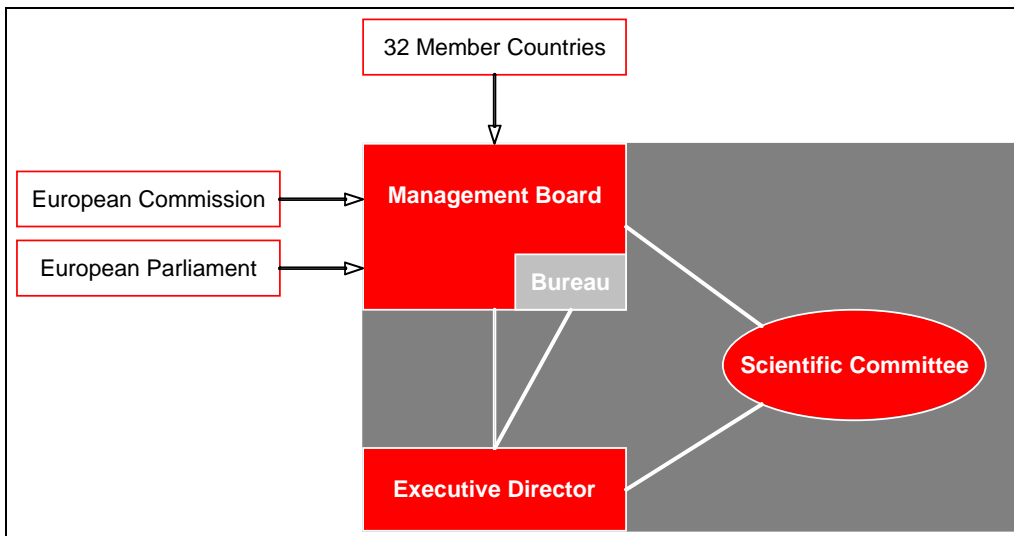
Source: adapted from EEA website

The Management Board, with its representation from member countries, and members nominated by the Parliament and the Commission is one of the factors cited in various consultations as ensuring the independence of the Agency – a key element in the credibility of the information produced. However, it also has huge implications because of the resulting size of the board. While this is not as large as some (such as the European Foundation in Dublin where for example, there is a tripartite system involving the social partners) it is still a relatively large body for an organisation of this size and has associated costs. Alternative systems have been examined and implemented for some of the newer Agencies but here there are issues similar to the discussions surrounding the membership of the Bureau at the EEA – how to have an adequately wide stakeholder representation without returning to all the problems of size[9]. There are also advantages of member country buy-in through active participation in the Board.

The Scientific Committee is made up of independent scientists from the EEA member countries, covering a variety of environmental fields related to the Agency's areas of activity. The role of the Scientific Committee is to provide scientific advice and professional opinions, but its function has also, as in the other Agencies with a similar structure, taken some time to mature, and remains an area where there are questions as to the best way to use the resource this presents.

2.2.2.2 Networks

The EEA is supported by a large network, bringing in some 300 national institutions and 900 experts in the European Environment information and observation network (Eionet), through the National Contact Points, the European Topic Centres and National Reference Centres. Eionet is fundamental to the way the EEA collects and organises data, and ensures that it reaches the relevant audiences. The NFPs are appointed by the EEA member countries from national environmental organisations as the main link between the EEA and the national Eionet partners. They support the national network, and the interface between national and EU levels, and develop contacts to other relevant networks.

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[9] Documents on the administrative reform and the decentralised agencies can be found on the website of the Commission Secretariat General

For specific environmental topics or themes, member countries nominate national reference centres (NRCs) to work with the EEA and any relevant ETCs, and help with the technical co-ordination of work on these specific topics. ETCs vary in structure but are consortia of institutions contracted to perform their specific activities, following a competitive selection process.

National Focal Points are typically ministries or national environment agencies. Their role is to assist in preparation, implementation and follow-up of the EEA work programme and the development of the Eionet. The NFP/Eionet Group meets three times a year at the EEA in Copenhagen.

Each European Topic Centre (ETC) is a consortium of specialist partner organisations from the environmental research and information community, which pools resources in its particular area of expertise. They are contracted to the Agency in response to specific procurement procedures. Over the initial period of operation, the ETCs were proved to be a successful way of facilitating exchange between diverse types of experts across Europe. They are also actively involved in preparing major EEA reports.

National Reference Centres (NRCs) have been established at national level in the areas of environmental activity generally corresponding to the ETC areas and are the main data providers for these specific topics. The institutions are nominated by the member countries for their expertise in specific areas for the purpose of technical co-ordination and co-operation with the Agency. They play a role in technical co-ordination in these topics and work with the relevant European Topic Centres, either directly or through the NFPs.

Figure 3 The EEA and its networks
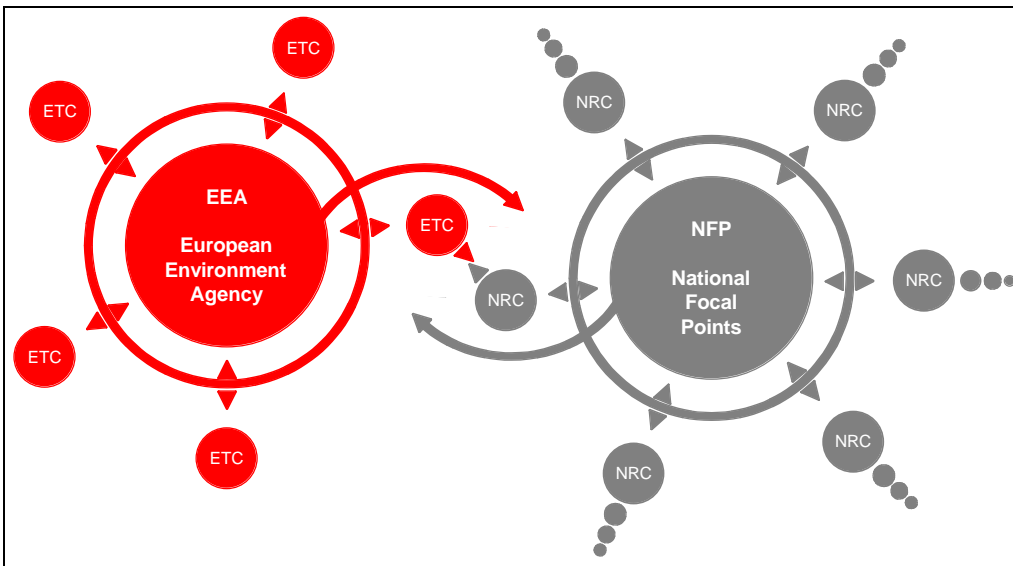
 Source: adapted from EEA website

The establishment of this network system, which has not been without difficulties in the past, is seen as one of the major achievements of the EEA, and a key factor in enabling it to meet its objectives. However, the implications of working in this way should not be underestimated – both in terms of financial and management costs especially in a situation where the EEA has relatively limited control over some of the elements. The quality of the relationships within the network is therefore of extreme importance to the success of its operation.

As well as managing its own networks, the EEA is itself part of the wider Environmental information network, collaborating with other European and non-European organisations active in the area. In some cases this collaboration is clear and complementary – such as to a large extent with UNEP where there is also streamlining of networks at national level. In others it is less so, particularly within the European Institutions, for example with Eurostat or the IPTS where the responsibilities are less

clear-cut. However working practices have been developed to avoid overlap or gaps and to benefit all parties.

The EEA receives most of its funding from EU subventions. These grew between 2002 and 2004, from 19.2 million EUR to 27.2 million EUR. However since 2004 there has been little growth in real terms and indeed there was a decline in 2005, despite the fact that the tasks and objectives of the Agency had continued to increase. The subsidy for 2008 is €31.672 million out of total estimated revenues of €36.414 million. Overall, however there has been a pattern of growth in recent years.

At 87% the EEA also has the lowest proportion of Community Budget contribution among the non fee-earning Agencies[10]. Other income sources have included TACIS, EuropeAid and the CIFAS project. The area of funding is a contentious one – there are inevitable tensions between the need to seek supplementary resources and the requirement to focus on core business. This is reflected in two areas of debate – the overall debate on activities and necessary funding, bringing in issues of the best use of resources, and a wider governance debate on the legal capacity of Agencies to pursue such additional sources, where they can be identified.

Overall the key point is that the Agency finds itself in an environment of contracting Community resources generally with several new Agencies in the process of start-up and early growth, at a time of increased interest in environmental information, leading to pressures to focus and to make best use of existing resources.

Within the resources, questions have also been raised on the way resources are divided between internal activities at the EEA, and funding passed to contracted external experts. The Topic Centres, for example, represent 16% of the total budget of the Agency, and 35% of the Agency's operational expenditure. This discussion has many facets, ranging from the limitations of the funding mechanism and the ability of the Agency to devote more resources to internal activities given the limits on establishment plans and the rigidity of budget lines, to the need for the Agency to build up its own technical expertise without undermining the strength and importance of the networks.

2.2.3 Activities

The key role of the EEA is the provision of sound, independent information on the environment. In order to do this it has to collect, analyse and assess information and produce the results in a range of products and, increasingly, services, for its three key client groups – institutions and governments, key influencers, and the wider interested public. The principal areas of work of the Agency as set out in the Regulation are:

- air quality
- water quality
- the state of the soil, of the fauna and flora
- land use and natural resources
- waste management
- noise emissions

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[10] See Commission Staff Working Document accompanying Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – European Agencies – the way forward (SEC(2008) 323).

- protection of coastal areas and the marine environment.

This encompasses a range of activities underpinning and supporting this from the collection mechanisms, to the products – print and electronic, delivered or participatory, and events. While listing the products is relatively simple this hides the complexity of the production processes and the necessary resources to ensure that they can be produced in a timely and effective manner, depending on the scale, scope and audience of each product.

The key products are:

- The EEA 5 year State of the Environment Report (required by the Regulation)

- EEA Reports

- EEA Briefings

- EEA Technical Reports

- EEA Factsheets

- EEA multimedia publications

- Internet based information services

However, the Agency is more than just an information clearing house and also contributes significantly to the development of methodologies and systems, for example through working on the comparability of data at European level and promoting the development and application of environmental forecasting techniques. This is reflected in a shift towards scenario analysis and assessments in the framework of sustainable development.

2.2.4 Stakeholders

The EEA serves a wide range of organisations and clients including, within the institutional framework, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council, and the EEA member countries. Its wider audience includes NGOs, business, media, advisory groups/persons, the scientific community and those elements of the public for whom environmental policy is a significant issue.

We have used the term stakeholder for these people in its common, inclusive, definition as any person, group or institution that has an interest in the EEA. This definition, used widely in the evaluation world, includes both intended beneficiaries and intermediaries, and those involved or excluded from decision-making. It is thus somewhat wider than that used in the corporate world.

Categorising these is somewhat complex since some people play more than one role, and may interact in several categories. A broad typology is set out in Figure 4 below showing where the stakeholders fit in the overall picture according to whether their main focus is on information for policy making or on data or technical issues, and whether they are primarily users or providers of information.

Figure 4 Typology of stakeholders
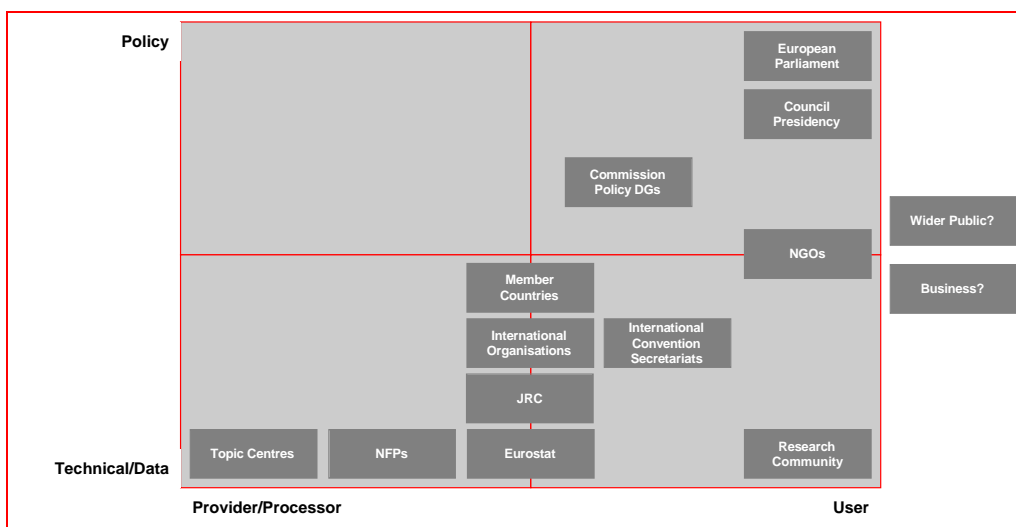
This typology covers the major data relationships, but does not include the internal governance relationships, or characterise the flow of information – provider, user or partner. This is set out in the table below. The wider public and business lie outside the framework as their relationship with the Agency is less direct, although business tends to want more technical data and the wider public more informative/policy related information.

Figure 5 Nature of relationships

	Provider	**Partner**	**End user**	**Governance**
Management Board				√
Scientific Committee				√
NFPs	√	√		
Member countries			√	√
Topic Centres	√	√		
European Commission (policy DGs)		√	√	√
Eurostat/JRC	√	√	√	
European Parliament			√	√
Presidencies			√	
Research Community		√	√	
Business			√	
International Organisations	(√)	√	√	

The list of stakeholders is taken from the analysis of the Agency's work programmes – see section 4.1 below.

Members of the Management Board may be governance stakeholders in one capacity but also be end users in another capacity as a member country; similarly National Focal Points may be providers as NFPs but users as member country stakeholders.

2.2.5 Policy background

The most noticeable change in the policy arena over the past few years has been the move to a more integrated approach to policy making, and a general shift in focus

from "environment" to "sustainable development". For the EEA this presents a risk of dilution and loss of focus unless a robust strategy is in place that can satisfy the key stakeholders and also provides the EEA with a clear path for its activities.

The Gothenburg Strategy of 2001 was renewed and developed in 2006 to meet the challenges of a wider Europe. The overall aim of this renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy is to support and promote actions to enable the EU to achieve continuous improvement of quality of life for both current and future generations, through the creation of sustainable communities able to manage and use resources efficiently and to tap the ecological and social innovation potential of the economy, ensuring prosperity, environmental protection and social cohesion.

Meanwhile the Sixth EU Environmental Action Plan – Environment 2010: Our Future, Our Choice adopted on 22nd July 2002 sets out the framework for environmental policy-making in the European Union for the period 2002-2012 and outlines actions that need to be taken to achieve them. It sets out a need for seven Thematic Strategies in the field of soil and the marine environment (in the priority area of biodiversity), air, pesticides and urban environment (in the priority area of environment, health and quality of life) and natural resources and waste recycling (in the priority area of natural resources and waste). The Thematic Strategies constitute the framework for action at EU level in each of the concerned priorities, and the work of the EEA is core to six of these seven[11].

One of the major differences between this action plan and the one that preceded it is that the Sixth Action Plan aimed to establish a new approach where both the definition of cross-sectoral policy problems and the options for tackling them were underpinned by the development of indicators and monitoring systems.

This change in approach also means that the work of the EEA can be called on to inform at all the stages of the policy cycle from issue or problem identification to reporting and evaluation or issue measure effectiveness, again bringing a need for a strategic approach from the Agency.

3. Delivering the corporate strategy

The Agency's management plans are based around a multi-annual strategy, which is implemented through a set of annual management plans. It reports annually on its activities, both financially and in terms of implementation. However the projects themselves are often either of an on-going nature or cover several years of activity, even though the funding is on an annual basis. The current strategy – and thus the subject of this evaluation – is the EEA Strategy 2004-2008. Preparation on the next strategy is now under way.

The main elements of the 2004-2008 Strategy have been discussed in section 2.2.1, above.

3.1 Activities of the Agency 2004-2008

The list of planned activities from the strategy is lengthy, but is set out in Appendix A. Seen like this it becomes clear how wide a range of activities the Agency planned, and indeed has undertaken. The appendix also lists the activities actually undertaken (from annual reports) and shows that the Agency has carried out a high proportion of the planned activities.

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[11] Pesticides are not a major area of work for the EEA.

It is possible to situate almost all these within the strategy. What the strategy does not include is the justification for the choice of priority areas for the Agency and the information needs being addressed, other than a general alignment with the Environmental Action Plan. Nor does it include medium term and impact objectives with performance indicators. This makes it difficult to assess the alignment of activities with needs, and to evaluate whether objectives have been achieved.

3.2 Coherence of objectives with objectives of the wider policy area

The Agency's strategy has been designed specifically to be coherent with the European policy arena, and over the period its planning and reporting has been adapted to make this coherence more explicit – making it easier for policy makers to follow the logic of the activities. The consultation process for the work of the Agency should also ensure that this alignment remains current, reflecting as required any changes in policy or emphasis from the policy arena where this is required.

The coherence of EU environmental policy and the policy agenda outside Europe is less of an issue for the Agency itself since that should be a matter for the European policymaking mechanisms. At an operational level, however, there are some important issues that the Agency needs to take into account, including technical issues relating to data collection, indicator development or standards to ensure international coherence, and policy related issues such as the production of information on wider geographical areas, typically those bordering the EU. Most of these are addressed through its action line on the EEA in the wider world.

3.3 Resources

The resources of the Agency, both in terms of funding and of staffing in the establishment plan have remained relatively static over the period, authorised posts having remained unchanged during the period of the strategy, and the budget having a slight upward trend. However the scale of activities has risen significantly over the period, as has the importance of environmental information in the overall European policy debate.

Figure 6 Evolution of Budget and staffing 2004-2008
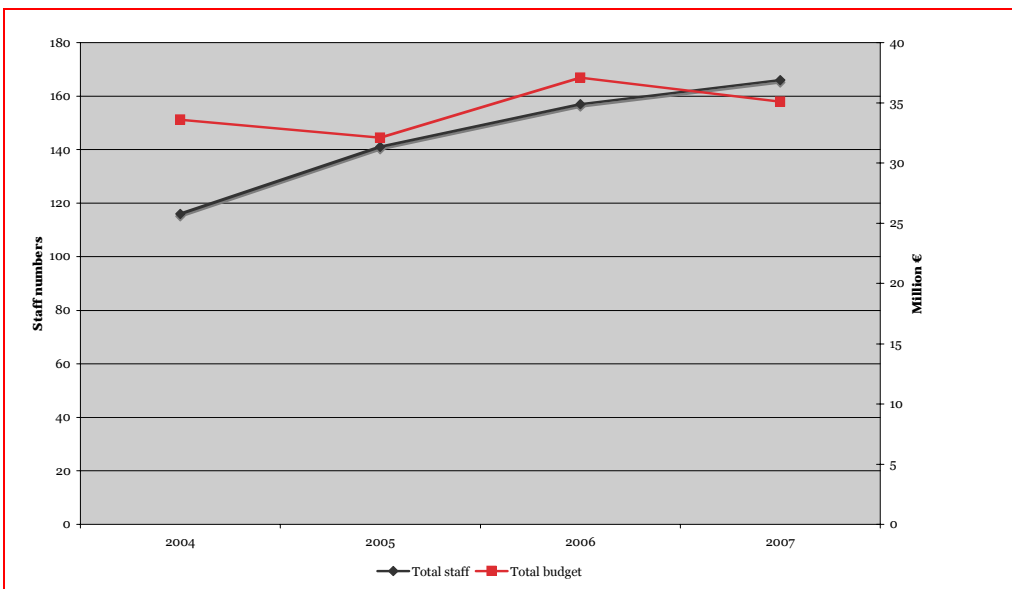
EEA data

In reality it can be seen that the human resources used have increased over the period, the additional resources being in the form of seconded national experts and auxiliary/contract agent staff[12].

Figure 7 Actual Staffing Evolution
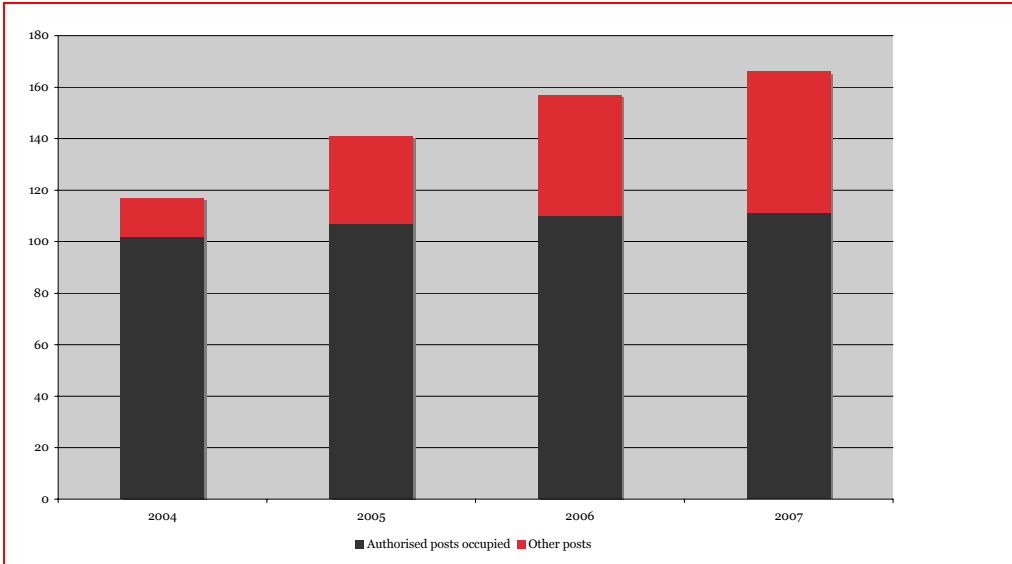
EEA data and draft annual report 2008

3.4 Priority setting and resource allocation

3.4.1 Strategy development

Stakeholders are widely consulted in the course of the strategy development, which has the advantage that it should secure a high level of support, but also means that the strategy has to some extent to please everyone. Some of the consultations are part of the formal decision making process of the Agency. DG Environment's input to the EEA's strategy and programme is substantial. The EEA programme, for instance, is discussed and negotiated as a part of a formal procedure and the Commission gives its opinion. The procedure starts with exploratory visits of EEA staff to DGs to exchange views on priority areas.

In addition the Agency, DG Environment, Eurostat and the JRC (often referred to as the group of 4) as the four main bodies[13] involved in the provision of environmental data for European policy making have set up a formal agreement on the division of work, to ensure complementarity and to avoid overlap. The G4 also therefore have a high level of influence on the strategy and the associated work programmes. This arrangement was set up three years ago so postdates the Agency's strategy document and has resulted in some realignment.

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[12] There was a change in the staffing regulations during the period concerning the status and titles of non-established (short term temporary) posts

[13] Technically the JRC and Eurostat are part of the Commission, being now DGs. When we refer to Commission DGs we mean policy DGs as opposed to the JRC and Eurostat who in this specific context have a different role. It does, however, mean the relationship between DG Environment and the JRC/Eurostat is somewhat different to that with the Agency.

Other DGs (including Agriculture, Research, Regional Policy) also have the opportunity to shape the EEA priorities and strategy through the inter-service consultations. Although it is difficult to assess the actual influence of individual DGs over the EEA's priorities and strategy, we can assume that there is some influence exerted through formal channels, such as meetings at high official and expert levels. The DGs interviewed (external to DG Environment) report commenting on the draft strategy for 2008-2013 making the point that the list of priorities was too long and also several of the priorities overlapped.

3.4.2 Annual Planning process

The annual management plans are linked to the EEA 5-year Strategy through the 10 key goals. Some of these key goals are long term and will certainly not be 'achieved' in the lifetime of this strategy but they are aimed to motivate the daily work. These are reported to particularly resonate with the more senior staff. During the year there are resource hearings to review progress in terms of specific and operational objectives and planned outputs and milestones as set out in the annual management plan (4 per year). (A management plan is made up of 2 main parts: a) the work programme and b) the budget outline).

In 2004 the Agency implemented a management system that allows the planning and monitoring of work to be managed coherently.

The planning process of the annual management plan involves four key documents:

- The ongoing strategy

- The ongoing work programme and a proposal for the next work programme

- The budget outline as negotiated with the commission services

The process involves both an assessment of what the Agency can achieve during the year, and a review of individual staff plans in the context of the career development cycle. Both on-going work and new work requests are considered, the process being thus both top-down and bottom-up.

This process begins at the start of the year and the outline AMP for the following year is available by the spring. The indicative budget outline has already been discussed with the relevant services in the Commission one year in advance of the planning process. This planning process also includes the performance indicators, which are developed for both the project level objectives and more strategic measures relevant to the regulation level. In addition to objectives and performance indicators, milestones and planned outputs the management system also covers the projects, performance objectives, strategy and regulation and the EMAS targets. In June the draft plan is circulated for consultation to the member countries and the National Focal Points, the Scientific Committee of the EEA, the European Parliament and the European Commission. This is an open consultation with the consultation period lasting 2 months.

Responses to all the comments are published along with the revised document, which then goes for inter-service consultation to the European Commission who submits a formal opinion. Finally the Management Board of the EEA adopts the annual management plan in November Y-1. The 2008 plan was activated and published in November 2007. The Agency therefore basically works 9 months ahead in order to complete the process.

3.5 Relationship of planned to actual activities

The Agency set itself an ambitious programme in the strategy document, covering a huge range of environmental topics and themes and involving an equally wide range of products and services. We have compared the list of planned activities from the strategy with the actual activities of the Agency over the period under review, both

through the annual reports and from the evidence (actual documents and services realised). Taking into account the necessary readjustment in a few areas to take account of the changes in external events and priorities, it can be said that the Agency has largely met its targets or is on track to do so.

The transparency of the follow-up and oversight of the activities has improved over the period in two ways:

- The new management system enables individual activities to be planned in more detail and followed up in real time. People working on projects have better information on the resources planned and used.

- The annual management plans and reports of the Agency have become much clearer for the external reader, enabling a better understanding of the work of the Agency. This should go some way to meet the Parliament's criticism of Agency annual plans in general that they are lacking in clarity. A final step in this would be a clearer identification of new activities or changes in existing work. The fact that many, if not most, activities carry over more than one year lends a certain sameness to the plans, leading to this need to highlight changes.

However, given the long planning process it is also inevitable that there should be short-term requirements or changes in emphasis required and it is important that the system be sufficiently flexible to accommodate this without losing focus. There were some comments from Agency staff about the problems of dealing with this type of request since in most cases there is no accompanying budget allocation or reduction in other needs to compensate.

3.6 External factors and developments affecting activities

The main factors influencing activities have related to the evolution of policy in the area, broad issues relating to the availability and management of resources – human, technical and financial and relationships with external players.

The basic input to all the EEA's activities is the data that it collects and analyses. It should not be forgotten that this is not done by the Agency itself in isolation but through its network of data providers and with the assistance of the Topic Centres. The Agency is therefore open to the effects of changes in the member countries as well as in the European arena.

3.6.1 Accession of 10 new Member States

A major event during this period was the accession in 2004 of 10 new countries to the Union. This affected the Agency less than some bodies since the countries were already involved in the Agency. There was, however, a change in the funding mechanisms. The development of the new Neighbourhood Policy has also encouraged a focus on working with other countries and an expansion of EU membership. However, the greater involvement of the new Member States as full members of the network has resulted in a change in the balance of activities within the network with an increased need for support to the members in the development of their reporting capacities. This is matched by a high level of interest in these countries for access to comparative data, and they generally attach a high value to the data from the Agency.

3.6.2 Main policy and regulatory developments

Climate change is an issue moving up the policy agenda with activities such as the EU Emissions Trading Scheme and the EU's commitment to reach its Kyoto target. Other environmental issues increasing in prominence were addressed in the adoption of the last of the Commission's seven Thematic Strategies (soil protection, the urban environment, and pesticides).

The EU Sustainable Development Strategy was renewed in 2006, confirming the commitment to put all EU policies on a more sustainable path. The Biodiversity

Communication emphasised curtailing the loss of biodiversity as another EU priority. This includes an Action Plan that proposes specific measures to conserve biodiversity in the EU and to meet the international commitment to reduce biodiversity loss worldwide.

In December 2006, the new chemicals regulation REACH (Regulation on the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restrictions of chemicals) was adopted, aiming to improve the protection of human health and the environment. The regulation will require the registration of some 30 000 chemical substances in use today, and is accompanied by the setting up of a new European Chemicals Agency.

3.6.3 Technological developments

Other major developments having an impact on the Agency have been in the field of technology. The progress on the development of the SEIS, INSPIRE and developments in the GMES process have an important effect not only on the demands on the Agency but on its working methods and relationships within the network.

The Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) is a collaborative initiative of the European Commission and the European Environment Agency (EEA) to establish together with the Member States an integrated and shared EU-wide environmental information system. The underlying aim of SEIS is also to move away from paper-based reporting to a system where information is managed as close as possible to its source and made available to users in an open and transparent way.

The SEIS concept is based on the principle that environmentally-related data and information will be stored in electronic databases throughout the European Union, rather than in one central repository. It will be built upon existing e-infrastructure, systems and services in Member States and EU institutions.

The SEIS vision was published in 2005 by the Environment Policy Review Group (EPRG) following discussions initiated in the early 2000s on how to streamline reporting of data and information by Member States up to the European level, given the potential of new ICT and GIS technologies. As such the concept has been around, and the Agency has been involved, for some time, but is now being actively implemented. The 2008 Communication from the Commission "Towards a Shared Environmental Information System"[14] sets out the resulting approach to modernising and simplifying the collection, exchange and use of data and information required for the design and implementation of environmental policy. The Communication states that

> *"the European Environment Agency (EEA) has a crucial role to play in implementing the SEIS and has been a leading proponent of many of the principles described in this Communication…..it will be essential for EEA to make SEIS the centre of its strategy"*

This clearly has implications for the new EEA strategy.

The INSPIRE Directive[15] establishing an infrastructure for spatial information in Europe entered into force in May 2007. It contains provisions aiming to improve the accessibility and interoperability of spatial data. INSPIRE is based on similar principles to SEIS. Its implementation is designed to contribute to overcoming existing inefficiencies relating to the usability and use of spatial data stored by public authorities. The case study on INSPIRE focuses on the contribution of the EEA within the Group of 4 to the development of the initiative. Working together on INSPIRE strengthened the intra-group collaboration across the EEA and the JRC, both formal and informal.

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[14] COM(2008)46 final 1.2.2008

[15] 2007/2/EC

Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) is the European participation in the worldwide monitoring and management of the planet and the European contribution to the Group on Earth Observation (GEO). The GEOSS principally foresees the monitoring and understanding of nature, the extent of disasters due to human activities, the impact of global warming, desertification, erosion and deforestation. GMES will be based on observation data received from Earth observation satellites and ground based information. These data will be coordinated, analysed and prepared for end-users. Through GMES the state of the environment and its short, medium and long-term evolution will be monitored to support policy decisions or investments. GMES is being built up gradually, beginning with a pilot phase that targets the availability of a first set of operational GMES services by 2008 followed by the development of an extended range of services. The EEA has been given the role of coordinating the provision of surface measurements and other data for GMES services.

3.6.4 Relationships with other environmental policy players

The EEA is part of a wider group of bodies providing information on aspects of the environment, both nationally and internationally. It is important that the Agency work together with these organisations to avoid duplication and to ensure coherence of data where possible.

The main bodies regularly used by stakeholders for environmental information [16]are:

- OECD
- UNEP
- EUROSTAT
- European Commission
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
- World Resources Institute
- International Energy Agency
- Millennium Ecosystem Assessments
- WHO
- NGOs
- Academia
- Government departments

The Agency collaborates with all these bodies, and others, and has been involved in the production of several significant joint reports during the period. For example the Agency has recently been involved in the joint UNEP-EEA study of environmental issues in the countries of South-East Europe (SEE), Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia (EECCA).

This type of collaboration is seen as particularly important by the staff of the Agency, not only because of the wider reasons given above, but for the access it gives them to new skills and methodologies, and the opportunity to exchange experience with other specialists in the field.

At an operational level this exchange is also important for the development of standards – such as the collaboration with the US Environmental Protection Agency

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[16] From the surveys and interviews for this study

on eco-informatics which aims to foster exchange of information on standards and information technology issues.

Links with national bodies are close in terms of information collection through the Eionet network. The link with policy makers and the need to align the Agency's activities with the priorities of national administrations is less obvious, and falls more within the remit of the Management Board.

In response to the survey, the National Focal Points felt that the work of the Agency fitted well with national policies, however the Management Board representatives felt that EEA information did not really play a significant role in national policy making.

The Agency also has links with major international environmental NGOs. Generally these bodies had a positive opinion of the Agency and its data. The nature of any closer links would need to be carefully considered since the reliability and perceived independence of the Agency's data is considered to be one of its key assets.

3.6.5 Relationships with other Community Agencies

A number of new Community Agencies covering activities of relevance to the EEA were also set up during this period, including:

- The European Chemical Agency (ECHA) started operating in June 2007 and became fully operational in June 2008. The Agency is responsible for coordinating the duties introduced by the new REACH Regulation It will manage the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction processes for chemical substances to ensure consistency across the European Union.

- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) became operational in May 2005. Its mission is to help strengthen Europe's defences against infectious diseases, such as influenza, SARS and HIV/AIDS. The ECDC works in partnership with national health protection bodies to strengthen and develop continent-wide disease surveillance and early warning systems. Through such collaboration the ECDC pools Europe's health knowledge, in order to develop authoritative scientific opinions on risks posed by new and emerging infectious diseases.

- The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) with the main objective of providing technical and scientific assistance to the European Commission and Member States in the proper development and implementation of EU legislation on maritime safety, pollution by ships and security on board ships. The Agency has, for example, operational tasks in oil pollution preparedness, detection and response.

These Agencies have responsibilities that are related or have a direct connection to areas of work of the Agency. There are clear relationships emerging and the Agency has worked with the ECDC (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control), together with the Commission and the WHO on the impact of climate change on health, through assessing how and where infectious diseases may take advantage of climate change. Examples of collaboration also exist with the Maritime Safety Organisation and the Chemicals Agency.

These new Agencies are all still in a relatively early stage of operation and it would be expected that these links would become more developed over time. This may in some cases, also require agreements on the respective roles of the Agencies. These roles are quite different – the ECHA and EMSA, for example, have a regulatory function, which the EEA does not.

3.7 Conclusions

The Agency set itself a long list of tasks to be carried out under the Corporate Strategy 2004 to 2008, and has largely succeeded in achieving these – or in making significant

progress. Some realignment of the work has been done to take account of changing circumstances.

However the 2004-2008 strategy does not explicitly set out the logic behind priorities or state the needs it is trying to address. It is, rather, a long list of activities that the Agency is trying to undertake. These activities do, however, relate closely to the priorities of the wider European policy arena since the strategy is explicitly structured around the Sixth Environmental Action Plan.

The Agency has translated the strategy into its annual management plans. These have increasingly been related back to the strategy in their structure, improving the transparency of the management and reporting.

The Management Board is highly involved in the definition of the strategy, and the Agency makes efforts to ensure this. However, its involvement is lower in the drafting of the annual management plans, because of the detailed levels of planning involved.

The introduction of the new management system has been an important tool in the improvement of the transparency and the efficiency of the management and reporting of the activities.

The planning process is very lengthy, for both the strategy and the annual plans, which limits its ability to react to short term or immediate requirements that emerge. However the process is highly inclusive which is important, especially for the commitment of the network members.

A number of new Agencies have been set up in the recent period that have responsibilities that overlap, or have a direct connection to, the work of the Agency.

Finally, some activities are only loosely tied to the strategy and the core business of the Agency; indeed, for some activities, it is difficult to see how they relate to the strategy. However, these are not numerous or particularly resource intensive.

4. Effectiveness

This section looks at the effectiveness of the EEA corporate strategy and the impact on the relevant policymaking processes – thus focussing on the external perspective. The sections include the EEA in the policy process, focusing the strategy, messages, channels and products, delivering quality, European Added Value and general impacts.

4.1 EEA in the policy process

Overall, the EEA has a well-established role in the policy process as an information Agency providing focused information and analysis. Its flexibility as well as its freedom to think and act, primarily due to the way it was established, has contributed to its establishment in the policy process. In the last five years, the EEA has emerged as a mature organization and consolidated its position. However, the sheer number of priorities addressed by the Agency, and the fact it has a wide variety of partners and end users means that opinions vary as to how established the EEA is in the different policy areas it works in.

- The results from the Management Board survey agreed that the EEA has a well-established role overall in the policy process.

Figure 8 To what extent has the EEA an established role in the European policy process – Management Board[17]
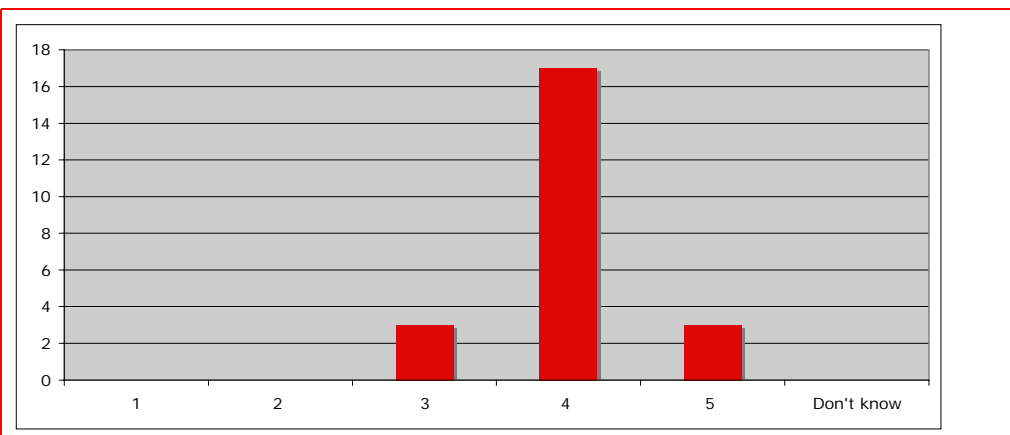
Management Board questionnaire 2008

In the survey of the National Focal Points a similar opinion was reflected. The EEA has an established role in the main thematic areas identified in the 2004-2008 Strategy, especially in the field of information systems and networks, climate, air and water as well as land use. EEA also has an established role in comparing various policies, for example instruments in support of policies.

Figure 9 To what extent has the EEA an established role in the European policy process – NFPs
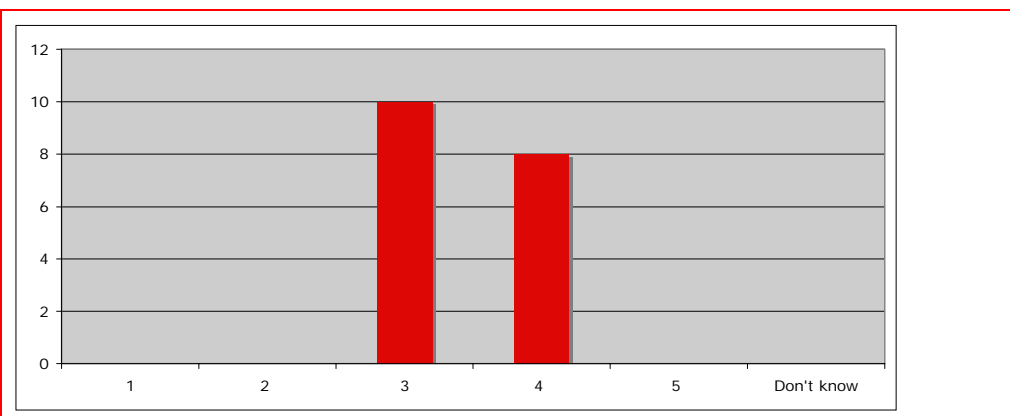
NFP questionnaire 2008

The following sections outline the policy issues set out in the documentation, it covers the key topics discussed by actors involved in delivering and receiving information and knowledge from the EEA, It goes on to look at what areas of the policy cycle the EEA has the most influence. It also looks at views on how effective the EEA is at working with others.

4.1.1 Key policy areas set out in documentation

The key policy areas tackled by the Agency are set out in the strategy. This strategy is of course adapted every year in the annual management plans and although the principal areas remain the same, the priorities naturally change according to many of the external factors already outlined in section 3.6 (external factors and developments affecting activities). The following table shows the principal areas of work set out in

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[17] 1 means not at all, 5 means completely

the Regulation, the areas of the strategy, the areas of the Annual Management Plan 2007 and the organisational chart of the Agency. From an external perspective (and indeed internal) this can lead to some confusion regarding the focus of activities.

Figure 10 Policy areas, priorities and the organisational divisions of the EEA

Principal areas of work (according to the regulation)	Strategy (2004-2008)	Annual management plan 2007	Organisational chart divisions
Air quality Water quality The state of the soil, of the fauna and flora Land use and natural resources Waste management Noise emissions Protection of coastal areas and the marine environment	Information systems and networks Tackling climate change Tackling biodiversity loss/understanding spatial analysis Protecting human health and quality of life Sustainable use and management of natural resources and waste EEA in the wider world Supporting sustainable development and environmental policies Covering: Air Biodiversity Freshwater Marine Land and soil	Providing an information system Climate change and energy Nature and biodiversity Water and agriculture Air and Transport EEA in the wider world Sustainable consumption and productions, including material resources and waste Land use and landscapes Scenarios Integrated assessment and supporting sustainable development EEA operations	Biodiversity, spatial analysis and scenarios Biodiversity and ecosystems Spatial analysis Scenarios and forward studies Communication and corporate affairs Management Board and Scientific Committee Media, editing launches and PR Information Centre Multimedia communication Environmental assessment Climate change and energy Air and transport Water and agriculture Executive Director Client relationships Operations and EPA network Information and data services Publications, web and programme support IT networking and data flows Data access and management Information technology Strategic knowledge and innovation Sustainable consumption and production Science policy and innovation International and regional cooperation

As well as the principal areas set out in the strategy and the annual management plan, for each year there is a different set of objectives outlined in the annual management plan. Each objective has associated target end users or partners. Each end user group or partner may therefore have a valid but different opinion about the priority issues dealt with by the Agency.

Figure 11 Annual Management Plan 2007 objectives and their targets

Objectives 2007	Aimed at
To support and strengthen the EEA and Eionet activities, through development of skills, capacities, environmental information products and services;	NFPs Eionet
To establish the Shared Environmental Information System and the five data centres for which the EEA has responsibility i.e. in the thematic areas of climate change, air, water, biodiversity and land use, in partnership with DG ENV, JRC, Eurostat and member countries;	Member countries European Commission
To establish agreement on arrangements for data transfer and co-operation in the areas of waste, material flows and resource accounting with Eurostat and on chemicals, environment and health, soil and forestry with the JRC;	Eurostat JRC
To provide information, analyses and assessments in support of the thematic strategies and key policies	Member countries Policy makers
To further develop European scenarios using Prelude as the basis	European policy makers National policy makers The research community
To provide assessments, advice and briefings, including foresight analyses, to the European Commission, Parliament and Presidencies on environmental policy areas relating to sustainable development and the Lisbon process, across relevant sectors especially in agriculture, energy and transport;	European Parliament European Commission Presidencies
To work further with countries, the EU institutions, international organisations, secretariats of international conventions to ensure that respective activities on environmental information and reporting are properly streamlined, coordinated and the effectiveness of joint activities enhanced;	EU institutions International organisations Secretariats of other international conventions Countries
To further develop co-operation with the research community aimed at better utilisation of results from relevant scientific projects across Europe;	The research community
To communicate key findings and assessments to a broad spectrum of environmental organisations, business, governments and the general public and provide public access to environmental information in accordance with the Århus convention.	Environmental organisations Business Governments General public

There are also 10 main strategic goals to be achieved by 2008 (see section 2.2.1).

In order to establish what the key policy issues are from the perspective of the people involved rather than the documentation, the following section highlights the areas discussed with the interviewees both externally and internally.

4.1.2 Key policy issues

There is an overall opinion throughout the external interviews that the EEA is very well established in several policy areas as an information provider (in providing high quality, European information). In several instances the Executive Director and the senior staff were mentioned as having made the Agency a strong partner and highly visible in Europe. This is not just a view from the European Commission but also some major international organisations and NGOS. The EEA is considered to make issues visible and also identifies problems at the European level.

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The main policy areas raised and discussed in the interviews covered:

- Climate change

- Biodiversity

- Agriculture, as a part of supporting sustainable development

- Water – Information system

- Sustainable consumption and production

- Urban environment, within the land use policy area

- Other issues raised included spatial analysis, international cooperation, scenarios and forecasting and environmental technologies and innovation. The views on these policy areas are considered below.

The majority of the Commission officials interviewed consider climate change has been a core element of the EEA's work. This is also a priority area of the EU's internal and external environmental policy and, thus, an area where the EU has a clear policy and where the Agency's role is also clear. Several key issues dominate the policy debate: the EU's climate change package[18], including greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, adaptation to climate change, the need to encourage the use of renewable energies and the relationship between economic sectors and climate change. The Agency contributes to these issues, particularly in areas where there is strong need for reporting and the Commission relies on the Agency. The EEA's inventory on GHG emissions as well as its monitoring of progress in GHG emissions and projections in the EU via the European Topic Centre for Air and Climate Change are valuable for DG Environment. In addition, the Agency enhances the visibility and awareness of climate change issues in the EU via publications on specific topics for a wider public illustrating the potential impacts. The EEA has also done a substantial amount of work on climate change adaptation issues. Climate change is the most frequently cited area (by staff) where future demand for work from the Agency is expected. Adaptation is also an area that has implications for spatial analysis and biodiversity.

Three of the case studies undertaken as part of this study relate to key climate change issues and illustrate how the EEA addresses the needs of wide stakeholder groups. The Greenhouse Gas Emissions work undertaken by the Agency is reported to satisfy the needs of many of the NGOs interviewed. Ozoneweb provides near-real time information which is particularly useful for air quality/climate change experts, the Cost of inaction/Cost of adaptation report is a technical report which brings together methodological issues in the area of the economic impact of climate change adaptation of particular use to environmental economists.

The Greenhouse Gas Emissions work undertaken by the Agency is reported to satisfy the needs of many of the NGOs interviewed

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[18] The EEA data has been used for the climate change package although they are not directly involved

Biodiversity is another policy area where the EEA's role is well established according to external stakeholders and Agency staff. The Agency is one of the most important partners of DG Environment in the implementation of NATURA 2000. The EEA, via the European Topic Centre on Biodiversity (ETC/BD), provides the DG with advice and support for the evaluation of the EU member states' proposals and designations for NATURA, for spreading the management of the NATURA sites and for facilitating implementation via the bio-geographic seminars. DG Environment is considering setting up a 'Task Force', in the future, which may involve the ETC/BD[19], In addition, the EEA, supported by the ETC/BD on Biodiversity, and in collaboration with DG Environment, UNEP bodies and NGOs (i.e. Birdlife International), has developed core biodiversity indicators (notably species diversity, threatened species and protected areas) and additional ones within the SEBI 2010 project. Work on indicators is ongoing and far-reaching. The earlier phase of indicator development was considered by those consulted to be a lengthy and difficult process. The outcome, however, was a common solution, successful and very useful, according to comments of other bodies involved, such as NGOs. According to the Agency staff interviews there will also be a large increase in data and indicators over the next few years (both in biodiversity and climate change) and will include aquatic systems and fisheries for example. There is also a crucial link being made between biodiversity and spatial planning policies. One of the main priorities of the Agency will be to consolidate data in this area. At the same time there is an increased need for cooperation around these areas (within the Agency) and support is needed from senior management for this to happen. Spatial analysis is emerging as a horizontal area across the Agency and across political agendas[20].

DG Environment, DG Agriculture and Eurostat highlighted the EEA's very active and well-established role in the agri-environmental policy process – particularly on issues of biodiversity and agriculture where it has resources (staff). The Agency, for instance, contributed to streamlining Agri-environmental indicators with IRENA (Indicator Reporting on the Integration of Environmental Concerns into Agriculture Policy), a joint initiative of the DGs Agriculture, Environment, Eurostat, JRC and the EEA. The Agency, in collaboration with the JRC-Ispra is also involved in the elaboration of the High Nature Value Farmland (HNVF) indicator and the preparation of a HNVF map, based on CORINE data, presented at the Belgrade conference and included in the DG Agriculture's rural development report of 2007. This work is, according to some in DG Agriculture, particularly useful given the increasing importance of rural development over recent years.

Case study: EEA products and services related to Agriculture
There are clear linkages between the selected initiatives of the EEA addressed in this case study, e.g., CIFAS, HNVF and IRENA, and core issue areas and concepts of the EEA's strategy and programmes, notably biodiversity, preservation of nature and sustainability, while the Agency's bioenergy activities relate to climate change and land use change issues for instance. In addition, these initiatives remain relevant for the Agency, in terms of its objectives and activities. There was general agreement that the IRENA and HNVF initiatives are important for shaping the debate and issues framing. Some interviews with the Agency and the Commission pointed out that these particular products can also help policy makers at the national and EU level to set priorities as well as to monitor the effects of policy measures.

Water is an important area for the EEA, cited frequently by stakeholders. The Agency, for instance, in partnership with the Water Protection Unit of DG Environment, contributes to the implementation of the Water Information System for Europe (WISE) by 2010 by streamlining water requirements throughout the EU. WISE

[19] It would not involve the EEA so as not to call into question its relations with the member countries

[20] There are currently no EU policies called land management but the issue is addressed through ERDF, Cohesion funds, CAP or through sectoral policies.

implementation is also supported by the JRC, contributing modelling work, as well as by external contractors, carrying out quality checks on, and analysis of, water data.

In the emerging area of sustainable consumption and production, DG Environment considers the EEA's input to the Commission's Action Plan as extremely valuable[21]. The European Topic Centre on Resource and Waste Management (ETC/RWM) has been working on these issues and the future ETC Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) (Jan. 2009-2013) is expected to contribute sufficient information on patterns of environmental impacts of consumption and production. From the staff perspective sustainable consumption and production is an area growing in importance. It is different in nature to some of the other areas of work of the Agency as the group work mainly on policy effectiveness in close collaboration with DG Environment (and the Parliament, member countries and other stakeholders). The EEA does not currently hold its own data in this area. An activity has been started in 2007 to develop a framework and a set of indicators for use in EEA reporting.

One issue raised in particular by the JRC was the urban environment. Although it is not an established EU policy area (it tends to be left to the Member States on the basis of the subsidiarity principle) this issue is considered important due to its link with climate change, especially coupled with land use (an area driven by several other issues, e.g. economic, environmental and health considerations). The Agency, in cooperation with JRC Ispra has contributed to the debate on these issues through reporting, for instance, on the linkages between land use, traffic and transport in urban environments and their impact on air quality and health. Involvement with DG Regional Policy, who are significantly involved through the Structural Funds, has been more limited, partly due to the nature of the data involved.

The Agency has contributed to the debate on the urban environment through reporting, for instance, on the linkages between land use, traffic and transport in urban environments and their impact on air quality and health

The area of work mentioned by Agency staff was the horizontal work around international cooperation and the global context. International cooperation has just become a defined area within the group working on strategic knowledge and innovation. The EEA has an opportunity to play a leading role in some of the regions and Africa bordering the Mediterranean. Relationships between the Agency and major countries such as China, or Brazil are of growing importance and the Agency needs to agree whether this is a priority and to identify whether additional resources are needed to deal with it. Another area the Agency staff was keen to highlight was environmental technologies and innovation. It is an area where interest is growing. The Agency has been involved in the production of the Environmental Technology Atlas a web-based geographic service. The portal is the EEA's contribution to the implementation of Action 4 of the European Union's Environmental Technology Action Plan (ETAP). There are discussions with DG Environment to identify EEA's role in supporting ETAP[22]. Finally the staff highlighted scenarios and forecasting. In some areas the Agency has good established authority (existing scenarios prepared for the SOER) and in others they are still developing (for example PRELUDE). Crucial in this area is the need for shared data. The Agency has the capacity to bring together a number of different data sources and to publish dynamically.

4.1.3 Working with others on policy issues

Interviews with NGOS and international organisations gave a rich and varied picture of the types of work the EEA does with other organisations. Topics include: environmental protection, streamlining of reporting in the UNECE region, eco-informatics, environmental health and the impact of enlargement. The Agency also has a key role in the Mediterranean region.

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[21] The Agency particularly worked with the Commission in preparation of the EU action plan on SCP and its work on revision of waste legislation.

[22] Draft Annual Report EEA 2007

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In terms of environmental protection, the Agency, in partnership with regional and international organizations, has promoted the Environment for Europe process and supported the European environmental policy and the European Neighbourhood Policy of the EU. The Agency, for instance, has reported on the State of the European environment, with expert contributions from several organizations, notably the OECD, the UNEP and WHO and with the support of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (WGEMA), a UNECE instrument. The next State of the Environment Report will be produced 6-12 months prior to the next pan-European Conference in 2011. According to interviews with international organisations and the European Commission, the SOER conclusions will potentially be used to feed into the Ministerial Agenda, which will strengthen the EEAs' influence and role in the Environment for Europe process.

With the WGEMA assistance and EU funding (through TACIS), the Agency contributed to streamlining environmental reporting in the UNECE region and to environmental capacity building in the EECCA (Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Asia) countries via, for instance, data collection and the development of environmental indicators. Thus, it supported the implementation of the strategy for the environment in EECCA, an initiative of the Kiev Ministerial Conference of 2003. Since January 2007, the EEA has not involved itself in activities in the EECA regions due to lack of mandate and funding, following the change in the ENP assistance instruments, notably the replacement of TACIS by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI).

Within the EEA region, the Agency collaborates with several organisations, notably US EPA, UNEP, WHO-ECEH (European Centre for Environment and Health) and the European Commission DG for Health and Consumers and the JRC, on eco-informatics, for instance. These initiatives involving exchange of information and experience as well as joint projects is aimed at improving the collection and provision of information.

Environmental health issues have been on the agenda of the Agency and its network. The Environmental Assessment Group in the EEA and the Strategic Knowledge and Innovation Group collaborate closely with the WHO ECEH (European Centre for Environmental Health) on several issues, notably air pollution (including air quality guidelines, pollutants and particulates) and health risk assessment. Similarly, the Topic Centre ETC/ACC has established close links with the ECEH to promote exchange of information and expertise on air pollution but via the EEA. Collaboration between the Agency, however, and the European Environment and Health Committee (EEHH) was rather 'loose' from mid-2004 to end of 2006 following the 'retraction' of DG Environment and environment ministers and the emergence of DG SANCO and the Ministers of Health as important actors.

EEA has also supported the DG Environment service responsible for Enlargement and Neighbouring Countries, by contributing to the assessment of the impact of the 2005 enlargement on the environment (in the context of sustainable development), in collaboration with experts from the acceding countries. It was also involved in projects aimed at the harmonisation of the environmental information and reporting system in the candidate EU members. It also participated in similar harmonisation activities in non-acceding Balkan countries, i.e. Bosnia Herzegovina.

Within the Mediterranean region, the EEA supports activities undertaken within the Barcelona process and aimed at improving environmental reporting and assessment, with particular focus on progress in pollution reduction, thereby contributing to giving a picture of both the state of the environment in the region and the progress achieved. These activities include, for instance, collection, consolidation and monitoring of data and indicators and streamlining of information. They also involve capacity building activities to strengthen the environmental institutions in individual countries, enable them to develop and implement the national environmental regulation and to fulfil their commitments within the Barcelona Process. The Agency, for example, has contributed to the implementation of MEDSTAT, a Eurostat project by providing

The Agency, in partnership with regional and international organizations, has promoted the Environment for Europe process and supported the European environmental policy and the European Neighbourhood Policy of the EU

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training on environmental programme implementation, on information sharing (including data and methodologies) drawing on their own experience and on particular environmental issues, e.g. biodiversity and emissions. The Agency has also undertaken initiatives, in partnership with the UNEP, to address environmental issues in the region, such as reporting on existing and emerging pollution problems in the region (in 2006) and the preparation of a joint work programme for 2006-2008 to promote capacity building.

More recently, the European Commission's strategy for the Mediterranean, of September 2006[23], clarified the Agency's role and activities in the Mediterranean region to promote the priorities of the Horizon 2020 initiative within the Barcelona process (of 2005)[24], including capacity building and pollution reduction with focus on urban waste water, municipal waste and emissions. Clearly, the Agency plays an important role in the region since it is difficult for the Commission and individual countries to take action. Interviews with DG Environment and international organisations involved in the Barcelona process suggest that the Agency is well established within the process since it has the expertise and political credibility as an EU body but, most importantly, it is seen as independent from the Commission. Currently, DG Environment is seeking to fund EEA monitoring activities related to the Horizon 2020 initiative under ENPI (European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument), for which several Mediterranean countries qualify, and focusing on the priority areas of capacity building and pollution reduction.

4.1.4 Stages in the policy cycle

The Agency uses a concept of the policy cycle in assessing its role. The representation below is the one that the Agency uses, although the staff interviews and the focus groups highlighted some confusion over where this concept of the policy cycle came from within the organisation, and who owned it.

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[23] EC, 'Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Establishing an Environment Strategy for the Mediterranean', COM/2006/0475 final, 05.09.2006.

[24] De-polluting the Mediterranean Sea by 2020. http://ec.europa.eu/environment/enlarg/med/initiative_en.htm.

Figure 12 The policy cycle
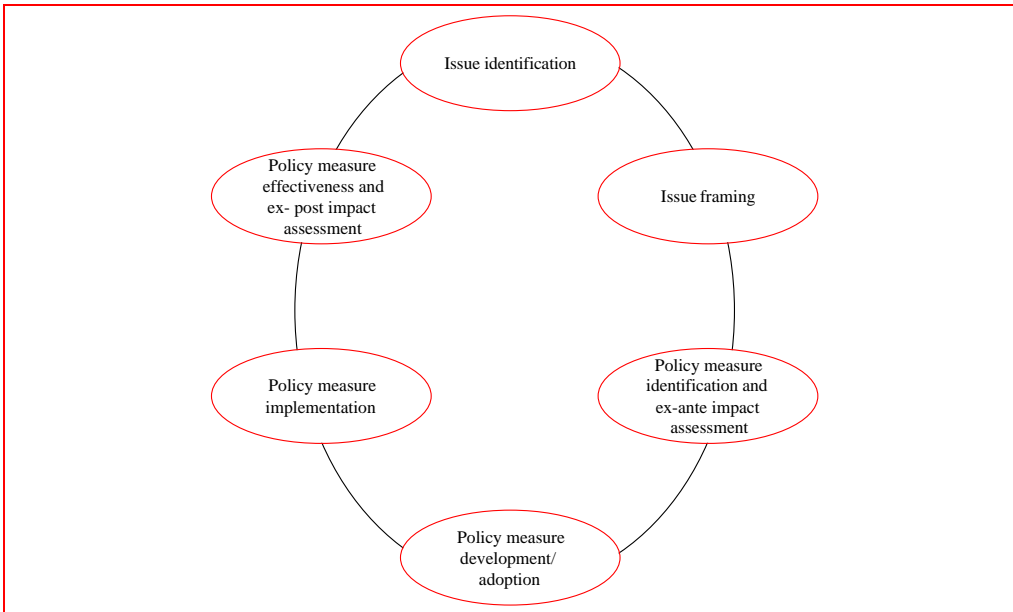
Source : EEA

The figures below show the results from the Management Board survey and the NFP survey. They show at what stages in the policy cycle the Agency has an established role, across the priority areas outlined in the strategy.

The Management Board questionnaire indicates that the EEA has a well-established role in the identification of issues, and issues framing across all the main topic areas. The area of information systems and networks was strong throughout the policy cycle. It is weaker in policy measure implementation and policy measure effectiveness evaluation.

Figure 13 Management Board questionnaire - stages in the policy cycle
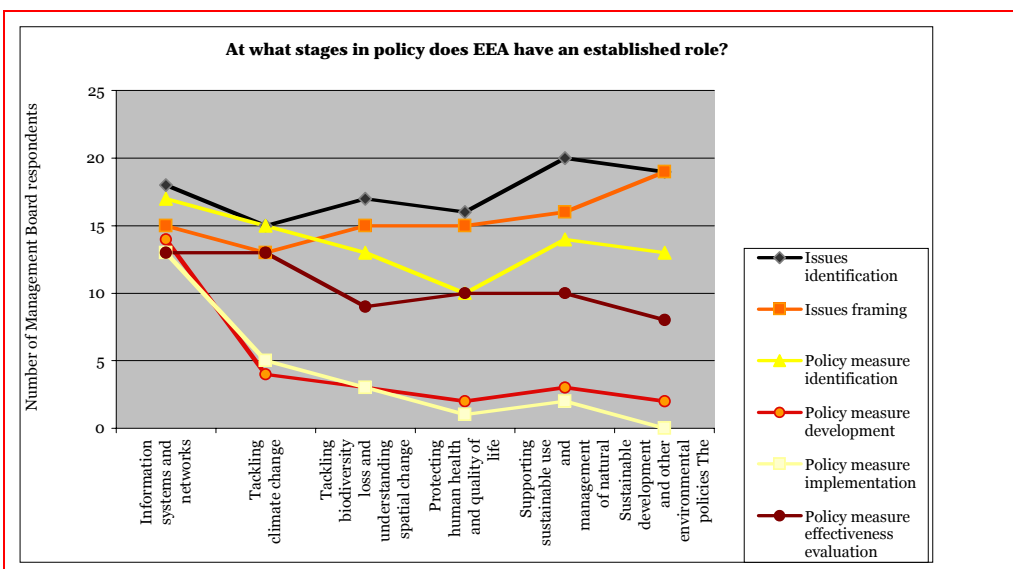
Management Board questionnaire 2008

The NFPs also identified policy measure implementation as a particular weakness in the policy cycle, although again, information systems and networks were considered strong across the whole cycle. According to the NFPs, policy measure identification is less well established than policy measure effectiveness.

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Figure 14 NFP questionnaire – stages in the policy cycle

At what stages in policy does EEA have an established role?

Legend:
- Issues identification
- Issues framing
- Policy measure identification
- Policy measure development
- Policy measure implementation
- Policy measure effectiveness
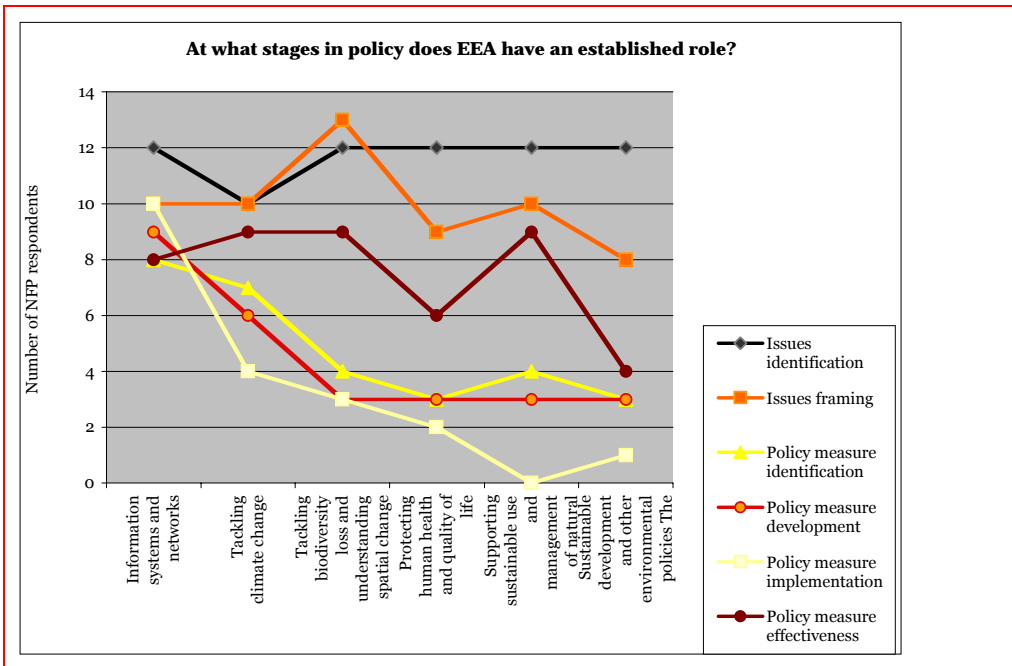
NFP questionnaire 2008

The Management Board and NFP questionnaire also responded to a question on where the role of the EEA in the policy cycle could be strengthened. For the Management Board, policy measure identification is highlighted as being important to strengthen with particular reference to sustainable development and other environmental policies. Policy measure effectiveness should be strengthened across all the areas of the strategy.

Figure 15 Management Board questionnaire - stages in policy cycle where role could be strengthened

At what stages in environmental policy making do you feel the role could be strengthened?

Legend:
- Issues identification
- Issues framing
- Policy measure identification
- Policy measure development
- Policy measure implementation
- Policy measure effectiveness evaluation
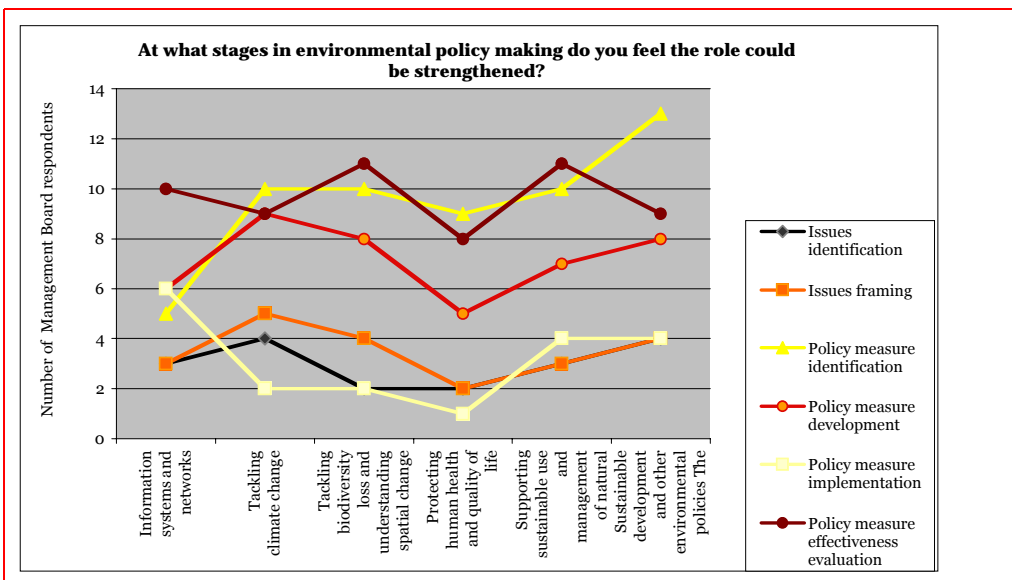
Management Board questionnaire 2008

The NFPs showed similar results with policy measure effectiveness and policy measure identification being highlighted as the most important roles to strengthen across most areas of the strategy.

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Figure 16 NFP questionnaire - stages in policy cycle where role could be strengthened
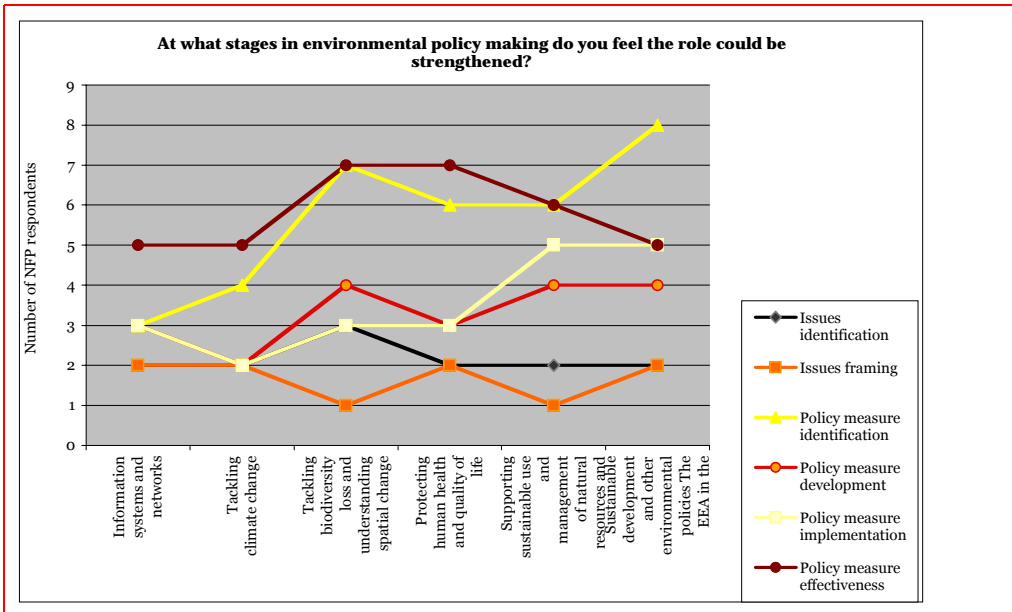
NFP questionnaire 2008

There was no real consensus from the Commission consultations as to where in the policy cycle Agency information would be most effective. In some cases this depended on the issue concerned – availability of data, topicality of issue and even where the responsibility lay within the Commission. There was, however, a distinction between the relevance and use of EEA data at various stages which was considered to be high in most areas, and whether the EEA itself should be involved in, for example policy measure effectiveness and ex-post impact assessment. The overall view was that the Agency might have a role in developing tools and methodologies in some cases but not in actual policy assessment, for example.

Judging whether the needs of the member countries are met has to be done through their representatives in the Management Board and the Focal Points. In both cases the results are broadly positive – although some did point out that the Agency cannot be expected to match the individual policy agendas of each country, but had to focus on issues where there was a European consensus or added value.

The staff interviews gave the opinion that the Agency played a solid role in issues identification and also in issues framing (this includes reframing of existing issues). For them it was the main area of work. Policy effectiveness, for the staff tends to be limited to areas such as sustainable consumption and production. The work on scenarios also touches on the policy cycle in the area of effectiveness and implementation.

4.1.5 Additional/unmet requirements

Across the interviews, not all stakeholders identified unmet needs or additional requirements they would have from the Agency. For example, there were no unmet needs highlighted in the interviews with DG Environment (there was a call for more information, but at a general level, rather than new topics). There were unmet needs put forward from DG Agriculture and DG Regional Policy. The Management Board and the NFPs were also asked where the EEA could enhance its role and the areas mentioned in the questionnaires are set out below. The European Parliament also expressed some general needs which are outlined in this section.

In the area of agriculture and energy, there was a view from the external interviews that the EEA should seek to redress the information deficit in bioenergy-biomass,

where there is urgent need for data on biomass availability given the environmental limits and also to satisfy the information needs of DG Agriculture.

In addition, interviews with DG Agriculture mentioned they would like more work done on forestry. Currently this work is undertaken by the JRC meaning if the EEA were to address this point there might be an overlap (it is also not a core strength of the Agency). The EEA has in the past worked in the area, with the production of a 2006 report on European forests (this was done by external consultant). DG Agriculture is also interested in more work on land use and are supportive of a joint initiative, proposed by the EEA and involving the EEA, JRC (at IES and IPTS) and DG Agriculture.

In the case of DG Regional Policy, a major constraint at the time was the lack of data down to the regional level and at the NUTS level 3. In the long term this should be ameliorated through the introduction of SEIS, but given that, it is difficult to see how this could be altered in the short term.

- In general Management Board members indicated that the EEA has to enhance its role expanding on its strengths, in the field of socio-economy, health, agriculture, food, transport, biodiversity and energy. There was also a suggestion that the EEA should devote more attention to exceptional events like fires and floods. Four of the 21 respondents also put emphasis on the need for enhanced policy assessment tools (however the overall view is that the Agency should not be involved in actual policy assessment).

- The NFPs responded in a similar way to the Management Board members but in addition they emphasised the need for enhanced attention for water protection, marine areas and biodiversity.

From the questionnaire and interviews with the European Parliament, the overall view was just to generally increase the visibility and remit of the EEA. There were requests to do more policy briefings for MEPs and their assistants, as at the moment this is limited. It was also said that the EEA could help more with legislation and decision-making. There was also a call for briefings to be made available in more accessible language for the lay reader.

4.2 Focusing the strategy

This section looks at whether stakeholders feel the strategy is appropriately targeted and also looks at some practical examples of the use of products and services by stakeholders.

4.2.1 Targeting the strategy to stakeholder requirements

The Management Board, the Scientific Committee and the NFPs were asked to what extent they thought the strategy was appropriately targeted for European policy makers. All sets of respondents agreed that the strategy covers the priorities of 6th European Environment Framework Programme well. The Management Board respondents emphasised the need for better communication and the role of supplementary tools such as networks and information systems. The respondents also raised this issue that the strategy may have too scientific an approach and therefore may not tackle the changing priorities of EU policy makers.

Figure 17 gives the overview of the results from the surveys highlighting that the strategy is well targeted.

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Figure 17 To what extent was the strategy appropriately targeted for European policy makers?
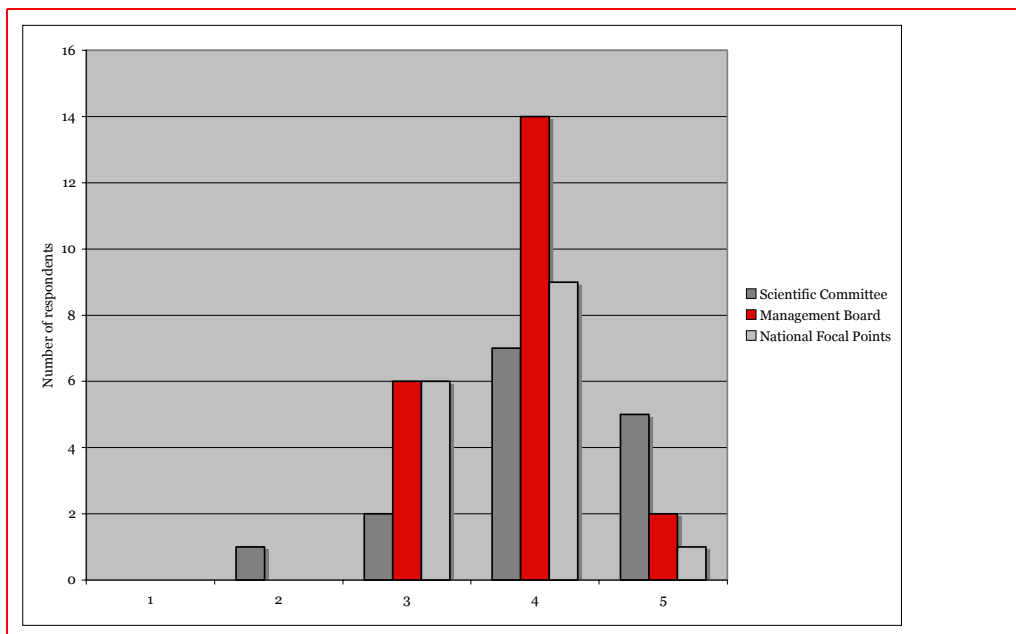
Evaluation questionnaires 2008 (scale of 1-5 with 1 meaning not at all and 5 completely)

At the level of strategy, the results of the surveys with the European Parliament indicate that the EEA has an established role in policy. It was also emphasized that the EEA's work on ecosystems, natural resources and CO2 emissions had contributed significantly to the implementation of the 6th EAP priorities.

Staff consultations raised an issue of the lack of internal priority setting – which reflects the fact that the strategy itself does not set priorities and lacks the reference framework within which to make judgements. Overall it lacks clear objectives – the objectives of the Agency itself rather than the objectives of environmental policy.

4.2.2 Use of products/services

The use of products and services is a useful indication of where the EEA is having the most effect in the target audiences. The main interviews report differences in the level of use of the products and services by the main stakeholders and are considered below.

In DG Environment, the use of EEA products and services depends on the issue area. For example, the EEA is the main source of information for the DG services involved in strategic planning and evaluation. According to those interviewed, the Agency provides them with useful and targeted information, mainly indicators and trends, to take decisions on policy, to evaluate progress of EAP and to measure its effectiveness. Inputs from the EEA indicators, for instance, were used for the mid-term evaluation of the 6th EAP. In addition, EEA data and reporting related to climate change help the relevant services to identify trends. EEA information on air quality and particles is used to see if EU legislation covers citizens' needs.

The EEA's work on ecosystems, natural resources and CO2 emissions have contributed significantly to the implementation of the 6th EAP priorities

Interviews with DG Environment indicated that, when rapid information is required, particularly when the Commission are preparing a Communication or impact assessments, DG Environment consult first with the JRC tending to bypass the EEA. This can happened in an area where both the JRC and the EEA are active, for example in climate change. This illustrates the difference in the relationship between the Commission policy DGs and JRC/Eurostat and that with the Agency. Both formally through the inter-service consultation process and informally through personal links there is in some areas a tendency not to involve the Agency when a rapid response is required. This is not universal – in some cases the Agency is informally included in the inter-service consultation, for example – but seems to reflect a view in some quarters that the Agency cannot respond rapidly enough, possibly because of its "arms length" relationship. This is only an issue if it results in duplication of effort or reflects a lack of knowledge of the work of the Agency by the specific parts of the Commission concerned. It is, however a reflection of the remaining confusion at the operational level of "who does what" within the G4 – an issue already addressed above.

Across the JRC, EEA products and services are used to varying degrees, with those interviewed involved in land use, soil and waste reporting to be the more frequent users. JRC- Soil are the most regular users of the EEA data on land use, in particular the CORINE land cover which is crucial for their work. Those interviewed who focus on technical aspects of data report no use of EEA information at all.

Although DG Agriculture has the potential to be more networked with the EEA, it is nevertheless a regular user of EEA products and services, particularly reports, assessments and studies in relevant issue areas, primarily, rural development, climate change and renewables. DG Agriculture use similar work by other main providers including DG Environment, JRC, Eurostat, Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), Intergovernmental Climate Change Panel (ICCP), the European Biomass Association and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe - Timber Committee.

In the area of agriculture, another regular user of the EEA products and services is COPA-COGECA (the Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations and the General Committee for Agricultural Cooperation in the European Union). The organisation reports to use the EEA regularly for its own purposes and occasionally for their own publications.

DG Enterprise and DG Research use EEA information on a much more *ad hoc* basis. DG Enterprise tends to use EEA products and services through consulting working documents and reports, although is much more likely to use Commission products and services which fulfil most of their immediate requirements. DG Research is also more likely to use its own DG Research publications and where relevant, the JRC would be the first port of call rather than the EEA for expert reports which are of most relevance to them.

The International Organisations interviewed are both users of EEA products and services and also partners in a number of them. They receive information about new products (often via email) and publications related to their area of interest and, admittedly, appreciate products specific to their issue area. For instance, the European Branch of the World Health Organisation (WHO) value air quality data and appreciate the country and geographical coverage as well as the speed with which the new EU members' data are becoming available. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are very interested in work on methodology, reports and some trends, eg of GHG emissions, while the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) prefer policy briefings and reports. In addition to the EEA data, these organisations use their own, as well as information from other organisations, notably the UN Development Programme and the World Bank, individual countries and research institutions.

International Organisations however, are not only 'traditional' users of EEA information; they are also information providers, or partners. The EEA, United Nations Environment Programme and WHO, for instance, have been involved in joint reporting activities covering countries throughout Europe and beyond, such as

The EEA Assessment Report on the Changing Faces of Europe's Coastal Areas fed into the Commission's Communication and the proposed package

reporting on sustainable consumption and production, HNVF (High Nature Value Farmland), the Arctic and the forthcoming report on the impact of climate change in Europe by WHO, the EEA and the JRC.

Interviews with the NGOS from the Green 10 suggest that for most of them the EEA is a source of basic data, used to shape, document and present their policy positions. For example, the European Federation for Transport and Environment has referenced several EEA reports in its position papers. Examples include: TERM (Transport and Environment Reporting Mechanism), on trends and projections of GHG emissions in Europe and reports on specific issues, such as transport subsidies. Climate Action Network Europe (CAN-Europe) reported use of the Agency's reports on GHG emissions and on compliance and their appreciation of the presentation of these reports. Birdlife International also report used of a number of EEA products and services in the areas of biodiversity and agriculture, in particular maps for Value Farmland and nitrate pollution. These products are reported to be well targeted towards these organisations and their needs and can directly influence their own position papers and dissemination material.

> The European Federation for Transport and Environment has referenced several EEA reports in its position papers

4.3 Messages, channels and products

4.3.1 Relationship with the Press

- There is clearly an important role for the EEA in providing timely and relevant information to the press and working with them. This section looks at the results of the interviews with the press and brings in the opinions of those within the EEA who work in the area of communication. In total there were 10 interviews with the press, all of whom had some degree of contact with the EEA in the last couple of years.

- In general, the press are in contact with the EEA a few times a year, sometimes less. A number of them get reports from the Agency and this seems their main reason for keeping in touch. There are some newspapers with stronger ties than others. The press contact with Le Monde had a strong relationship with the EEA and has both visited the Agency and been to Greenland with them. More could be done to work with Le Figaro, Economist, Euractiv, EU Voice. There are some links with individuals which are well developed and personal, and there are also a number of important organisations where the links could be strengthened.

The press interviewed consider the EEA a primary source and an expert source of information on the environment and 'authoritative', used for both validation and also for quotes occasionally. The reports particularly help to alert the press to the EEA for specific subjects. A number of press organisations also consider the EEA to be in the same category as an NGO in terms of use.

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A range of topics was mentioned by the environmental press when asked what makes them think of the EEA, but climate change was the most prevalent. Other key topics mentioned were air pollution (complication of air emissions), water and waste. Four indicated 'nothing specific' (these were agencies or newspapers with less formal links with the EEA). The majority did not know a name of a person actually at the EEA who they could either contact or were contacted by. The most common mode of communication was passive – either email or website. Two of the respondents immediately named someone. The rest were unable to name anyone. It was suggested by one of the respondent that receiving email alerts is enough in order to highlight significant reports but they should be accompanied by details on how to follow these up plus the availability of the relevant contact detail on the days following the release of information. The reports, as the main information source for the press, were regarded as timely, reliable and extremely good. The press stated they would use the EEA as a source of new information and also as an expert opinion on news topics from elsewhere. There was an issue over timeliness of environmental data in general (not the Agency's timeliness); this is something that needs to be tackled by all data

collectors. When compared to the other sources used, the EEA were highlighted as being able to put the environmental issue into a European context and also the robust nature of the reports.

> *'The EEA is best at providing scientific information at a European level – very specific to this field'*

> *'air pollution – there is so much information gathered it is difficult to assess the problems for each country. The EEA's data can be useful for this topic'*

> *'we like the EEA because of their opinions'*

> *'Agency is good at making independent statements – not political but scientific and this is different from the European Commission'*

There were varying suggestions on how the EEA might work with the press more effectively. There was a comment that all countries need to be treated in the same manner and that reports produced need to be equally accessible to all countries. Being more proactive in announcing new reports was mentioned, as was the lack of a visible press officer (this despite the fact that the EEA does have a very active press officer).

- From an internal perspective, there have been some significant changes in the way they deal with the press in the last couple of years. One reason has been the shift in environmental journalism in the last few years. There is now a greater need for an understanding of environmental economics and more technical subjects. This has changed the nature of the relationship between the press and organisations such as the EEA. Internally the EEA see there is now a role to translate the technical reports into a language that is understood by the press. Another reason is that communication with the press has become more prominent in the strategy. As a consequence, the Agency has moved from being an organisation that produced a high number of press releases to one that works more strategically. It now picks targets and considers timing.

- It is now more structured and considered. There used to be an approach to measurement from the EEA that the more coverage the better, not considering the nature or tone of the coverage. This has changed and has been facilitated by the increasing visibility of the topic in the international press. Its profile has allowed the Agency to become much more strategic in its dealings with the press.

The EEA is still working on finding a way to present a coherent external message in line with its corporate identity. Recent reorganisation within the EEA has resulted in two new press officers who will take forward this work. There is also a new framework contract for media dissemination services to the European Environment Agency (just awarded). Although the EEA has a communication strategy in place, the response from staff to this strategy is mixed.

4.3.2 The website

The website is one of the main communication tools of the Agency with over half a million visits in the first quarter of 2008. We have examined both the web monitoring statistics and the results of a survey of visitors to the website to assess the website.

<div style="color:red">The website is one of the main communication tools of the Agency with over half a million visits in the first quarter of 2008</div>

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Figure 18 Background of visitors to website
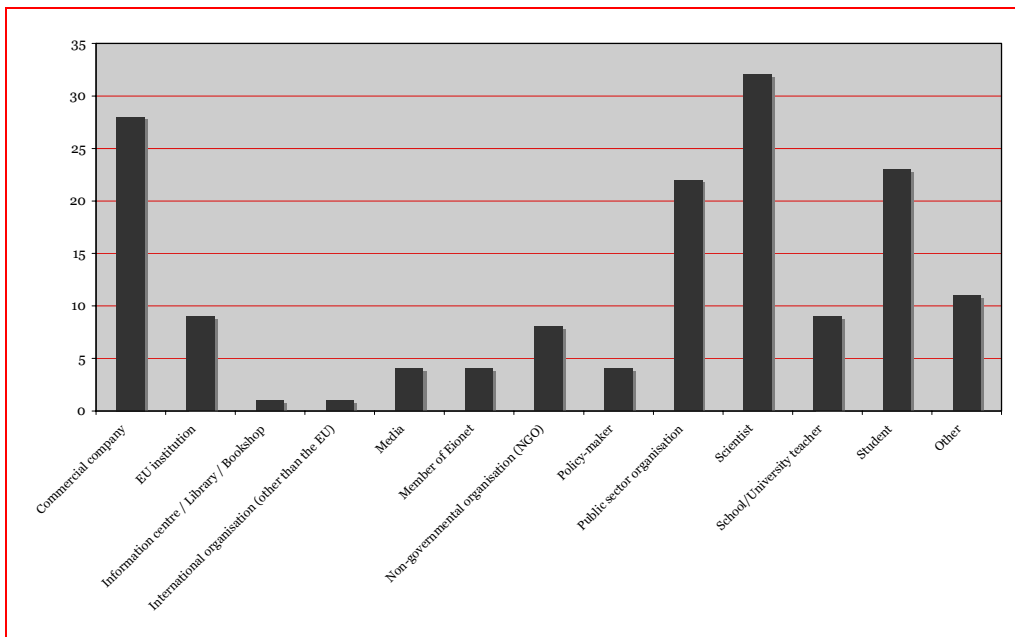
Survey of web visitors 2008

In terms of sources of visitors, by far the main user was the European Commission. User types responding to the survey covered a range of backgrounds. The majority of users were from the public sector, scientists or students. It was also possible to identify some of the main NGOs as active users from the monitoring data. The Parliament is also active, with over 80 uses per week although this is overshadowed by the Commission who provide 300 users.

Figure 19 Visits to the EEA website in the last year by some of the key stakeholders

Stakeholder	No of visits April 2007/April 2008
European Commission	15,965
European Parliament	4,167
UNEP	533
Birdlife	48
WWF	294
Greenpeace	364

Many visitors used bookmarks to reach the site but 22% were referred from links in reports or documents and 16% from search engines, suggesting that the EEA has a good level of general visibility. Versions of the website in languages other than English are more limited, and have a different look and feel from the main site. They only provide access to information in that language and although the start page does suggest that more information is available in English through the main site, it does so in English.

Figure 20 Purpose of visit
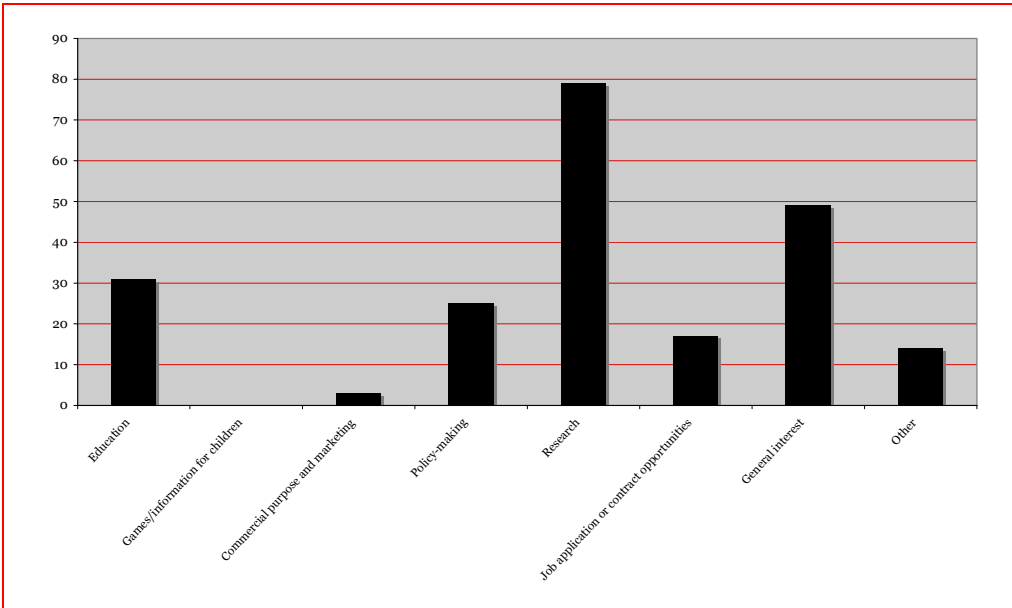
Survey of web visitors 2008

The survey of web users showed a keen interest in general environmental policy and analysis of data. Recent viewing figures have seen a huge rise since the launch of the new games for children. Equally there was a spike following the publicity for the film "Our Arctic Challenge" showing that the dissemination of information on new activities and products is effective. Overall, the SOER remains the dominant product of interest, and we would expect a new 'peak' with the publishing of the next edition.

Figure 21 Areas of interest
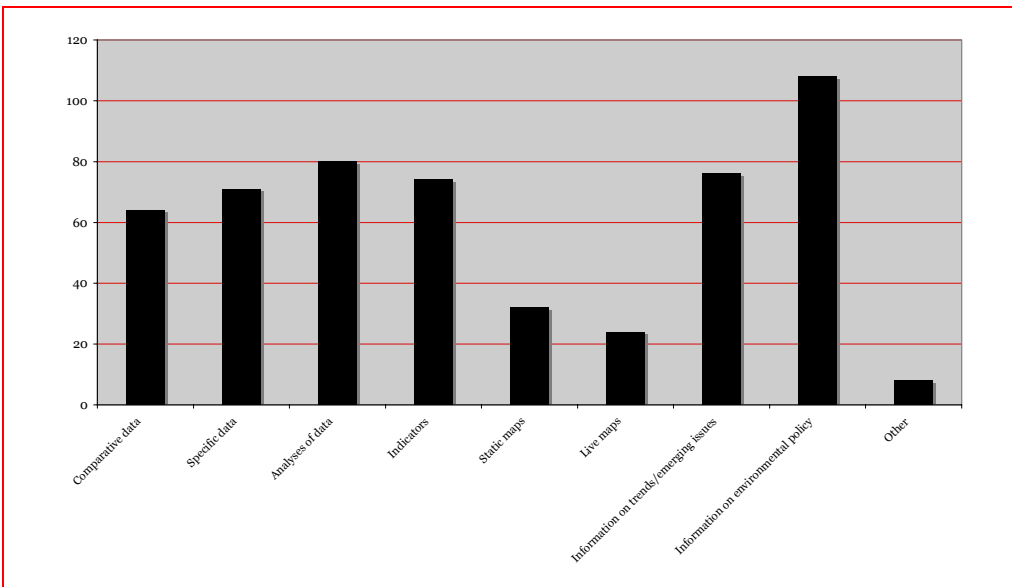
In terms of specific topics there is broad interest (visitors are interested in more than one area) with climate change again being the most frequently cited topic of interest followed by air pollution and environmental health.

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Figure 22 Topics of interest

4.3.3 Relationship with the general public

The EEA regulation also requires the Agency to disseminate information on the state of the environment to the general public. While their main focus remains with the environmental community, there are some activities that are targeted directly at the wider public. These include:

- Some reports (such as the SOER)
- The children's games
- The events at the EEA
- Live maps and data

The European public is a heterogeneous group with different needs and interests. The EEA cannot hope to satisfy all these interests with its available resources, especially as many of their products and services are quite technical in nature and are either of limited interest or require significant interpretation to be of use to the general public. The general public therefore needs to be segmented in order examine how they are served by the EEA.

The first, and closest group would be the "professional public" where we would include scientists, researchers and some industry users. These users are either specialists or have a special interest in environmental information, and generally seek to use it for professional purposes of some sort. We could also include the press and NGOs in this category as they use the Agency for information purposes. This group are well served by the Agency and the majority of the outputs are potentially of interest to users in this group. The website offers a single and immediate point of access to the information, and the visitors surveyed reported that finding information was generally easy or very easy.

Products like the Greenhouse Gas Emissions report and Ozone Web have potential to appeal to a wider audience

The second group would be the public at large. This group is more problematic since presentation of information for citizens is very different from that for professionals. Providing data in a form of relevance involves additional effort, and expense since to genuinely reach citizens there are implications for the availability of information in national languages. The Agency does have a range of products which are available in many languages but the websites versions in these languages are not very "public

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friendly", and also do not feature many of the activities with a wider audience – the live maps, for example are not highlighted, nor are the educational products.

The final group is the local public. The Agency regularly holds open days and other activities aimed at its local community in Copenhagen. This combines the activities of the Agency with its corporate social responsibility agenda. The level of support for these activities is very high and serves to reinforce links with the local community and local administrations.

Figure 23 Areas of interest
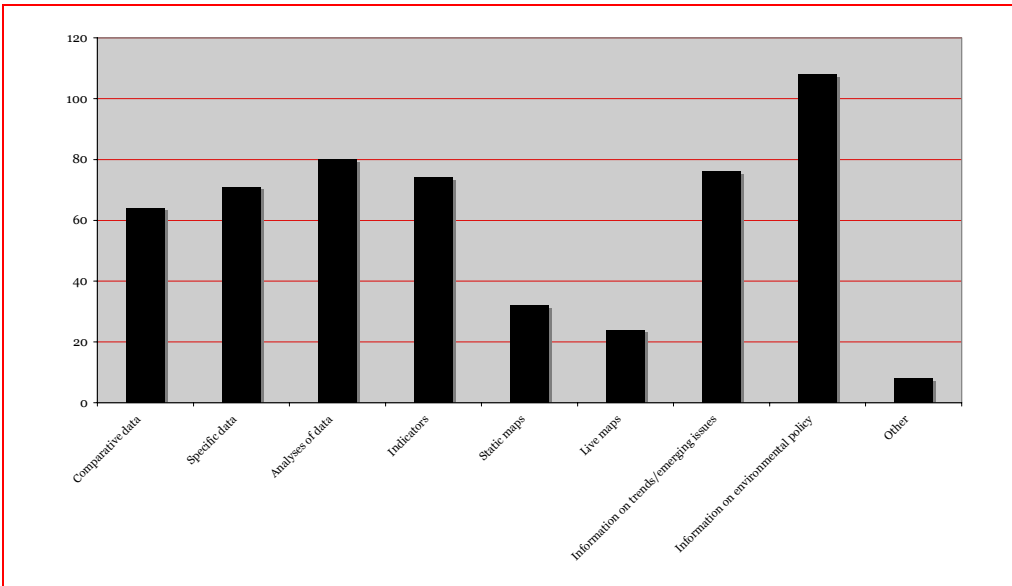
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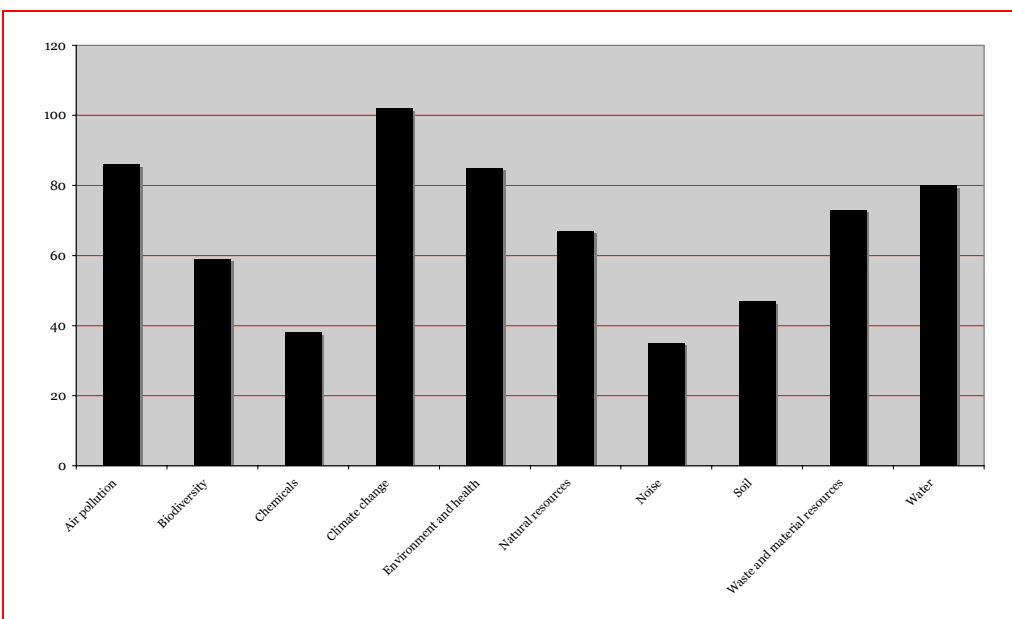
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4.4 Delivering quality

Provision of high quality data by Eionet is fundamental for EEA's mission to provide timely, targeted, relevant and reliable information to policy-making agents and the public. The methodological soundness of the analysis provided by the EEA on the basis of the data is also a critical factor in the recognition of the Agency as the authoritative source of environmental data for Europe. The issue is not only one of actual quality but of perceived quality.

The EEA has implemented a number of activities to ensure data quality, including Reportnet tools, data guidelines and progress monitoring and reporting (eg reports on priority data flows published annually but also updated on the website). However the Agency's responsibility is to ensure quality of the reporting rather than the quality of the data itself, which is in the end the responsibility of the member country.

Overall the Agency is seen as a provider of reliable, reputable and pan-European information. In addition in the view of most stakeholders interviewed, it is quality of information that differentiates the EEA from some other information providers, (particularly lobbies and NGOs) – although not from other European or international institutions. Although DG Environment reports the JRC and the OECD as main information sources alongside the EEA, it is the EEA they think of for continuity and breadth of information.

Timeliness, as already highlighted, can be a problem. In most circumstances it is not something the EEA has control over due to a reliance of information from a variety of data sources (the member countries, Eurostat etc). These timeliness issues tend to be technical, but in the long term, according to those interviewed in DG Environment and the NGOs in particular, can become political when the EEA is not in a position to report on a 'hot topic' on the political agenda. Timeliness will however become less of an issue with the increasing move to real time data, new initiatives and advances in technology. There are examples where timeliness is already not an issue such as information on ozone levels in cities where almost real time data is available. The introduction of SEIS is also expected to address this issue, at least to some extent.

Other services within the Commission reported that, although the EEA has improved the quality of information considerably, the quality of information on agricultural and economic issues remains rather weak. In this area it was stated that there were concerns over establishing the quality of data collected through the EEA network since the Agency's data validation process is not sufficiently rigorous, with no quality assurance mechanism in place and a lack of expertise in this particular area. This is a worrying perception. SEIS is expected to improve the data system but it will not improve reporting.

It is difficult to compare EEA quality with Eurostat as Eurostat's information is harmonized into an EU system allowing robust EU-wide comparisons. EEA information is only assessed and published. There is no harmonisation of data and therefore in most circumstances it is not considered appropriate to use it for cross-country comparisons. However it is more timely, than Eurostat data, and the added value is that it provides environmental information over time.

Some sectoral DGs reported that the EEA evaluation and reporting provide a comprehensive account of the state of affairs in some areas, for example rural development. In the area of land use/land cover, however, there were concerns raised over the Agency's methodological approach. Another issue raised concerned the EEA approach to focusing on individual components, such as, water and soil. Given the current trend to integrated assessments and the need to identify key drivers, this fragmented approach is limiting. Since the Agency is moving towards more integrated approaches, this perception of fragmentation needs to be carefully watched. Another issue was the quality of assessments. The interpretation of figures on GHG emissions, for instance, was rather pessimistic when compared to actual figures quoted in the assessment. Finally, with regards to work on renewables, more work was needed on data and on assumptions.

Both the NGOs and the press commented favourably on the quality and reliability of EEA data.

The Management Board and the Scientific Committee rated the quality of products in terms of availability, timeliness, coverage, accuracy, independence and whether well communicated. Overall there was broad agreement that the EEA scores well on all of the criteria. For the Management Board – accuracy and independence came out on top and timeliness was given the lowest rating. The Scientific Committee was even more positive about all aspects.

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Figure 25 Rating of the EEA quality of products by the Management Board
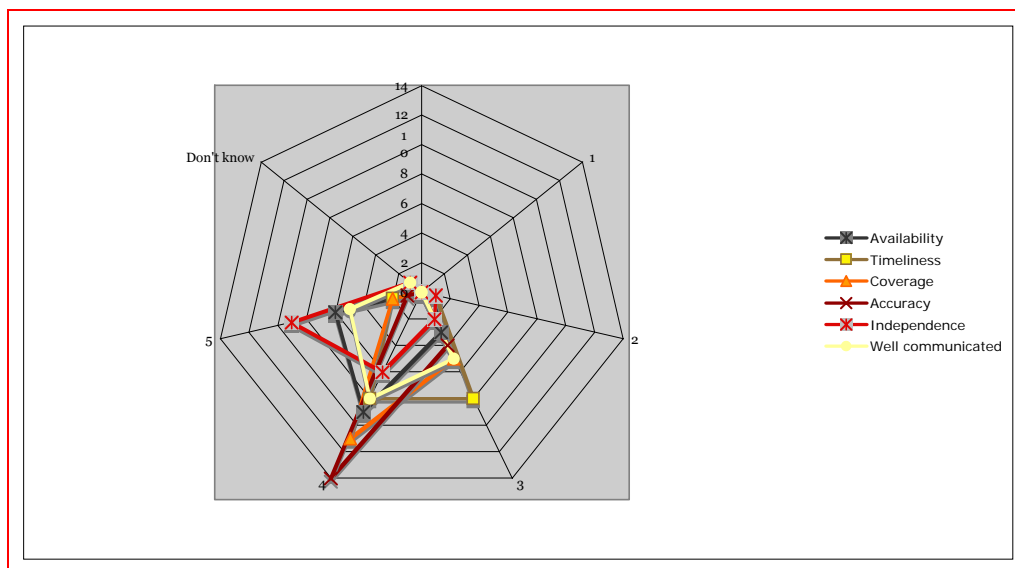
Management Board questionnaire 2008

Figure 26 Rating of the EEA quality of products by the NFPs
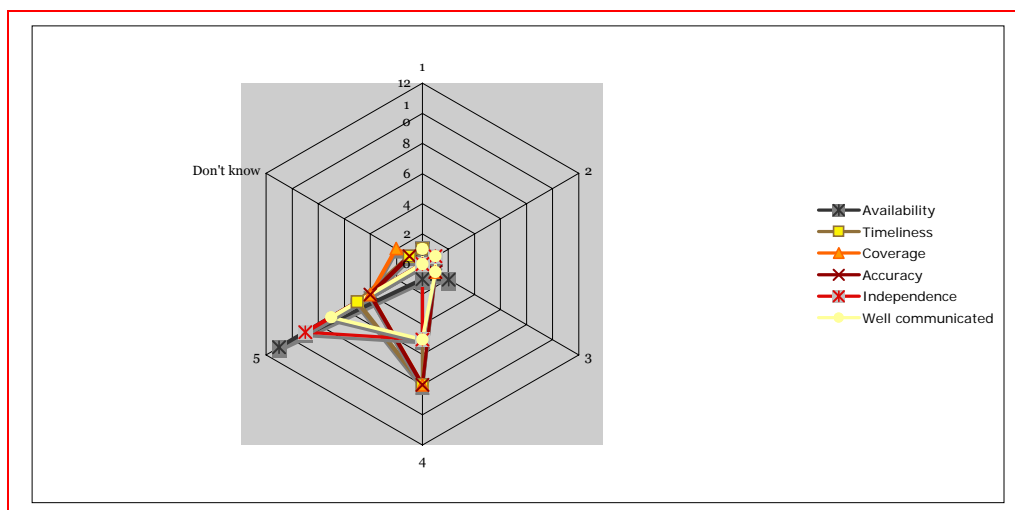
NFP questionnaire 2008

4.5 European Added Value

European added value is said to arise from[25]:

- producing European level information
- setting EU methodological standards
- supporting the making of EU policies and national policies
- assisting lagging behind countries to catch up with international standards
- transfer of knowledge across MS
- filling knowledge gaps

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[25] This is the set of parameters used by DG Budget in assessing European Added Value

- providing advice that is recognised as independent

- allowing MS to solve common problems or to benefit from economies of scale

- providing an EU wide benefit to its clients

Since the Agency published the first State of the Environment Report it has been clear that there is a high level of interest in environmental information at the European level. This ability of the Agency to provide information for the whole of the EU and many neighbouring countries is an area of real value added for many of the stakeholders.

In order to achieve this it has worked extensively with information providers on the identification of key indicators, the quality of data and regularity of reporting. While the data is not completely "harmonised" in the sense that Eurostat data is, the speed of provision is felt to be higher and the trade off is accepted. In doing this work it is contributing to the development of new standards and new methodologies.

The ability of the Agency to provide input to European policy development is also illustrated and a further example of European added value. Some member countries, especially among the newer members also suggested that there were benefits to them in the development of national policies and information systems. Through working together in the framework of Eionet, member countries have also been able to exchange information and expertise. Ease of access to information on other member countries (such as the national SOER reports) is also reported as valuable, especially by respondents from new Member States and neighbourhood countries where there is a real interest in benchmarking.

In the surveys, respondents also mentioned the value of information at a supra-national but not necessarily European level – such as complete river systems, maritime areas and country groups, which is hard to access from other sources. Working with other international bodies also enables exchange of expertise of benefit to the Agency and its member countries.

The work with neighbouring countries and with other international organisations also contributes to the flow not only of data but also of expertise and methodology development, which is also valued by all the parties.

Finally the fact that the Agency has a European standing without being directly seen as part of the European Policy-making institutions is repeatedly cited in the consultations as a contribution to its status.

4.6 Impacts

Impacts, especially soft impacts (as are the type the Agency would expect to have) are notoriously difficult to measure and attribute to specific actors. In addition the strategy does not set out specific areas where impacts would be expected or targeted. Thus there are no impact indicators set.

Areas where the Agency and its work might expect to have an impact would be

- Policy making – the process

- Policy itself

- Knowledge impacts especially on the State of the Art, Methods etc

- Availability of data – coverage and timeliness

- Data quality

We have taken the Agency's documents and activities and constructed the table of potential impacts and how the Agency might demonstrate a contribution to impacts below.

Accepting that many of these are not measurable as such, the Agency could monitor these areas and be in a position to report on its contribution in a more regular and coherent manner.

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Figure 27 Areas of EEA impact

Types of impact⇒ Evaluation criteria ⇓	Policy making	Policy	State of the Art, Methods etc	Availability of data	Data quality
Effectiveness	Change in how policy is made eg. Policy effectiveness studies	Evidence of policy change/development directly influenced by EEA data	New indicators New improved scenarios Methodologies	Better informed pubic Visibility of issues	Data Standards Technical standards (ICT)
Efficiency	Speed of data availability for policy making and timeliness of the data			Timeliness	Improved processes
Relevance	Products designed for specific users (and the extent to which the products are being used)			New forms of focused delivery (real time etc) (and the extent to which these are being used)	
European Added Value	Value added in the European decision making processes	Enabling Europe to have an international voice and influence. ("European policy works" eg SOER 2005)	Exchange of learning within Europe and between Europe and others Coherence Standards	Coverage	Comparability/complete ness

Missing from the above table is the list of the target users of those impacts. The Agency would do well to review the current list of end users of its activities in order to better focus both the individual activities and the overall priorities of the Agency.

Figure 28 Examples of "soft" impacts

Area	Influence
EEA products and services related to Agriculture	The structure of the final DG Agriculture CIFAS database was influenced by the EEA work on CIFAS The JRC included the HNVF maps of the EEA in the Belgrade report Recommendations of IRENA reported by the EEA fed into the Commission's Communication for the update of agri-environmental indicators
Climate change: the cost of inaction and the cost of adaptation	Influence on the EU Green Paper on Adaptation
Belgrade Report	The report helped Ministers to identify issues and challenges which may be reflected in the priorities of the conference in 2011
Coastal and Seas products	The report on coastal areas fed into the debate on the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) experience n the EU Fed into the Commission's Communication to the Council and the European Parliament Contributed to the review of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council concerning the implementation of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in Europe
Prelude	Influenced the Agency's strategy to scenario studies Contributed to the GEO4 report A driver and inspiration for subsequent DG initiatives e.g. Scenar 2020
INSPIRE	Strengthened the Group of 4 and promoted intra-group collaboration
Waste management	Technical report on transboundary waste shipment has fed into the DG Environment activities Facilitated DG Environment's policy monitoring activities Complements Eurostat's work - helps to explain changes in waste data

Effectiveness depends upon a number of factors. These include:

- Relevance: that outputs should relate to the concerns of users.

- Targeted products: that they should be developed for specific users or groups of users to meet their needs.

- Reliability: that products should be based on sound science and the information contained within them be robust.

- Timeliness: that products should be delivered to contribute to policy debates, etc, at times that they can influence them.

- Impact: this is the ultimate determinant of effectiveness, but is usually difficult or impossible to demonstrate conclusively.

The Agency has established itself as a reputable point of reference in the European environmental policy landscape, and has achieved this recognition from its stakeholders, other organisations active in the field and from press and the wider public.

The Agency, and its information, addresses many parts of the policy cycle. Users have different views on the most important parts of the policy cycle depending on their own work focus.

Through working with the Commission in the Group of Four, the Agency has contributed to the continuing dialogue and cooperation of the partners looking at complementarity of activities. This is done through the annual working programme and regular meetings. It has resulted in a common understanding of concepts of data centres – JRC, EEA, Eurostat – and a common emerging understanding of the SEIS framework and its implementation.

The existence of the Group of Four has also facilitated the buy-in of senior management and top-level management, which has had an overall positive effect on co-ordination within the Agency. However, among some users, there is not a transparent understanding of the operational relationships that exist across the Group of Four. Although for the EEA staff this is not an issue in their day-to-day dealings, it sometimes leaves information users unsure of the appropriate point of contact for data.

The strategy and activities of the Agency currently have a comprehensive rather than a focused approach. This will be difficult to sustain as demands increase and resources remain static.

Targeted products

In general, the balance of product types seems well adjusted to user requirements, with new developments in information types and analyses being added. However, more thought needs to be given as to the targets of the information and the degree to which the Agency should devote resources to more distant targets.

The Agency addresses the policy needs of the Commission, fairly comprehensively in the case of DG Environment, but to a lesser extent in the case of other policy DGs. This is partly an issue of expertise and partly data availability.

The Agency is careful to address itself to the needs of the Parliament and provides them with both data and briefings. However, this is still quite a one-way process and, while there was evidence of the Parliament being engaged in the management issues of the Agency, there was little evidence of a similar level of interest in the products of the Agency. However, there is also an absence of criticism.

The Agency has recently been focusing on its relationship with the press to provide a more coherent approach and develop links with key information users. This approach fits well with the requirements of the press for a reliable source of data and interpretation and should be continued.

The time taken for data to be available is a frustration for the Agency and its users alike. The extent to which this can be improved is limited but is clearly an important issue. Some degree of expectation management may also be necessary.

Timeliness

The establishment of the network system is one of the major achievements of the EEA and its member countries and there is evidence of efforts on the part of all participants to improve the speed and quality of data provision.

In general, the Agency has a reputation for good quality data but this view is not universally held – there are isolated instances of people who were more critical or of types of data that were less well received by specific users. The introduction of SEIS will have implications for maintaining the current favourable views.

Reliability

The Agency has quality high on the agenda. The data received from sources means that it is not always possible for the Agency to achieve its objectives in this area but it works hard on this issue.

Overall, the Agency adds value to the data – both by the comprehensive coverage and through the analysis it performs. Its position adds European value through comprehensiveness of coverage and by allowing comparison of countries or supra-

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national analysis. This European added value is not disputed by the stakeholders - both internal and external.

The impact of the Agency must be judged against its objectives. It has made a positive contribution to the availability of environmental information at European level. It has also established a reputation for the reliability of this information. It has built good links with the other main environmental players, again showing that it has established a recognised place in the information landscape.

There is evidence that policy makers at national and European levels use the information provided, so the Agency has contributed to the development of informed environmental policy making. The Agency has demonstrated a commitment to evaluation of its activities, both overall and specific. Having a more developed framework for this with specific impact objectives would enable them to benefit more from these exercises.

5. Efficiency and internal management

This section looks at the governance structures of the EEA and whether they assist or impede the strategic planning processes. It explores the management structures and systems, the working methods, including governance structures and the wider network and stakeholder groups. It also looks at human resources and other issues of efficiencies in processes such as the use of the balance scorecard, internal performance measurement, resources and costs.

5.1 Annual management planning, structures and systems

The governance structures are outlined in section 2.2.2.1 of this report. This section looks at efficiency in the management systems in relation to the annual management planning. It draws on evidence from the Management Board survey, the scientific committee survey and the NFP survey as well as staff interviews. It also brings in examples from the external stakeholders, in particular the European Commission.

Overall, the annual management planning process is lengthy and complex, although well defined and extremely inclusive[26]. The complexity is inevitable given the governance structure of the Agency and those of its stakeholders, and it is unlikely that major improvements in the overall process could be achieved.

The underlying systems that have been introduced have increased the transparency of the process. However, while the overall structure of the plans is clear and now links back well to the strategy it is not always apparent where all of the proposed activities have originated – there are some which when examined in detail are difficult to link directly back to the overall objectives.

The major criticism, which links to some of the broader questions discussed below, is that this degree of inclusiveness results in a lack of focus and an attempt to spread resources too thinly. This is partly a result of the different requirements and priorities of the stakeholders – Commission, Parliament and member countries and partly reflects the desire of the Agency staff to meet the demands made on them. At the same time, there are some activities that apparently reflect interests of individuals rather than the needs of the Agency and its "clients".
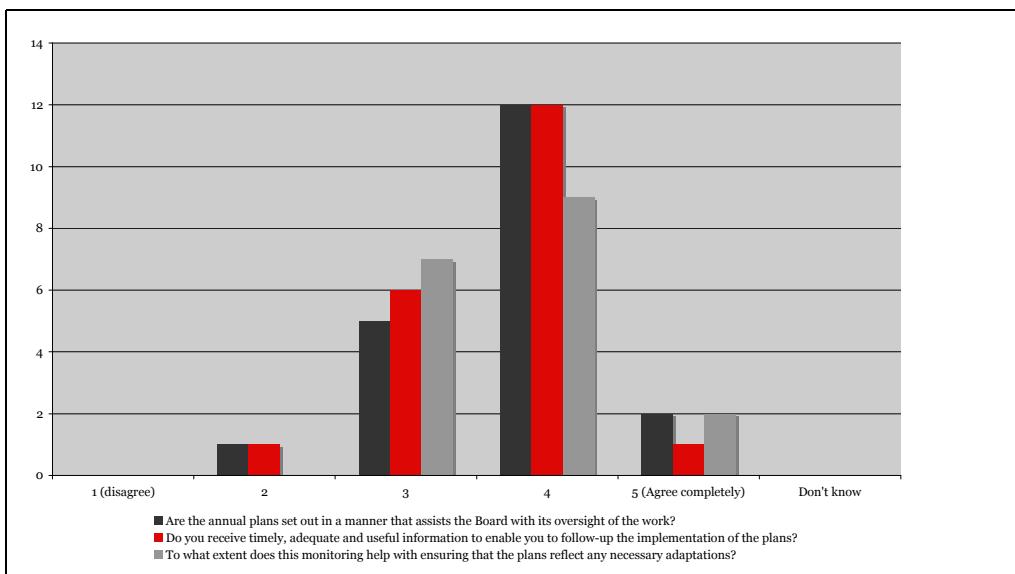
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[26] For which the Agency has received positive comments

Given that the external stakeholders have these different needs, the focus in the plans needs therefore to be driven by the Agency itself, which in turn requires the Agency and its staff to have a clear view of its role.

5.1.1 Internal governance process

Within the internal governance process the annual plans are seen as effective. The Management Board survey shows that there is a high degree of satisfaction with the usefulness of the plans to the Management Board. The Board survey also showed a general level of satisfaction with the level of influence over the allocation of resources, reporting a fairly strong influence and a high level of satisfaction with this level. However, some members did suggest that the extremely detailed planning information provided made them somewhat reticent to comment on individual activities as they were not able to judge the implications of changes.

Figure 29 Satisfaction with annual plans (Management Board)

Are the annual plans set out in a manner that assists the Board with its oversight of the work?
Do you receive timely, adequate and useful information to enable you to follow-up the implementation of the plans?
To what extent does this monitoring help with ensuring that the plans reflect any necessary adaptations?

MB survey

The content and coherence of the plans also scored highly in the Management Board survey. The responses of the National Focal points followed a similar pattern. The Scientific Committee, while still broadly positive had slightly more reservations, expressed as their role being more one of ex-post comment and thus with less direct influence.

One of the main barriers to making more effective use of the Scientific Committee was time. This included the time they have in meetings as well as the time they can devote to the Agency in the intervening periods. The issue of a lack of a clear mechanism for involving the Committee was also mentioned. This issue was also raised by EEA management staff, who felt that there is not a good structure in place for raising questions to the Scientific Committee and also little commitment from the Committee in terms of answering questions when they are brought to the table.

5.1.2 Staff in the management process

The new management process is something that staff are currently adapting to with no major issues. Each person has time planned against projects and tasks, and the internal management system is transparent and open for all to see and use. This includes budgets so staff can see exactly how much money they have per task. Now that this has been successfully implemented, the EEA is able to concentrate on quality and quality assurance. As a consequence there has been a reported significant change in efficiency since the introduction of the new management system.

The internal organisation of the Agency was restructured to fit with the structure of the strategy, and generally this has been well received. However, there have been movements of staff within the Agency and sometimes the consequences of this can be quite serious. This can result in the loss of certain aspects of institutional memory. There are a number of informal relationships across Eurostat, JRC, International organisations, European Commission that are not coordinated at the group level. Since the Commission is also prone to a high level of staff mobility this could indicate an area where there may be scope for action to reduce potential problems or inefficiencies. This also affects the new structure set up to deal with international relations, which cannot (and should not) take on the management of all the relationships across the EEA but is tasked with mapping and understanding all the partnership arrangements.

The overall impression of the staff relationship with the Management Board is mixed. The information flow appears to be good, but the overall understanding of whether they work well at the strategic level is poor. There is an impression by staff interviewed that the meetings are dominated by a few key individuals and the agendas are long. It was suggested that the Management Board need to have more influence but the amount of information they need to deal with means that decisions are diluted or not taken as a collective. The Executive Director is considered to have a strong influence on the Management Board.

The view from the staff interviews is that the Scientific Committee is not well engaged at the operational level. A number of staff mentioned a lack of direct contact with members (although in the past when the Agency was smaller there was more direct contact). There has been a perceived evolution in the role of the Scientific Committee as the Agency has grown, from setting themes to validation and taking a more external view. In some ways this is to be expected with the growing number of topics (with members covering more than one area) and a need for balanced representation across the countries.

However there are clearly individuals who do engage well with the staff and there are also new relationships being created. In the area of climate change in forward-looking studies and in spatial analysis the view is that they are becoming more able and engaged. It is reported to still be weak in the area of biodiversity where committee members tend to be mobilised by the Agency staff. In some publications, the Scientific Committee are very hands on, including with the State of the Environment Report. There is a clear interest from the staff to benefit from more interaction with the Scientific Committee and there may be a number of missed opportunities for them to work together collaboratively. This is known within the Agency and there are also efforts underway to get the Scientific Committee Members more involved in dossiers.

5.1.3 External stakeholder views

It is recognised that the European Commission find the timescale of annual management planning slightly frustrating and not always a good fit with their own internal cycles, but it is considered necessary by the Agency in light of the processes that need to take place to ensure the plan meets the needs of the stakeholders and is fit for purpose. On the other hand, the Agency has been praised by the European Court of Auditors for their consultation procedure. This balance between timing and inclusiveness is difficult and it is unlikely that any solution will please all the stakeholders. The current system has achieved acceptability and an understanding of the constraints by all parties.

In interview with a number of external stakeholders there were some individual activities or products that were frequently cited as perhaps outside the remit of the EEA. This included the Agency press release and contribution the report on "Bioinitiative: A Rationale for a Biologically-Based Public Exposure Standard for Electromagnetic Fields" published by the BioInitiative Working Group (this was not an area in which the EEA has recognised expertise). The report "the Arctic

Environment: European Perspectives – Why Should Europe Care" produced with UNEP in 2004 also gave rise to questions. The initiative was seen by some in DG Environment – particularly senior staff – as the Agency's attempt to play a political role and as an initiative that should have been negotiated with the Member States, given the sensitivity of the issue. The political climate has changed since then, however and the video "our Arctic Future" has won prizes. The question remains however, not one of whether the reports were well produced but whether this type of activity falls within the scope of the Agency, and how decisions were reached.

5.1.4 Internal management and communication

A clear issue affecting efficiency within the Agency is internal communications. Internal communications helps employees to understand the organisation's vision, values, and culture. It may involve staff members in issues that affect their work and also keep them informed of important management decisions that are of relevance to, or affect them. When maintaining open lines of communication between management and staff, effective internal communications can enhance stronger relationships throughout all levels of the organisation and forge a sense of community.

This is borne out across the staff interviews[27]. The current structure of the organisation means that groups tend to have little systematic interaction between them. The increased working on horizontal issues should bring people together, but this is not reflected in the views of the staff overall. The problems in internal communication also affect the ability of the organisation to instil a common identity across the organisation. The nature of the EEA, its priorities and numerous activities and products mean it is difficult for staff to see the wider view of what the Agency is doing as a whole. This in turn affects the coherence of external communication activities of the Agency. The staff satisfaction survey from 2007 also has staff commenting on the need to clearly define the role of the Agency and align this vision with the work processes.

The nature of the EEA, its priorities and numerous activities and products mean it is difficult for staff to see the wider view of what the Agency is doing as a whole.

Excellent internal communications cannot be implemented and left alone. While more and more organisations begin to spend more time identifying special interest groups within their own walls, internal communications methods are becoming increasingly diverse to match the varying needs of each organisations' internal staff and stakeholders. This does not necessarily mean that more time needs to be devoted to internal communications; it just needs to be smarter and well adapted to address the concerns of staff. Although internal communication is an apparent weakness within the EEA there are steps being taken to change this. The recent staff satisfaction survey (2007) did indicate a slight increase in satisfaction with communication channels and also less resistance to change within the Agency. In particular it highlighted that the senior managers are facilitating this change. This satisfaction survey also included comments from staff about a serious need to look at improving the degree of internal cross working (even within programmes). There should be work done to 'encourage crossing inter-organisational boundaries towards common goals'.

The following table taken from the staff satisfaction survey shows a high importance given to networking, intranet announcements, group meetings and emails. Staff meetings are more important for those under the line managers.

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[27] And a topic of discussion in the internal focus group.

technopolis |group|

Figure 30 Staff satisfaction survey – information sources

Which of the following information sources do you find useful to find out what is happening in the Agency?			
	Line manager	Not line manager	Difference
E-mail	3.90	3.80	0.10
Group meetings	3.95	3.96	-0.01
Staff meetings	2.90	3.59	-0.69
Annual work programme and annual report	2.60	3.11	-0.51
Grapevine - word of mouth - rumours	3.35	3.28	0.07
Minutes of meetings	2.65	3.09	-0.44
Website/Internet	3.35	3.94	-0.59
G drive/intranet (documents)	2.70	2.93	-0.23
Board/bureau meetings	3.05	2.87	0.18
Intranet announcements	3.70	4.13	-0.43
The cascade briefings	2.80	3.21	-0.41
Programme meetings	3.60	3.71	-0.11
Networking	4.15	3.74	0.41
Newsletter	2.30	2.92	-0.62

2007 Staff satisfaction survey

If changes are occurring apace in an organisation, the right level and style of communication needs to be found in order to ensure that staff feel part of the process and also buy-in to the change. The EEA is an organisation that has a history of implementing fast changes. It is perhaps this, rather than the lack of communication, which has given staff an apparent 'feeling' that they are not communicated with.

Staff highlighted in interviews that there is a training need relating to networking. Many individuals are networking and there is also a move for the EEA to have all individuals involved in the external communication of the Agency. If there were specific training associated with networking skills it would also help with internal communication in the sense that staff would have training relating to messages about what the Agency is and does.

Another factor affecting identity and buy in is the nature of staff contracts (differences between Temporary Agents, who are seen as long term staff, National Experts who are seconded for a limited period and Contract Agents who have rather different conditions of employment and which is still a relatively new status). This was also highlighted in the staff survey where there was a comment for example to 'clarify the differences (if any) between contract agents and temporary agents - the frustration level is quite high amongst contract agents doing the same job as temporary agents'. There was also a call for a better balance between contract and temporary agents.

5.2 Working methods with the Eionet network and other stakeholders

This section covers the efficiency of the Agency's working methods in relation to the Eionet network, other main stakeholders and also looks at efficiency in practice through the example of the publications process that is central to the work of the Agency.

5.2.1 Eionet network

The Agency consists of three elements – the Agency itself: which has a co-ordinating role and carries out much of the data analysis and reporting; the Eionet network: the collaborative network of the EEA and its member countries, connecting National Focal Points in the EU and accession countries, European Topic Centres, National Reference Centres, and Main Component Elements; and the European Topic Centres which are contracted to the Agency and carry out a range of tasks on specific issues.

These organisations jointly provide the information that is collected. Eionet is both a network of organisations and an electronic network. The networks are described in detail in 2.2.2.2.

Managing this complicated and extensive network could be a difficult exercise. However Eionet is now well established, some members having been involved for more than 10 years. It is therefore extremely well embedded in the work of the Agency, and there appears to be respect on both sides for the contributions of the various partners. The Management Board view of the functioning of the network was very positive. The Focal Points were rather less positive, especially on the level of influence they have on the allocation of resources against priorities, where they felt their influence was low to average (score 2.44 out of 5) although this was broadly adequate (score 3.13 out of 5).

The importance of the network can be judged from the hypothesis that it might be possible (although difficult) for the network to exist and provide the data without the Agency, but the Agency could not exist or add value to the data without a well functioning network. Therefore the fact that the Agency information is well regarded is an indication that the network is functioning relatively well.

However, it is also clear that the network and the Agency together are looking for ways to improve performance and to encourage the provision of timely and complete information. Some network members support the idea of "naming and shaming", while others are opposed. The completeness of data does form part of the key indicators in the Agency's balanced scorecard reporting (Eionet dataflow) and shows a positive trend.

The Focal Points were positive about the support from the Agency. Areas where they would welcome further support were scientific and technical issues to do with data (55.6%) and administrative and procedural support (44.4%). Most NFPs also reported a close working relationship with their country representatives on the Management Board.

5.2.2 Cooperation and the Group of Four

The evaluation asked questions about the Group of Four to all stakeholders interviewed in the European Commission, the Agency and other organisations. In terms of cooperation, four leading figures directly involved within the Group of Four (Eurostat, JRC and DG Environment), as well as staff involved with the Group of Four internally, gave rich data on how cooperation is working in practice.

At the strategic level, there is a growing emphasis on the cooperation of the EEA with the Group of Four. At the operational level, the links across the Group of Four are numerous and have been in place sometimes longer than the official Group of Four. They are not necessarily transparent across the Agency and there does not appear to be a good overview of the link between the strategic and operational level engagement.

In the area of climate change, the links across the Group of Four are well developed. The relationship with the JRC is diffuse due to the structure of the JRC. Those involved in climate change internally work with IES, the IPTS and the Institute of Energy. The evidence is that these relationships work very well. The JRC is a major source of emissions data on carbon sinks and IES on the impact of climate change on agriculture. The IPTS contributes actively to the SOER and provides energy scenarios. In relation to Eurostat, the climate change group work together with those involved in the energy statistics and also on sustainable development as Eurostat support the EU sustainable development strategy.

In the area of spatial analysis and scenarios, the EEA plays a coordinating role over its work with the JRC and Eurostat. It is important for spatial analysis as it needs shared information, and the relationship with the Group of Four should aid the rapid access to data sets and research. There are some clear targets over the move for INSPIRE. However there is a need to make sure that the Group of Four has a clear vision and

Eionet is now well established, some members having been involved for more than 10 years, and is therefore extremely well embedded in the work of the Agency. There appears to be respect on both sides for the contributions of the various partners.

remains operational. The IT group within the EEA has been working on facilitating closer models for working between the JRC and Eurostat, in particular in relation to spatial analysis in helping them to find common sets of rules.

In biodiversity there are very strong links with the European Commission due to the technical work being done with the Habitat and Birds Directive. This work is also being done with the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity (ETC/BD). This is a very close relationship and sometimes difficult as the boundaries blur between the three entities. Discussions were concluded with the Commission on the transfer of the Natura 2000 database to EEA by early 2009 and there will be a significant budget increase for this work with new staff put in place.

5.2.3 Cooperation and the European Parliament

At the strategic level the last few years have seen an increase in cooperation with the European Parliament and in 2007 the MEP Frederique Ries was nominated as the European Parliament focal point for the Agency. The Executive Director reports regularly to the European Parliament. In the past the EEA has produced various specific reports for the European Parliament. The Parliament nominees are also active in the Management Board of the Agency.

At the operational level within the EEA the relationship with the European Parliament is not so well developed. The most mature relationship appears to be with climate change. It was mentioned internally that there is one way traffic from the EEA to the European Parliament but that they receive little in return, and it would be helpful to have more established open channels of communication in place.

According to the interviews with the European Parliament, there is a need for the EEA to provide more briefings and general information. From the perspective of the Agency staff, the Parliament need to work in a more proactive way in asking for information or work from the European Environment Agency.

During the evaluation it proved extremely difficult to collect input from the Parliament, although a large number of members were contacted both directly and through a questionnaire. It appears from the responses collected and the reasons for opting out of the interviews that the Parliament did not see the Agency (as opposed to the data produced) as something high on their agenda as the current time. With regard to the information provided, this was reported as meeting their needs and their policy agenda. Areas suggested for future work included climate change and new information systems. The Parliament was also a user of the printed publications, with views being split on whether or not a move to more electronic versions would be appropriate.

The major comment was that the Agency needed to focus its activities and outputs more, since they could not expect to receive additional resources. It was, however, acknowledged that they were reliant on the member countries as data providers and even suggested that some powers to require the submission of data might be helpful.

5.2.4 Cooperation and the wider stakeholder groups

A number of the areas covered by the EEA have wide stakeholder groups that are involved directly in the data sets and outputs of the work. This includes for example, European level environmental NGOs and other international and regional organisations.

In particular in the area of climate change there are large numbers of stakeholders involved. The EEA staff dealing with climate change suggested there be better networking among the networks (including themselves). There are, for example, some main climate change topics that the EEA do not deal with but need to know about.

The last few years have seen an increase in cooperation with the European Parliament

The nature of the relationships can sometimes be complicated by the nature of the political structures. The links with Kyoto can be difficult as it is not the Commission that leads on Kyoto but the Presidency[28]. The EEA faces an uphill struggle to keep in touch with all major stakeholders, projects and initiatives across the member countries. It remains important to highlight where the links need to be made/strengthened.   Other stakeholders to mention include:

- Industry, which is looking more and more at emissions data for example. The Agency reports an increase in direct questions from industry in relation to this topic. As the existing products the EEA have are levelled at the generalist, there may be a further need in the future for more specific products in this area.

- NGOs: the Agency also receives a lot of questions on climate change and associated topics from NGOs and in the area of climate change this will only increase.

- The general public: there is also a huge increase in interest from the citizen across all environmental topics. Although the EEA has yet to deal with a large increase in direct questions from the general public, this is being seen nationally. Decisions need to be made as to when and where the Agency can respond efficiently to the general public and with what messages.

- The links between research and EEA activities in specific areas could be strengthened although this is difficult as there are limited resources and too many research programmes to keep up with. Nevertheless awareness and links at European level might be improved by co-ordination with DG Research, for example. This is not to propose that the EEA carry out research itself but that its links into EU funded research on environmental issues could be strengthened and facilitated.

The EEA has been working with engaging new stakeholders in the area of spatial analysis through "strategic conversations". According to interviews this has been a positive process.

Strategic conversations – engagement with new stakeholders

Spatial analysis is a newer area of work for the Agency (after the 2004 restructuring) and because of this, they have been building new links with stakeholders over the last two years. This has been done in part through 'strategic conversations'. The stakeholder groups have been broad, reflecting the horizontal nature of spatial analysis, including agriculture, forests, business, government and NGOs. Due to a need to create better links the unit have been presenting at conferences and publishing widely in order to develop an external profile in the area.

5.2.5 The production process

The EEA produces a large number of publications and it is one of their main areas of activity in terms of output. The size of the publications varies from short summaries (for example for the European Parliament), to the State of the Environment Reports. Production times vary from months to years.

The targets for these publications are wide ranging and include policy makers, research scientists through to the general public in some instances. In general it can be said to be the environmental policy community, but with a wide scope.

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[28] The EU's current Troika (France, Czech Republic and Sweden) are hoping to seal an agreement on the Commission's climate change package. The involvement of the Troika increases the number of stakeholders.

It is difficult to make generalised statements about the production of these publications as the processes happen throughout the organisation and involve most staff. There are also an increasing number of joint publications as well as publications which are edited and brought together by external contractors.

Overall the EEA, as a seasoned producer of publications, has a management system in place that supports the process. There are however issues around some of the larger processes such as the State of the Environment Report. Due to its size and resource intensity, it is difficult for the Agency to find staff who will undertake to lead the process more than once. As a consequence, there is little opportunity to learn from the last attempt and to make adjustments to the smooth production of this publication. The actual process can involve over 300-400 people. The general process is reported to be highly democratic and well regarded by the EEA governance network (mainly the NFPs). Opportunities should be sought to streamline this and to learn from previous experience. The nature and format of the SOER report could also be reassessed in the light of new types of data and new tools available – particularly the link between electronic and paper versions. This is not in any way implying that there should be no paper version – it was clear that the printed version has a very specific value for certain audiences including the press and the Parliament, but the nature of it could be revisited. The Agency and the focal points have already consulted widely and evaluated the response to the report and the process of its production, and the resulting learning should be built on.

In the case of external contractors, the EEA has formal and tried and tested processes in place regarding the letting of contracts and their management. However, when external contractors are involved there are often inevitable delays in the production process due to the checks in place. In the case of the Climate Change: Cost of Inaction, Cost of Adaptation report this increased the production time from 4 months to 9 months.

Some of the joint reports involve close working relationships between the producers. For example in the case of the Greenhouse Gas Emissions, a very good working relationship between the EEA and DG Environment was reported on both sides.

The case studies and previous surveys and polls point to the issue of targeting of publications for specific user groups. Another issue, which comes up, is language. It is particularly important if the target audience is at the level of the national and regional administrations (and even more so for the general public).

5.3 Monitoring and feedback

The section looks at what feedback mechanisms are in place to ensure that management and planning is kept current. It covers how the Agency monitors and the efficiency of these systems.

In looking at the monitoring and feedback mechanisms of the Agency we have to divide these into three types:

- Monitoring internal management processes to ensure that work is being produced

- Monitoring use of the information produced (customer satisfaction)

- Monitoring the policy agenda to be able to respond to emerging needs.

5.3.1 Internal performance measurement

The Agency's management system enables detailed follow-up of work from the project level up to the overall Agency level, and it appears that now that this system is fully in place it does enable more efficient management of resources and provide clarity for staff on the level of resources planned and used for activities. It also enables decisions to be taken on the reallocation of resources when this is required to respond to specific issues, needs or problems.

In addition to this monitoring, the human resources of the Agency and their skills are also kept under review (see section 0 below). There is also an annual staff satisfaction survey carried out.

Performance of the network is also kept under review, and there are close feedback links with, for example, the National Focal Points. In addition, the nature of the relationships with many of the network members is such that there is a good flow of informal information, as well as formal monitoring of information flows.

Information from all these sources is taken into account in managing the work of the Agency and ensuring corrective action is taken where appropriate, bearing in mind that in some instances it is not within the control of the Agency and therefore changes are in the form of mitigation of effects of, for example, non-delivery or late delivery of data.

5.3.2 Customer satisfaction

The Agency's main dissemination tool is via its website, although some major reports are also produced on paper, and distributed through the Office for Official Publications or the partner authors.

The website is monitored closely for traffic, and tools are in place for a range of analyses ranging from the technical to pathways through the site. A constraint here is shortage of time to analyse the data regularly, rather than a lack of data. This could be eased by the identification of a small number of key statistics that could be regularly monitored, but which go slightly beyond the measures currently reported.

Surveys of web users are carried out periodically and have shown a fairly high level of overall satisfaction – a further survey was carried out, as part of this evaluation, and the Agency will use this data in their longitudinal follow up of web users.

In addition the Agency monitors and reports on the queries received – either specific requests for information or requests for publications. The final check of customer satisfaction comes through the regular meetings of the Management Board, who have a clear role here as representatives of the key users and providers of the Agency's products.

5.3.3 Balanced scorecard

The Agency uses the balanced scorecard[29] approach to monitor and review its operations. The balanced scorecard is a strategic planning and management system used to align business activities to the vision and strategy of the organization, improve internal and external communications, and monitor organisational performance against strategic goals. It is meant to be a management system (not only a measurement system) that enables organizations to clarify their vision and strategy and translate them into action, providing feedback on both the internal business processes and external outcomes in order to continuously improve strategic performance and results. While originally used in the private sector, it is increasingly being applied in public sector organisations since it gives the opportunity to link performance monitoring to the overall strategy – mainly through the use of strategy maps linked to the identification of a suite of performance measures.

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[29] The approach was originated by Drs. Robert Kaplan (Harvard Business School) and David Norton as a performance measurement framework that added strategic non-financial performance measures to traditional financial metrics to give managers and executives a more 'balanced' view of organizational performance.

Figure 31 EEA Balanced Scorecard
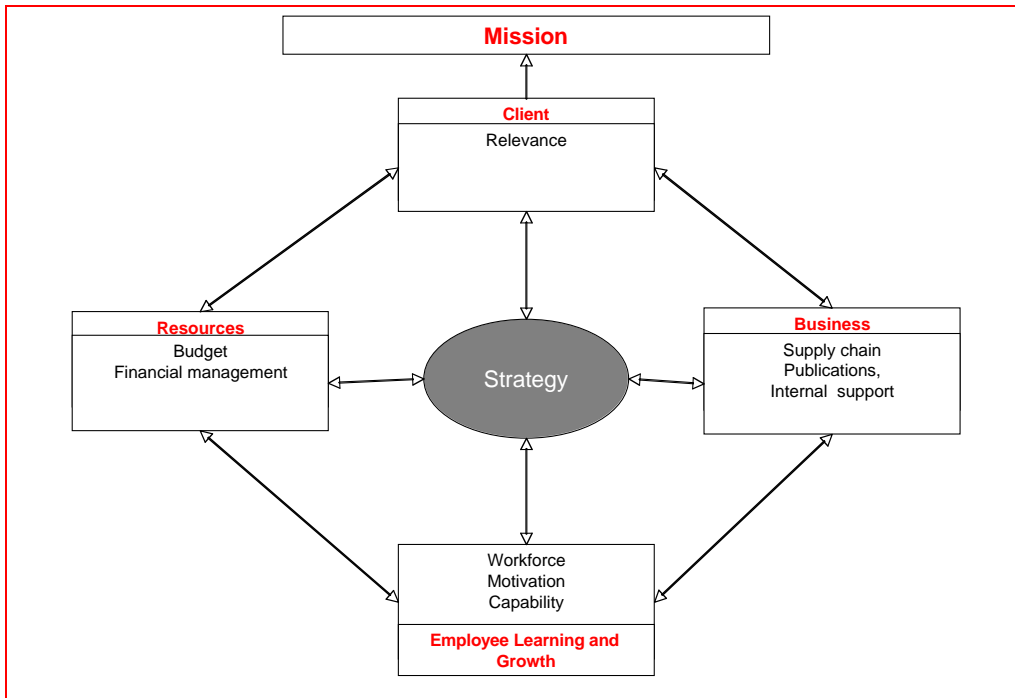
EEA Annual Reports

This scorecard differs slightly from the classic scorecard as devised by Kaplan and Norton, even as normally adjusted for public sector organisations, but the broad underlying concept of the four perspectives is still present. However, what is more significant is the actual indicators used to measure these four perspectives. These are set out in Figure 32 below. The table also includes the key questions suggested in the original K&N balanced scorecard, which highlights the limitations of some of the indicators used by the EEA.

Figure 32 EEA Key performance indicators

Perspective	Key questions	EEA Key Performance Indicators
Resources	*How do we add value for customers while controlling costs?*	**Budget** **Implementation** (% committed of total appropriation) **Execution** (% of total committed appropriation by year end **Time budget/execution** (% of registered time against the time budgeted) **Sound Financial Management** Transfers (% transferred of total appropriation)
Business	*To satisfy customers while meeting budgetary constraints, at what business processes must we excel?*	**Supply chain** **Eionet dataflow** (% of dataflows updated 37 countries) **Dataset/Indicator use** (new maps and graphs produced and uploaded) **Publications** **Publications** throughput (inc no published vs no planned) Internal support **Throughput time of tender**s (% of tender procedures finished by year end) **Throughput time of payments** (% of

Perspective	Key questions	EEA Key Performance Indicators
		payments processed before last due date)
Client	*Who do we define as our customer? How do we create value for our customers?*	**Relevance** **No and source of visitors on EEA website** **Subscriptions to EEA reports notification service** (new, existing, lost) **Media monitoring** (no of products by type) **Dataset/indicator use** (% increase in datasets downloaded by external users)
Learning and growth	*How do we enable ourselves to grow and change, meeting on-going legislating and citizen demands?*	**Workforce** **Turnover rate** (stability index) **Diversity** (country representation) **Diversity** (gender) **Capability** **Competency development** (days registered as development of competency) **Career development** (%of career development plans finalised for next year) **Appraisals** (%of appraisals carried out for current year) **Motivation** **Absence** (average absence days per year) **Job satisfaction** (survey job satisfaction index)

Source: EEA Annual Reports

The Agency reports its scorecard metrics regularly and this information also forms part of its annual report.

The purpose of balanced scorecard performance measures is to:

- Provide a way to see if the strategy is working

- Focus employees' attention on what matters most to success

- Allow measurement of accomplishments, not just of the work that is performed

- Provide a common language for communication

In addition they should be explicitly defined in terms of owner, unit of measure, collection frequency, data quality, expected value (targets), and thresholds, be valid, to ensure measurement of the right things and verifiable, to ensure data collection accuracy.

The resource perspective indicators, while limited do respond to indicators seen by others as important (in particular the Court of Auditors). What is lacking in this area is any steps towards questions of efficiency and value for money – it tracks whether they absorb resources but not what value is added.

Similarly the business perspective looks at a very high level but not at some of the key issues of interest to the client groups – length of time taken to produce data and publications, for example since the issue of timeliness is an important one for data users. Of course both the users and the EEA do need to acknowledge that this is not the responsibility of the EEA alone but of the EEA and its wider network.

The learning and growth perspective again has several indicators that respond to needs of external supervision bodies (diversity/country representation has been singled out for criticism in the past and the Agency is able to show this issue is being addressed, for example). However there is no real consideration of the results of the exercise in the report itself.

The main area of weakness is in the client perspective where it does not address the issues of "who is the customer?" and "how is value added for them". This in turn reflects the underlying problem of the Agency of difficulty in defining its focus. The data presented in the scorecard is not broken down in a way that helps address the issue (total web visitors but not who they are, for example although this information does exist). Other metrics that might be helpful would include citations of EEA documents in policy documents and academic publications, and the presentations given by members of staff.

Now that the system has been successfully implemented it should continue to be kept under review to assess where the selection of indicators could be improved, and particularly how it could be better linked to the strategy. At present the scorecard metrics are not explicitly linked to objectives. The presentation in the report is also an area to be addressed – the 2007 report presentation is not helpful in monitoring or understanding progress.

That being said, the fact that this form of reporting on key indicators has been introduced and implemented in a formal way is an achievement for the Agency that should not be undervalued. In addition the main purpose of the scorecard is for internal management purposes, which are more important than the production of an annual snapshot. It does seem, however that the Agency has not yet drawn full benefit from the exercise.

5.4 Human resources

The status and distribution of staff varies across the Community Agencies – some have a high level of permanent staff (for example the OHIM in Alicante) while others have mainly Temporary Agents. The EEA has mainly Temporary Agents. It is also possible for Officials of the Commission to be seconded to an Agency although this is not a popular option among Commission staff as the Staff Regulation means that there are negative implications for promotions and career prospects on return to the Commission. Major changes in the staff regulations of the Institutions were introduced in 2004/5 that have also been reflected in changes in the Agency.

There are three types of posts within the EEA

- Officials/Temporary Agents in long term employment
- Temporary agents on short term employment (The Executive Director)
- Contract agents on short-term employment.

To this should be added National Experts seconded to the Agency for a period of three years. Overall, there are currently 146 staff at the Agency (June 2008).

Recent changes in the staffing policy have increased the length of contract of the long-term Temporary Agents to 4 years renewable for another period and then indefinitely.

The internal perspective from staff raised some issues in relation to employment. It was thought that the EEA sometimes loses good people because of the types of contracts on which they are employed. The technical staff, in particular, rely on a high number of seconded national experts. A more positive perspective is that some staff considered even if they do go back to their original institutions they come away with new knowledge on the policy environment and also the links to the EEA. Related to this however is the issue of training of those non-permanent staff. Some staff stressed that there is a moral obligation to train non-permanent staff along side the temporary agents. Even if they leave after a year or two, they will still be of benefit to the EEA through the wider network. Another issue raised by staff related to the appropriateness of employing individuals who wished to remain in science. There is perhaps an issue in the external perspective of what the Agency does which means that, sometimes, true scientists are employed and are an uncomfortable fit with the Agency.

There was also a suggestion for staff exchanges, potentially between the Group of Four or, at least, some mobility[30]. Where this has happened in the past between the JRC and EEA it has given rise to positive feedback.

The Agency has a target (which is in general met) of staff spending at least 10 days per year on the development of competences. Changing demands on the Agency not only requires that staff remain technically up to date but also that they acquire some new skills – the topic of networking skills has already been mentioned, for example.

There is currently a proposal before the budgetary authorities for an increase in staffing numbers (10) in 2009 across

- Ecosystem assessment (2)

- Sustainable consumption and production (2)

- SEIS (1)

- Climate change adaptation (2)

- Administration (1)

5.5 Allocation of resources

The breadth of the subject of environmental information, the level of interest in the topic and the increasing complexity and availability of environmental information means that the Agency could in theory absorb huge levels of resources – both staff and financial. In the real world, however, the resources are constrained and likely to remain so which means that the Agency has to allocate these across its activities with prudence when drawing up and implementing its plans.

There is evidence, for example, suggesting that the EEA desires involvement in research and surveys; in fact, it has tried, and succeeded, in researching/analysing data with the work done by the Topic Centre. However, extension of work into the area of modelling was contested by the JRC as being outside the remit of the Agency. In general, the Agency has not the resources for this type of work and the view is that it should focus on what it does best.

The agency has also sought to expand its role by looking at world data. This push to go more global was partly because of the global nature of environmental issues. For instance, satellite data are global. If the perspective/approach were strictly European it would be very narrow and possibly less significant less effective. Where this is achieved through working with other international bodies the approach has been well received but there are also views that this needs to be approached with caution given the remit and resources of the Agency.

The constraints fall into five main categories:

- Financial

- Human

- Skills

- Data

- Technology

Financial resources are of course limited, and the Budgetary Authorities have made it clear that Agencies in general cannot expect to receive major increases in budgets over

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[30] The EEA will take part in the Inter Agency Job Market in accordance with the agreement between agencies foreseen to be signed at the beginning of 2008.

the next few years both for reasons of general economic prudence and because of the impact of increases in Agency budgets on the activities of the Commission itself. A number of other Agencies are recently established and will therefore have first call on resources, both financial and staffing. (Agency funding has been increasing overall by 22% over the past 5 years, for example, whereas the funding of the EEA has basically remained static.

Part of the issue with financial constraints is also that many new information requests are often not accompanied by budgetary resources. The Agency addresses financial constraints through its planning and management system, and by joint working with other bodies. It also secures additional resources from Community and external funds for some of the additional activities – in 2006 this represented 11% of the Agency's funding.

Human resources are also limited – the Agency is constrained by its establishment plan, which has to be approved by the Parliament. At present the Parliament is looking for an overall reduction in staff in the Commission and is keen that the Agencies not be seen as a way of outsourcing work to circumvent this, resulting in a downward pressure also on the Agencies. The EEA has some flexibility through the use of seconded National Experts and the use of Contract Agents but this is limited – secondees are helpful and in some areas indispensable, but the temporary nature of their involvement also has potential drawbacks, and Contract Agents by definition are generally recruited as administrative and support staff, there being a limitation on the highest possible grades at which they may be recruited. Nevertheless the Agency has some experts working on core tasks who are contract agents.

As work moves into new areas, and with new demands arising through initiatives such as SEIS, or moves to new forms of dissemination the Agency needs to acquire new skills. This is done through training, through participation in conferences and workshops, through recruitment or secondment of people with specific skills and through joint working with other bodies. However, the Agency having reached a mature stage has a fairly low rate of staff turnover, so the potential for skill acquisition through recruitment is limited. The Agency also has access to specific skills through the Topic Centres, where is it possible to have more flexible access to specific skills at specific times of need. A further option is to work with external experts through standard contracting procedures.

In the past the Agency was criticised by the European Court of Auditors for the amount of money spent on consultants. Since then there has been an increase in staffing numbers and as a result increased competence internally. The resulting economies of scale have made it possible to internalise technical experts in some areas (where long term work is needed), which is a more effective approach. In addition the rates paid to consultants, particularly within the Topic Centre contracts have been substantially reduced.

They do, however, still need skilled consultants for specific work and expertise. They now have experience of a large number of high quality consultants who are able to get the work done and respect the mission of the EEA, and have also improved their procurement procedures to comply with the Public Procurement and Financial Regulation requirements.

Data limitations are an issue, obviously, since in the majority of cases the Agency is constrained by the data providers. The Agency does not have an compulsory powers in this respect and therefore is reliant on goodwill and the strength of its networking to ensure the availability and quality of data.

The Agency has invested significantly in technology, and this remains a major area of expenditure. New developments both in technological potential and in approaches to data provision and dissemination mean that new needs are likely to arise in this area for the foreseeable future. Initially this investment included a high level of use of external contractors, but much of this has been brought in-house. This has the

advantage of continuity and building of institutional knowledge, but there is a potential trade-off against possible benefits of outsourcing given the rate at which equipment and skills become outdated and the risks of supplier "lock-in".

Allocation of tasks between the Agency, the Network and the Topic Centres is done on the basis of the relative skills of each. The Agency works on the standing assumption that the effectiveness of the Topic Centres has been proven – a view which was substantiated by our interviews with the Commission who were very positive about the Topic Centres and also cited areas where there has been an improvement. If the issues are highly technical or otherwise specific then external resources are mobilised either through framework agreements or specific tender exercises.

Allocation of resources across the work programme is part of the annual planning process. It has not been possible to examine this over the period of the strategy as the basis for the reporting has changed over time. The current basis is, however, more informative than in the earlier reports.

It can be seen that the costs of the Agency are allocated to three main headings – staffing, operational expenditure and overheads/administration.

A breakdown of the operating expenses shows that the largest element is the funding for the European Topic Centres, with a significant proportion also being allocated to IT and communications costs.
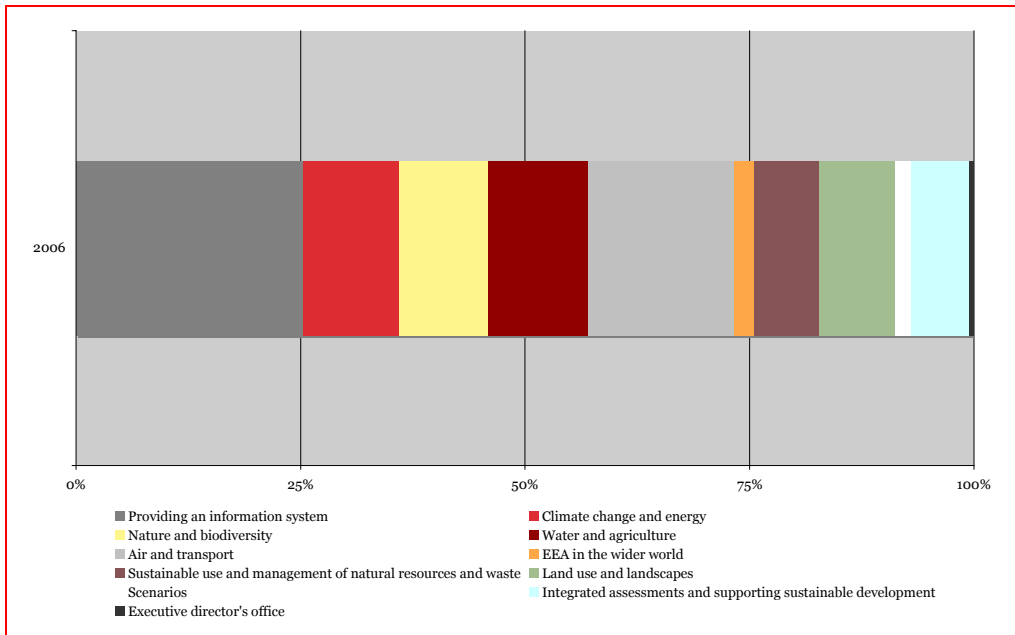
Figure 33 Allocation of operating expenses
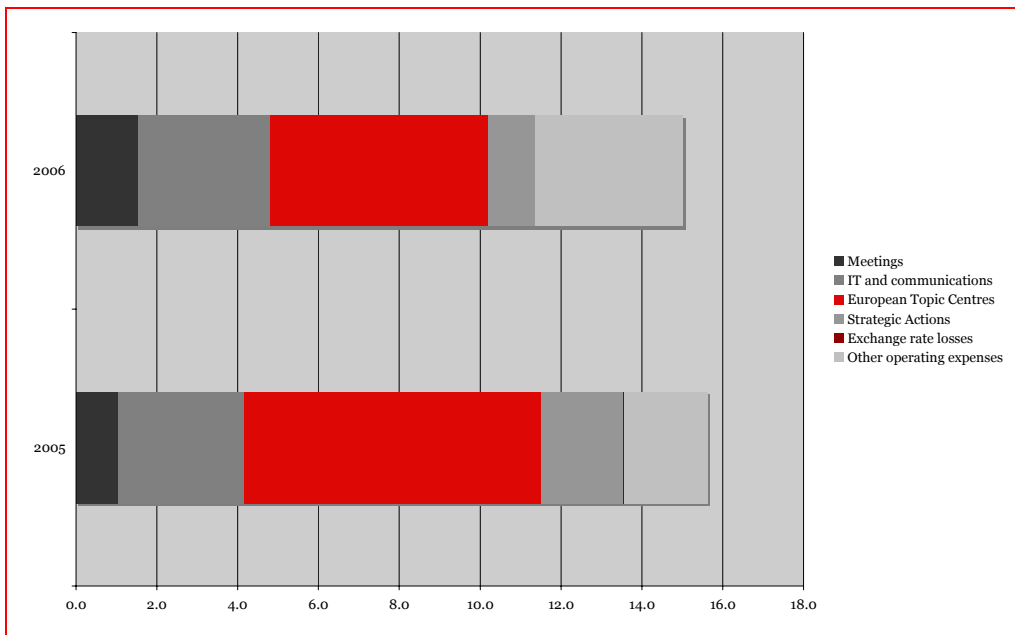
EEA data

In order to look at the allocation across the various priorities we have also examined the allocation of resources broken down by the major areas of activity.

Figure 34 Allocation of expenditure across priorities[31]

Legend:
- Providing an information system
- Climate change and energy
- Nature and biodiversity
- Water and agriculture
- Air and transport
- EEA in the wider world
- Sustainable use and management of natural resources and waste
- Land use and landscapes
- Scenarios
- Integrated assessments and supporting sustainable development
- Executive director's office

EEA data

Of course the allocation of funds gives only a partial picture, since staff resources are also an important element of the resource allocation. A similar analysis of staff (FTE) resources across the areas of work (not including administration) gives a slightly different but complementary picture.

Figure 35 Allocation of staff across priorities

Legend:
- Providing an information system
- Climate change and energy
- Nature and biodiversity
- Water and agriculture
- Air and transport
- EEA in the wider world
- Sustainable use and management of natural resources and waste
- Land use and landscapes
- Scenarios
- Integrated assessments and supporting sustainable development
- Executive director's office
- Administration
- Corporate affairs and communication

EEA data

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[31] Including Topic Centre budgets broken down by priority

In order to provide an overall picture we have taken the percentage distribution of funds and effort above and combined them to give an approximate overall distribution of resources[32].

Figure 36 Overall allocation of resources

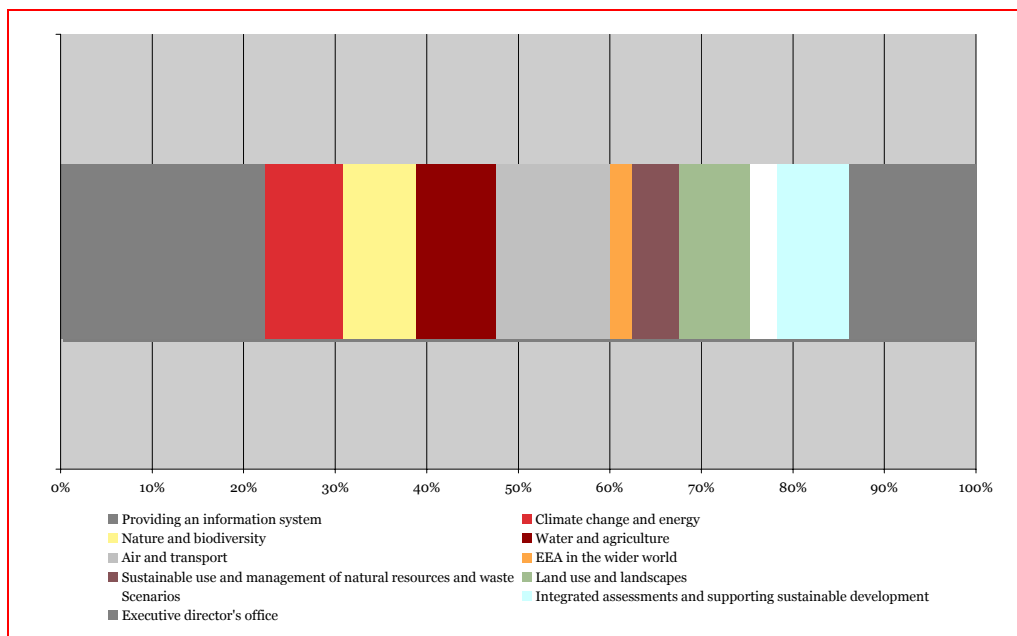EEA data

While it might be tempting to assume that this reflects the relative importance of the various issues within the strategy, this should be approached with caution, as there is no yardstick for assessing the relative costs associated with the different areas of activity. An activity might, for example be a very high priority but consume relatively few resources because of previous investment, ease of access to data or other factors.

What can be said is that the information infrastructure is the main consumer of resources both in operations (providing an information infrastructure) and overheads (IT infrastructures and communication costs).

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[32] This figure takes the proportion of budget and the proportion of human resources and averages them by category. This enables a view of the overall effort regardless of whether is internal or external. This does not include administration costs due to the way the budgets are set out –it was not possible to reach a combined figure.

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Figure 37 Allocation of overheads

Expenditure 2006

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

■ Communication ■ IT Infrastructure ■ Meetings   Translations
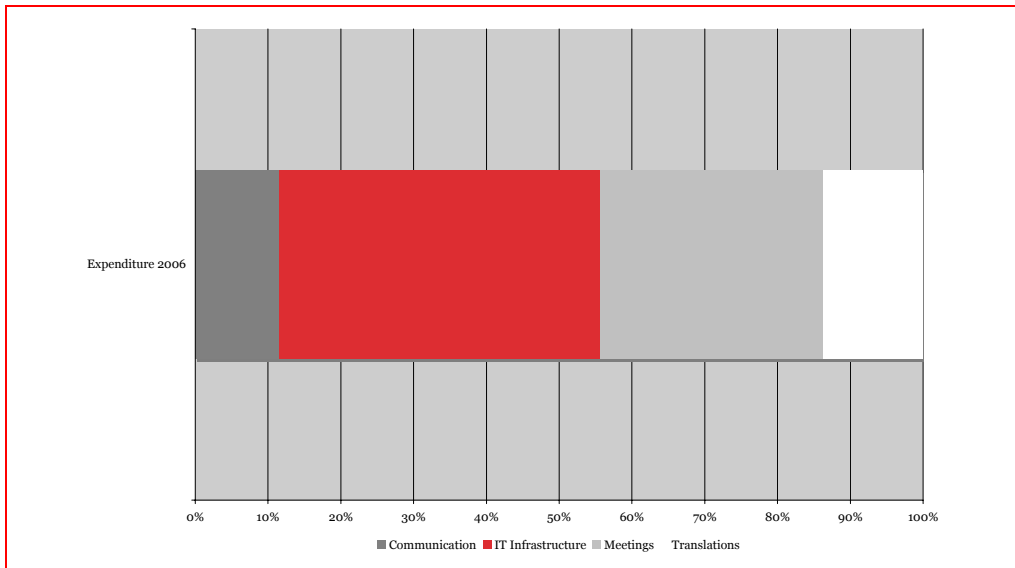
EEA data

5.6 Costs of achieving the results and impacts of the Agency

The two key questions to be addressed here are whether the available resources been used to best effect, and whether the products/services have been produced in the most efficient way possible.

Whether the resources have been used to best effect is best judged from the stakeholder feedback. We have not attempted to examine every product of the Agency, since the range is impressive. We have, however examined a range through a set of case studies, and consulted widely on the overall range of offerings.

Overall there is widespread satisfaction with the work of the Agency, which is discussed in more detail in the following section. The response here is therefore positive.

Whether the results have been achieved efficiently is more difficult to assess. It could be argued that the processes involved are inherently inefficient – this is a trade-off that is inevitable given the framework within which the Agency has to work. The Agency has, however, taken steps to ensure that within this constraint the work is undertaken as efficiently as possible. The new management system is evidence of the commitment to this. There are some areas where the situation could be improved, particularly in terms of maintaining institutional knowledge – not least in the production of the State of the Environment Report – but overall the Agency demonstrates a reasonable level of efficiency and a commitment to maintaining improvement in this respect.

A second yardstick would be whether the results could be achieved more efficiently or at lower cost through some other mechanism. This is unlikely. A number of scenarios could be envisaged:

• EEA activities are carried out inside the Commission, where the activities continue much as present but the Agency is absorbed into the Commission (presumably DG Environment)

• EEA activities are contracted out, where the activities continue but are contracted out to private or public sector bodies who can provide appropriate expertise in the form of a number of contracts resulting from procurement procedures. The co-ordination of these contracts would fall to the Commission, either directly or through the management of a co-ordination contract also externally procured.

- EEA replaced with an executive (administrative) Agency. Since the EEA was founded the possibility has been created for the Commission to set up so called Executive Agencies whose purpose is to manage programmes on behalf of the Commission. These agencies deal only with the administrative elements of Programme management and have no involvement in policy or policy analysis.

- Work of the EEA is discontinued. This has not been considered in any depth since the need for the activities of the Agency is not in question.

Each of these scenarios has implications for both the financial cost of the operations and the way in which it operates and its relationship with its users and information providers.

These tangible and intangible costs and benefits are summarised below. Changes in financial costs have not been calculated in detail, however the broad pattern is known due to the different regimes in the various types of organisation, in particular those related to staff costs, which are the main element of the overall costs involved.

Figure 38 Alternatives to the EEA

Option	Comment[33]
EEA activities carried out inside the Commission	The only immediate saving in costs by internalising the work within the Commission (apart from the limited cost of living allowance of staff for being located in Copenhagen) would be a potential reduction in meeting and mission costs[34]. Work being carried out within the Commission might not meet the needs/priorities of the other stakeholders, and would in particular lack the element of "independence" or "neutrality". The separate existence of the EEA also enables the co-ordination of activities across different parts of the Commission in a way that would have a different dynamic were it focused in one particular DG. The relationship with the member countries and the operation of the network would be very different in this scenario. Absorption within the Commission might mean that the focus on the area became diluted within the other activities of the DG. The important distinction between independent data and policy that contributes to the recognition of the Agency would be lost. Since no posts are available within the Commission, presumably other activities would have to be discontinued. Commission staff recruitment procedures are not designed to provide the type of specialist skills required for this type of work. In addition the staff regulations are slightly different for contract agents in the Commission who have a more limited contract regime. Finally, with the exception of Commission staff seconded to the Agency, the staff would have no guarantee or rights to employment in the Commission, but would have to pass through recruitment procedures in the normal way. Even assuming staff were willing to relocate to Brussels, the potential for disruption and loss of knowledge would be huge.
Individual activities contracted out	The cost of managing the range of activities is likely to be extremely high if fragmented in this way. Tasks involving an integrated

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[33] These comments are made on the basis of the similar, but more detailed analyses carried out by the contractor for the Commission on the potential establishment of several Executive Agencies, which show a clear difference in both financial and opportunity costs between the alternative scenarios and the situation of the Agency.

[34] And potentially in CO_2 emissions

Option	Comment[33]
	approach would become extremely difficult. Procurement processes are costly and cumbersome and could jeopardise the timeliness of the information provision. The relationship between private contractors and the information providers might be difficult to manage, leading to potential difficulties. The cooperative networking relationship built up by the Agency in Eionet would be lost and contractors would have no or limited standing with the member countries.
EEA replaced by administrative or Executive Agency	The Commission has at its disposal a new form of Agency – the Executive Agency, designed to provide administrative support to Commission programmes. Executive Agencies thus enable administrative tasks to be outsourced to a body with a European public service mission. Executive Agencies use contract agents for the majority of their staffing – which leads to cost savings. The small number of Agencies currently existing has also demonstrated a high level of efficiency. The work of the EEA is not purely administrative in nature. Indeed the majority of the value added comes from specific technical expertise that it would not be possible for an EA to access. In addition, the EA would find it difficult to maintain the relationship with the member countries – the current EAs have limited relationships with national bodies, these being assured by the Commission, which would have a negative impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of the network. The issues about transfer of staff to the Commission would apply equally here, although the regime for contract agents is longer-term. However the number of higher-grade posts in an Executive Agency is quite limited.
EEA Activities discontinued	Judging from the responses of the stakeholders this would be an unthinkable situation and could not be entertained.

None of the envisaged solutions – even were they feasible – seem likely to produce any increases in efficiency or savings in costs[35]. We consider the Agency is therefore the most efficient way to deliver the products and services required by the stakeholders.

5.7 Conclusions

From a comparison of the current situation to the findings of the previous evaluations, it is clear that major initiatives have been taken within the Agency to improve its overall management, addressing all stages of the process from planning to implementation and reporting.

The Agency has been able to meet increasing demands for information without a similar scale of increases in resources, also pointing to efficiency gains within the organisation.

The Agency is the most efficient way to deliver the products and services required by the stakeholders, when compared to the alternative possible structures.

Given that external stakeholders have different needs, the focus of the plans needs to be driven by the Agency itself. This, in turn, requires the Agency and its staff to have a clear view of its role.

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[35] This assertion is based on having carried out detailed analyses for the Commission on the potential for setting up or the continuation of half a dozen Executive Agencies compared to other external or internal solutions including outsourcing to the private market.

The Management Board is content with the information with which it is provided for management purposes, although members would apparently like to have more strategic information in the annual planning process to enable more involvement in the prioritisation of work.

The staff have no clear understanding of the exact nature of the strategic decision making process and whether this is done effectively by the Management Board.

There is a weakness in internal communication in the agency and its approach to maintaining institutional learning – the staff report a poor institutional memory and a lack of networking skills.

The recent changes made in the organisational structure also produced a response from some staff that a period of stability would now be welcomed so that they could take most advantage of the changes.

The work of the Scientific Committee is viewed positively. There is potential that it could have a significant impact on the quality of work produced by the Agency. The staff already value the existing input from a number of members of the Scientific Committee. The Scientific Committee wants to be more involved, the staff want the Scientific Committee to be involved but there is a major constraint in terms of time.

The relationship with the European Parliament is somewhat different. The Parliament representatives are active in the Management Board. However, their role as information users is more passive, and the Agency needs to predict and service their information needs. It is in the nature of the Parliament that they will only give active feedback when they are unhappy with something or when there is an urgent need for something. It is an area where the EEA can be proactive in futures scanning and being aware of emerging issues.

The overall production process is well embedded in the Agency's management processes. There are some specific issues however, due to the wide variety of publications in size, topic, target user groups etc - and it is not always clear how decisions are made for targeting the publication to the right type of audience.

The Agency has a relatively refined monitoring and feedback system and uses a balanced scorecard approach to the reporting of key performance indicators. There is a weakness in the client perspective of the framework where it does not address the issues of 'who is the customer' and 'how is it adding value for them?' The principal framework has now become well established, and the Agency could now look at some more sophisticated indicators.

The Agency has some issues to address in the area of human resources. The two most important issues are in training, especially for non-permanent staff where there is an apparent difference between the policy and the reality. There is a need for a positive structured approach to training of these people. The second area is in the external perceptions of the work carried out by the Agency and the recruitment of scientists. There was a strong view from staff that true scientists were an uncomfortable fit within the Agency, and that time spent in the Agency would also be a negative effect on external career prospects for researchers. There was a strong interest in learning from others through potential exchanges of staff, particularly within the Group of 4.

The Management Board

The Scientific Committee

The European Parliament

The production process

Monitoring and feedback

Human Resources

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The human and financial resources of the Agency are finite, although there have been some increases, and the Agency is reliant on Community subventions. The allocation of the resources across activities, horizontal and overheads is consistent with any organisation of this size and type. The Agency was previously asked to address the level of use of external consultants and this has been done. Allocation of resources across the priorities and products is now completely transparent.

However, not all of the resources called on by the Agency are under its control. The important contributions from the member countries also have resource implications in terms of timing and the resources of the member countries. This is sometimes not sufficiently recognised by the information users. (The Commission and the Parliament).

6. Future requirements

The previous evaluation of the Agency noted that

> *"Direct contributions to aspects of policy development require the tailored deployment of specific information and analytical skills relating, for example, to the development of methodologies and new institutional structures. EEA staff therefore become engaged in the provision of services for specific clients as opposed to the production of products (reports) for a wider audience [...] This is a significant development which could well lead to a major shift in future in the definition of the EEA's core business, and in its mode of working, to become more responsive to the needs and timetables of its clients. Such a re-orientation would require additional resources and new skills, and a reconsideration of the utility of some of the Agency's other outputs."[36]*

This statement remains relevant today. There is an extent to which the Agency is continuously adding to its activities but the overall review of the outputs and the decisions to stop certain activities are not evident. However, this is part of the activity involved in the development and implementation of the next strategy, which is currently under way.

The main implications of a shift to providing value added services relate to the fact that such an approach should be largely demand driven. This provides a number of challenges for the Agency:

- The stakeholders have different demands and different expectations that are not always compatible, making it difficult for the Agency to meet all the potential requirements while maintaining a focused approach

- An overtly service-led approach might lead to expectations that cannot be met regarding issues of timing or coverage which would adversely affect the Agency's reputation but over which they would have little control

- A real service-led approach would require the Agency to provide products and activities at the demand of others rather than defining its own agenda. The culture of the Agency and the expert/scientific nature of many of the staff might make this a difficult approach to accept

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[36] Evaluation of the European Environment Agency: An IEEP/EIPA Study final report to DG Environment

In addition to this, the approach requires new skills and working methods that it may be difficult for the Agency to access. Constraints here include the staffing and culture of the Agency:

- The Agency has a limited capacity to take on new people with new skills due to restrictions on its establishment plan and limited staff turnover, especially at the higher grades. While specialist skills can be brought in through contractors or National Experts these are relatively short-term solutions and require skill transfer within the organisation if the longer-term benefits are to be achieved. Expertise also lies in the topic centres, which is not underestimated as a resource, but again the Topic Centres operate on fixed term contracts and there is a periodical risk of loss of knowledge if there is a change of contractors. This is, of course, balanced by the opportunity to add new expertise through the same process.

- The Agency has gone through a period of change recently, which has been quite successful in meeting many of the problems previously identified. However it remains a slightly odd body with characteristics of the public sector, research organisations, and, for some people, features of a semi autonomous NGO – a not altogether comfortable match. Some staff of the Agency still do not have a clear view of the role of the Agency, others have very clear views, but there are a number of different versions that are not at all similar. While this persists there will remain tensions between those who see a predominantly service/reactive information driven role for the Agency and those who see the primary role as more proactive involvement in policy development and monitoring driving the information role.

The final changes relate to the impact of new technology and new data provision mechanisms. It is clear that this has both human and technological resource implications for the Agency but also raises expectations of users as to what data they feel should be available and when. These expectations will also need to be managed as the resource implications here affect not only the Agency itself but the also the members of the network. Decisions therefore cannot be taken in isolation. One of the strengths of the Agency has been the development of the network and its consultation processes and this should be an asset in the management of these changes.

In more concrete terms, the new requirements are seen by the Focal Points as mainly new forms of access to data (85%) and new analyses of existing data (71%). Less than half of the respondents felt that data was needed on new topics. The need to ensure resources match the new priorities and any necessary reallocation is made was also mentioned.

Areas mentioned by policy makers at the national and European levels in terms of priorities for future work were centred on the implications of climate change, followed by bio-diversity.

Broadly those consulted in DG Environment were content with the information provided to them by the Agency. This reflects a close working relationship at the operational level that appears to be appreciated on both sides.

The other policy DGs did bring out issues of unmet needs, specifically the need for regional data for regional policy analysis – an issue that should be addressed through SEIS in the longer terms but about which the Agency can take limited steps in the short-term – and for more socio-economic analysis/skills for DG Agriculture. This is an area where the Agency could reinforce its capacity and which would have wider application.

The final need came from the Parliament for more digestible information. Despite the fact that the Agency produces simple briefings there was demand for simpler documents – one respondent even asking for "environment for dummies". Clearly there is a need for information for non-specialists, which, while aimed initially at the Parliament, would also be of interest to the wider public.

6.1 Key emerging issues

When questioned on key emerging issues, all the stakeholders interviewed commented on issues that have recently become prominent on the agenda – there were few comments on potential new issues for the future.

Preservation of biodiversity and ecosystems, water and climate change as well as the impact of climate change on the other components – for example the impact of climate change on water quantity - are key issues in the environmental policy debate in the EU. The Agency has already been involved in considerable work in this area and for instance was heavily involved in the development of agri-environmental and biodiversity indicators, both of which are considered powerful policy tools

In the area of climate change, there is need to address finding solutions and to focus on implementation of these solutions. The main issues that were discussed in our interviews with stakeholders were economic and social costs, the support needed, political and popular, for implementing measures and, finally, individual countries' reluctance to implement effective measures. Because of the cross-cutting nature of these issues, the EEA, according to some interviews with the Commission, is not able to contribute significantly to such issues on its own – it has to work closely with others, such as the European Topic Centre on Air and Climate Change or, in the case of forecasting, the JRC/IES which is also working on this area. The increasing demand for integrated approaches is likely to lead to more requirements for collaborative working.

In the area of land use, the valuation of ecosystem services is gaining importance, particularly since biodiversity and agriculture are well integrated in Europe, unlike in the US, for instance. The EEA and the Topic Centres on Biodiversity and on Land Use and Spatial Information have some experience in this area, through their work on ecosystem accounting in wetlands. Another emerging issue is land use for urban development. This issue is subject to both national regulation (on the grounds of the subsidiarity principle) and to some strict EU guidelines and also driven by other issues including environmental and health considerations. The Spatial Analysis Unit of the EEA has some experience in this area from work on the quality of life in European cities, a joint project between this Unit, JRC-IES and ETC/TE (current ETC/LUSI), following an integrated approach and addressing the link between land use/traffic and transport and the impact of traffic/transport on air quality and health.

In the area of waste and management of natural resources, the main issues are sustainable consumption and production and the problem of the increasing generation of some types of waste (notably municipal and hazardous) and of illegal waste traffic, on which there is no official data. In addition to these is the cost of waste management. The EEA has already contributed to the policy debate on sustainable consumption and production and addressed several waste issues as the Case Study on Waste shows. The Agency can also contribute by raising public awareness of these salient issues with the support of the press and by sustaining the Data Centre on Waste managed by Eurostat.

For the Environment for Europe Process, the implementation of the existing commitments and the strengthening of implementation are crucial. Quality data and assessment are equally important, however, as they constitute the basis for successful implementation. The EEA can contribute to these ends, via improved data, reporting and quality assessments as well as country comparisons.

Several other increasingly salient issue areas were mentioned in stakeholder interviews, including chemicals and environment, draught and desertification, market-based instruments and environmental protection as well as greater need for public access to environmental information and for streamlining European information. Most of these pose challenges particularly to the Member States and the Commission. For instance, there are several databases on chemicals but no information on the environmental impact of chemicals. Collaboration between the Chemicals Agency and the EEA is needed to address this issue.

Some in the Commission believe that the Agency can cope with new challenges because of their confidence in the Agency's management, especially the management's ability to detect difficulties. Others, however, argue that these abilities are not sufficient without a prior adjustment of the Agency's priorities, additional funding and/or a cautious and disciplined use of extra-budgetary resources.

6.2 Implications for information provision

The underlying requirement is not for more data but for better, and for more analyses of existing data. While there is a move to more and more electronic data, and sophisticated data presentation that is only possible electronically, there is still a demand for paper publications among the respondents, especially from the Parliament. These are not incompatible demands but require careful managing.

Figure 39 Implications for information provision - responses from the questionnaires
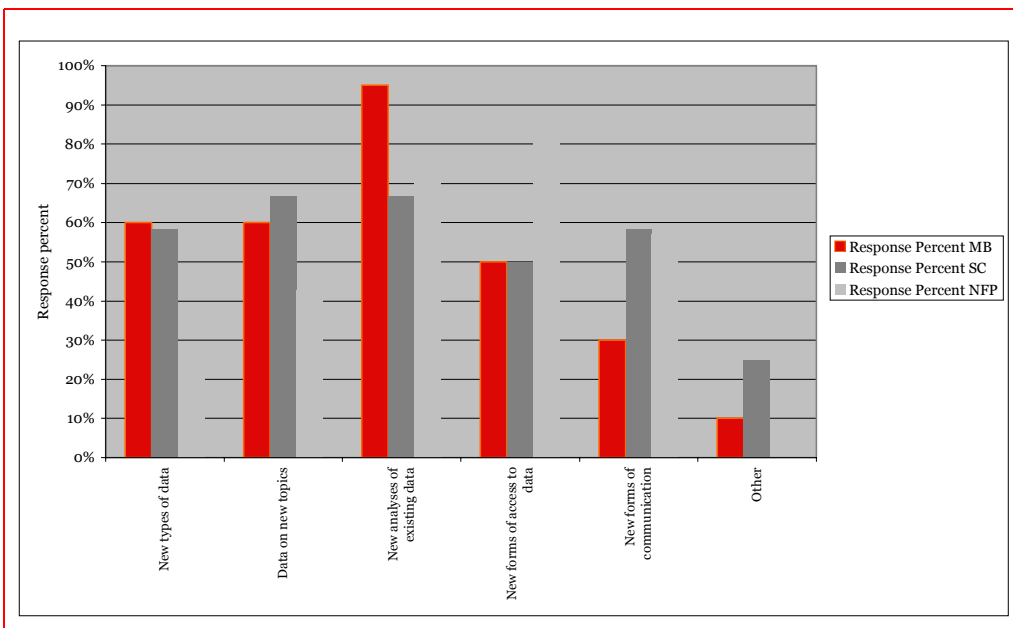
EEA evaluation questionnaires 2008

The major change is of course the introduction of the SEIS, which will have a huge impact on all levels of the EEA and its networks. In the long term this will result in major changes in the way the network operates and that data is delivered, quality assured and published.

6.3 Implications for organisation and resources

In the short term the resource implications for the implementation of SEIS are also significant – again across the whole network. It is important that sufficient resources are available for this development and implementation and to maintain existing levels of coverage and quality in the interim. This may mean that resources have to be refocused away from some of the less critical activities.

The range of potential additional demands is very wide, and the Agency could no doubt absorb a huge quantity of additional resources very effectively. However, in the real world this will not happen. They have been given some new resources from 2009 and it is therefore unlikely that there will be significant additional funding or staffing over the next strategy period.

The main implication of that is that the Agency will need to introduce a degree of focus into its work programme that at the moment is lacking. Some respondents categorised the EEA strategy as more of a shopping list than a strategic document, and when the

list of planned activities for the period is reviewed the scale of the task they set themselves is evident. That they have achieved much of it is impressive. However with the increasing call for information, and the increases in the potential uses of the data this wide scope is not really sustainable.

How the Agency can achieve focus is a more difficult question, given its governance structures and historical culture. A consequence of inclusiveness and wide-scale consultation on the strategy is the inclusion of a range of different desires for future work. If these are merely brought together in an overall framework then it is likely that the Agency will struggle to satisfy all those involved. It needs therefore to focus on its core business – and indeed to define that core business and where the Agency sits on the scale between policy relevant information and policy development.

In order to define its core business the Agency needs to be clearer about its own objectives – an intermediate level between its mission and its activities. The framework set out in section 4.6 would provide a starting point for this and help to refine and focus the Objectives and thus the activities needed to address them.

6.4 Working with others

The Agency has achieved a distinct position from an external perspective, and has built good links with other international organisations with a role or interest in the field. Building on this is important for the reasons cited above, not least of skill development and international coherence. However the Agency needs to ensure its own visibility when working with partners.

At present this visibility is promoted through the role of the Executive Director as the spokesman for the Agency. This has many advantages in terms of coherence and clarity of messages. However there were also some adverse comments on the identification of the Agency with the Director alone from external stakeholders. This suggests a careful balance needs to be struck. The role of the Director in managing the change to SEIS will also be important – not on the implementation per se but in dealing with the consequent changes required in the organisation and the wider network.

The role of the Agency in the European policy context is less clear although some significant improvement has been reported with the work of the G4. However it seems there are still some areas where the co-operation could be improved or where there is a need to clarify roles for outsiders so they understand the relationships better.

There are some areas where the Agency is active but others are also involved – for example the Agency and the IPTS are both doing work on scenarios. Since this is an emerging area where methodology development is key, this is not particularly an issue – more an opportunity to enrich the debate.

However there are other examples where analysis is carried out by the Agency and by others, sometimes on different bases giving different results. Clearly the Agency can only plan its own work and rarely influence that of others but it needs to continue to be aware of the activities of others.

6.5 Conclusions

There is a long list of current issue that are moving up the political agenda as well as emerging issues in the environmental policy landscape – the Agency will need to take a view of how and where they can meet these needs. There is also a trend to more integrated approaches to information. The Agency does provide this type of information, but there were still criticisms of deficiencies in this respect.

An overtly service-led approach might lead to expectations that cannot be met regarding issues of timing or coverage which would adversely affect the Agency's reputation but over which they would have little control. A real service-led approach would require the Agency to provide products and activities at the demand of others

rather than defining its own agenda. The culture of the Agency and the expert/scientific nature of many of the staff might make this a difficult approach to accept. The nature of the Agency's governance system would also make this difficult to sustain – indeed this would be more of a constraint than the internal management issues.

The changes in the nature and collection methods of the data – both collection through SEIS but also as the user trend to real-time data, and involvement in GMES – have major implications for the Agency and the wider network. This will require a specific allocation of resources with a subsequent knock-on effect on other activities that may need to be reduced or changed. It may also produce a requirement for new skills which will need to be acquired through recruitment, training and in some cases purchase from external experts.

The Agency is unlikely to be able to meet all the potential demands for information and will need to prioritise the most important areas of work and be prepared to discontinue work with more limited use, if necessary.

Through its work with others, the Agency has established a position of authority. It needs also to take care that its visibility is not compromised through joint working.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

This section brings together all the conclusions drawn in the report together with the related recommendations. It is broken down into the same grouping as the chapters of the report. The recommendations are set out by target since in some cases these are addressed to specific groups or organisations.

7.1 Overall Conclusions

The Agency has established itself as a reputable point of reference in the European environmental policy landscape and has achieved this recognition amongst stakeholders, other organisations active in the field, the press and the wider public.

It is difficult to see how the role of the Agency, and in particular the provision of impartial and reliable information, could be performed through any of the possible other mechanisms available for European organisations.

However, the Agency has to satisfy a wide and growing range of demands. This will require it to be stricter in setting priorities and managing user expectations.

There remains an issue that, partly because it serves many different users, there is still an overall lack of clarity, both internally and amongst stakeholders, about the real role of the Agency. This lack of clarity makes prioritisation and targeting of work difficult and needs to be addressed.

7.2 Corporate strategy

7.2.1 Conclusions

The Agency set itself a long list of tasks to be carried out under the Corporate Strategy 2004 to 2008 and has largely succeeded in achieving these – or in making significant progress. Some realignment of the work has been done to take account of changing circumstances.

However, the 2004-2008 strategy does not explicitly set out the logic behind the priorities or state the needs it is trying to address. It is, rather, a long list of activities that the Agency is trying to undertake. These activities do, however, relate closely to the priorities of the wider European policy arena since the strategy is explicitly structured around the Sixth Environmental Action Plan.

The Agency has translated the strategy into its annual management plans. These have increasingly been related back to the strategy in their structure, improving the transparency of the management and reporting.

The Management Board is highly involved in the definition of the strategy, and the Agency makes efforts to ensure this. However, its involvement is lower in the drafting of the annual management plans, because of the detailed levels of planning involved.

The introduction of the new management system has been an important tool in the improvement of the transparency and the efficiency of the management and reporting of the activities.

The planning process is very lengthy, for both the strategy and the annual plans, which limits its ability to react to short term or immediate requirements that emerge. However, the process is highly inclusive which is important, especially for the commitment of the network members.

A number of new Agencies have been set up in the recent period that have responsibilities that overlap or have a direct connection to the work of the Agency.

Finally, some activities are only loosely tied to the strategy and the core business of the Agency; indeed, for some activities, it is difficult to see how they relate to the strategy. These, however, are not numerous or particularly resource intensive.

7.2.2 Recommendations

1. The Agency needs to have a clearer and more consistent view of its role, and for this view to be communicated to staff. This should encompass the fact that the role may be different for each of its key users.

2. The new Strategy needs to be more focused, more explicit on how planned activities relate to the objectives of the Agency (as opposed to European environmental policy in general) and to state clearly how operational priorities should be set. In particular, it needs to set out the medium- to long-term objectives of the Agency, and associated indicators.

3. The Management Board should be more involved in priority setting for the annual management plans but should continue to avoid micro-management of activities.

4. The Agency should look at developing new relationships and working methods with other Community Agencies. This may require agreements on how the Agencies can add value to each other's work.

7.3 Effectiveness

Effectiveness depends upon a number of factors. These include:

- Relevance: that outputs should relate to the concerns of users.

- Targeted products: that they should be developed for specific users or groups of users to meet their needs.

- Reliability: that products should be based on sound science and the information contained within them be robust.

- Timeliness: that products should be delivered to contribute to policy debates, etc, at times that they can influence them.

- Impact: this is the ultimate determinant of effectiveness, but is usually difficult or impossible to demonstrate conclusively.

The Agency has established itself as a reputable point of reference in the European environmental policy landscape, and has achieved this recognition from its stakeholders, other organisations active in the field and from press and the wider public.

The Agency, and its information, addresses many areas of the policy cycle. Users have different views on the most important parts of the policy cycle depending on their own work focus.

Through working with the Commission in the Group of Four, the Agency has contributed to the continuing dialogue and cooperation of the partners looking at complementarity of activities. This is done through the annual working programme and regular meetings. It has resulted in a common understanding of concepts of data centres – JRC, EEA, Eurostat – and a common emerging understanding of the SEIS framework and its implementation.

The existence of the Group of Four has also facilitated the buy-in of senior management and top-level management, which has had an overall positive effect on co-ordination within the Agency. However, among some users, there is not a transparent understanding of the operational relationships that exist across the Group of Four. Although for the EEA staff this is not an issue in their day-to-day dealings, it sometimes leaves information users unsure of the appropriate point of contact for data.

The strategy and activities of the Agency currently have a comprehensive rather than a focused approach. This will be difficult to sustain as demands increase and resources remain static.

In general, the balance of product types seems well adjusted to user requirements, with new developments in information types and analyses being added. However, more thought needs to be given as to the targets of the information and the degree to which the Agency should devote resources to more distant targets.

The Agency addresses the policy needs of the Commission, fairly comprehensively in the case of DG Environment, but to a lesser extent in the case of other policy DGs. This is partly an issue of expertise and partly data availability.

The Agency is careful to address itself to the needs of the Parliament and provides them with both data and briefings. However, this is still quite a one-way process and, while there was evidence of the Parliament being engaged in the management issues of the Agency, there was little evidence of a similar level of interest in the products of the Agency. However, there is also an absence of criticism.

The Agency has recently been focusing on its relationship with the press to provide a more coherent approach and develop links with key information users. This approach fits well with the requirements of the press for a reliable source of data and interpretation and should be continued.

The time taken for data to be available is a frustration for the Agency and its users alike. The extent to which this can be improved is limited but is clearly an important issue. Some degree of expectation management may also be necessary.

The establishment of the network system is one of the major achievements of the EEA and its member countries and there is evidence of efforts on the part of all participants to improve the speed and quality of data provision.

Relevance

Targeted products

Timeliness

In general, the Agency has a reputation for good quality data but this view is not universally held – there are isolated instances of people who were more critical or of types of data that were less well received by specific users. The introduction of SEIS will have implications for maintaining the current favourable views.

The Agency has quality high on the agenda. The data received from sources means that it is not always possible for the Agency to achieve its objectives in this area but it works hard on this issue.

Overall, the Agency adds value to the data – both by the comprehensive coverage and through the analysis it performs. Its position adds European value through comprehensiveness of coverage and by allowing comparison of countries or supra-national analysis. This European added value is not disputed by the stakeholders - both internal and external.

The impact of the Agency must be judged against its objectives. It has made a positive contribution to the availability of environmental information at European level. It has also established a reputation for the reliability of this information. It has built good links with the other main environmental players, again showing that it has established a recognised place in the information landscape. The Agency has demonstrated a commitment to evaluation of its activities, both overall and specific. Having a more developed framework for this with specific impact objectives would enable them to benefit more from these exercises.

There is evidence that policy makers at the national and European levels use the information provided, so the Agency has contributed to the development of informed environmental policy making.

7.3.1 Recommendations

5. The Agency should be clearer on its target users and their priority so that it can focus its products for their specific needs – particularly in the case of the Parliament.

6. The current approach to work with the press should also be continued. More thought needs to be given to less direct targets and the extent to which resources should be devoted to them.

7. Within the Group of Four, the Agency should increase the understanding of users, particularly within the Commission, of the respective roles of its members.

7.4 Efficiency

From a comparison of the current situation to the findings of the previous evaluations, it is clear that major initiatives have been taken within the Agency to improve its overall management, addressing all stages of the process from planning to implementation and reporting.

The Agency has been able to meet increasing demands for information without a similar scale of increases in resources, also pointing to efficiency gains within the organisation.

The Agency is the most efficient way to deliver the products and services required by the stakeholders when compared to the alternative possible structures.

Given that external stakeholders have different needs, the focus of the plans needs to be driven by the Agency itself. This, in turn, requires the Agency and its staff to have a clear view of its role.

The Management Board is content with the information with which it is provided for management purposes, although members would apparently like to have more strategic information in the annual planning process to enable more involvement in the prioritisation of work.

The staff have no clear understanding of the exact nature of the strategic decision making process and whether this is done effectively by the Management Board.

There is a weakness in internal communication in the agency and its approach to maintaining institutional learning – the staff report a poor institutional memory and a lack of networking skills.

The recent changes made in the organisational structure also produced a response from some staff that a period of stability would now be welcomed so that they could take most advantage of the changes.

The work of the Scientific Committee is viewed positively. There is potential that it could have a significant impact on the quality of work produced by the Agency. The staff already value the existing input from a number of members of the Scientific Committee. The Scientific Committee wants to be more involved, the staff want the Scientific Committee to be involved but there is a major constraint in terms of time.

The relationship with the European Parliament is somewhat different. The Parliament representatives are active in the Management Board. However, their role as information users is more passive, and the Agency needs to predict and service their information needs. It is in the nature of the Parliament that they will only give active feedback when they are unhappy with something or when there is an urgent need for something. It is an area where the EEA can be proactive in futures scanning and being aware of emerging issues.

The overall production process is well embedded in the Agency's management processes. There are some specific issues however, due to the wide variety of publications in size, topic, target user groups etc - it is not always clear how decisions are made for targeting the publication to the right type of audience.

The Agency has a relatively refined monitoring and feedback system and uses a balanced scorecard approach to the reporting of key performance indicators. There is a weakness in the client perspective of the framework where it does not address the issues of 'who is the customer' and 'how is it adding value for them?' The principal framework has now become well established, and the Agency could now look at some more sophisticated indicators.

The Agency has a number of weaknesses in the field of human resources. The two most important issues are in the field of training, especially for non-permanent staff where there is an apparent difference between the policy and the reality. There is a need for a positive structured approach to training of these people. The second area is in the external perceptions of the work carried out by the Agency and the recruitment of scientists. There was a strong view from staff that true scientists were an uncomfortable fit within the Agency, and that time spent in the Agency would also be a negative effect on external career prospects for researchers. More opportunities for learning from others through an exchange programme with other bodies, especially within the Group of 4, would be welcomed.

The Management Board

The Scientific Committee

The European Parliament

The production process

Monitoring and feedback

Human Resources

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The human and financial resources of the Agency are finite, although there have been some increases, and the Agency is reliant on Community subventions. The allocation of the resources across activities, horizontal and overheads is consistent with any organisation of this size and type. The Agency was previously asked to address the level of use of external consultants and this has been done. Allocation of resources across the priorities and products is now completely transparent.

However, not all of the resources called on by the Agency are under its control. The important contributions from the member countries also have resource implications in terms of timing and the resources of the member countries. This is sometimes not sufficiently recognised by the information users. (The Commission and the Parliament).

7.4.1 Recommendations

8. The Agency needs to improve internal communication. In particular, it is recommended that the Agency instil a common understanding of what the Agency does across the organisation. Although there is need for an overall understanding of the networking and relationships the EEA has with partners and the wider world, the Agency should not attempt to centralise the management of this function.

9. The Agency should review and address the issue that the staff, as a whole, do not have a good understanding of the work of the Management Board, in general, and of the strategic decision making processes of the Agency.

10. The training needs of non-permanent staff need to be addressed in a structured way, ensuring that they can contribute most effectively to the work of the Agency both during their time there and (in the case of Seconded Experts) once they return to their own institutions. Additional actions that should be undertaken include training in networking skills for staff due to increasing need for networking throughout the Agency. Another training method could be encouraged through staff exchanges across the Group of Four.

11. More thought should be given to how the Agency can best benefit from the willingness of the Scientific Committee to become more involved, in principle, and how this can be most effectively achieved within the constraints of time and budget.

12. The Agency should continue to develop its activities in relation to supporting the work of the European Parliament. In addition, the European Commission needs to recognise that the Agency also has a role in supporting the Parliament, that its information needs may be different both in format and content.

13. The State of the Environment Report is one of the flagship products of the Agency and has a good reputation. However, there is a need to look at how this product could be produced in a more digestible and readable format, given the new dissemination tools and channels that are now available. The Agency also needs to address the level of effort involved in its production, and the potential for the Agency to build on its work in the production of the report rather than making a major additional effort.

14. In terms of monitoring and feedback, the Agency needs to address the client perspective and to review their metrics in the balanced scorecard to see if they could be improved or better linked to the strategy. It also needs to set medium term objectives and associated indicators.

7.5 Future requirements

There is a long list of current issues moving up the political agenda as well as emerging issues in the environmental policy landscape – the Agency will need to take a view of how and where they can meet these needs. There is also a trend to more integrated

approaches to information. The Agency does provide this type of information, but there were still criticisms of deficiencies in this respect.

An overtly service-led approach might lead to expectations that cannot be met regarding issues of timing or coverage which would adversely affect the Agency's reputation but over which they would have little control. A real service-led approach would require the Agency to provide products and activities at the demand of others rather than defining its own agenda. The culture of the Agency and the expert/scientific nature of many of the staff might make this a difficult approach to accept. The nature of the Agency's governance system would also make this difficult to sustain – indeed this would be more of a constraint than the internal management issues.

The changes in the nature, and collection methods, of the data – both collection through SEIS but also as the user trend to real-time data, and involvement in GMES – have major implications for the Agency and the wider network. This will require a specific allocation of resources with a subsequent knock-on effect on other activities that may need to be reduced or changed. It may also produce a requirement for new skills to be acquired through recruitment, training and in some cases purchase from external experts.

The Agency is unlikely to be able to meet all the potential demands for information and will need to prioritise the most important areas of work and be prepared to discontinue work with more limited use, if necessary.

Through its work with others the Agency has established a position of authority. It needs also to take care that its visibility is not compromised through joint working.

7.5.1 Recommendations

15. The Agency needs to be clear that it cannot address all the potential demands on it and ensure that the method of prioritisation, linked to specific objectives, is set out transparently in the new strategy. These limitations should also be recognised by the Commission and the Parliament. This may also mean that the Agency has to discontinue some of its current activities that are not so linked to its core activities, or which have achieved their objectives.

16. The Agency needs to continue to be aware of the potential impacts of the introduction of SEIS on the network and the Agency itself, and to prioritise the necessary internal actions to address these, including staff training needs, and the maintenance of quality standards.

17. The Agency should continue its joint activities but should take care that its visibility is not compromised in this type of work.

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