



OPINION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON THE EEA PROGRAMMING DOCUMENT 2021-23

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

On 15 May 2020, the Scientific Committee was invited to provide its opinion on the draft Single Programming Document (SPD) 2021-2023, which includes the 2021 AWP. The SPD 2021-23 anticipates the adoption by the Management Board of the draft EEA-EIONET strategy, 2021-2030.

Following discussions at the 76th SC meeting on 4 June 2020, we agreed the following.

We welcome the draft SPD 2021-23 and congratulate Agency staff on its clarity and more strategic orientation. In view of the continued external uncertainties relating to the status of the EU's Multi-annual Financial Framework in general and the 8th Environmental Action Programme (EAP) in particular, we appreciate the effort that staff have made to identify the key operational priorities.

It is clear that the European Green Deal and the forthcoming 8th EAP will require the EEA to step up efforts in many different areas of work. We strongly support the request in the draft SPD for several new posts to enable the Agency to deliver fully on what is expected of it, i.e. in response to the Council's request for an 8th EAP with "well-defined monitoring mechanism(s) to ensure ownership of and delivery on commitments and clear, result-based indicators to measure progress."¹ Related to that, we also noted that the European Commission's Implementation Reviews of Member States underscored the need for spatially disaggregated data and integrated, cross-sectoral analysis for the ability to monitor the extent to which polluters and authorities comply with EU law.

The SPD lists the numerous obligations, which the EEA is expected to honor within its core budget, which has been repeatedly reduced in real terms over the past few years. We note that the European Parliament and the European Commission have agreed to provide the EEA with some additional resources. However, we are concerned that these specific additional elements do not enable the EEA to assign all the SPD activities listed on p.32-33 to the necessary staff posts, some of which underpin the implementation of the 8th EAP. Several of

¹ The 8th Environment Action Programme - Turning the Trends Together - Council conclusions, Oct. 4th 2019.

these activities reflect recommendations made in our previous Opinions, i.e. for the EEA to report on drinking water quality, toxic pollutants and agricultural nutrients among others.

Under the AWP 2021, we welcome the inclusion of Activity Area 5 ('Sustainability trends, prospects and responses activity') and believe it is a necessary and much needed investment which will deepen knowledge of the linkages between production-consumption systems, and between natural systems and underpinning policy support and implementation (key priorities listed in the SOER 2020, Part 3). However, the description and structuring of Activity Area 5 should be made more explicit, with stronger linkages to other work areas and be clearer in responding to the Green Deal. Furthermore, there should be a more explicit focus on the four key systems (mobility, buildings, energy, food) and on systematically producing Europe-wide knowledge on path-dependences, innovations and policies with respect to sustainability transitions. This would better serve the Green Deal and provide a supportive bridge to SOER 2025.

Under the Copernicus program, the EEA manages (by delegation) the land monitoring service and the in situ component, with non-core funding that is higher than all the EEA topic centers combined. We support the extension of this activity after its expiry at the end of 2020, but urge the Agency to consider ways in which Copernicus data and products can be better integrated into the delivery of more of the EEA's data products and monitoring activities.

The EEA Regulation Article 19 established that the EEA is open to membership for countries that embrace its objectives and we urge the EEA to cultivate relations with UK and/or England, Scotland and Wales with a view to exploring opportunities for restoring membership. Moreover, we are concerned that one current EEA Member Country (Turkey) has not yet ratified the Paris Agreement, thus evading significant mitigation requirements. We advise the EEA to monitor, reflect and report on this situation, e.g. in the reporting on GHG emissions and air pollution from fossil fuels, if necessary drawing on independent data sources.

Copenhagen, 10 September 2020

SIGNED

Prof. Per Mickwitz, Chair of EEA Scientific Committee