



## **OPINION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON THE EEA PROGRAMMING DOCUMENT 2022-24**

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

On 15 March 2021, the Scientific Committee was invited to provide its opinion on the draft Single Programming Document (SPD) for the multi-annual period 2022-2024, which includes the 2022 AWP.

Following discussions at the 79<sup>th</sup> SC meeting on 26-27 May 2021, we agreed the following.

We welcome the draft SPD 2022-24 and congratulate the Agency for the increase in the core subvention and the associated staff posts. It reflects a recognition of the significant role of the Agency in delivering data, indicators and monitoring to underpin the EU's 2030 greenhouse gas reduction target and the 8<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme (EAP), as well as the European Green Deal framed by the European Commission. Still, we regret the lack of adjustment applied to the core budget, to fully reflect the increased costs, which limit the future opportunities, for example in relation to the European Topic Centres. The Scientific Committee fully endorses the requests made for additional resources for any new tasks delegated to the Agency. The current situation still undercuts the Agency's capacity to engage in numerous important activities, including engaging sufficiently with the wider global community on global environmental concerns and challenges.

Following the adoption of the novel EEA/EIONET strategy by the EEA Management Board in December 2020, there are now five distinct work areas; Biodiversity and ecosystems; Climate change mitigation and adaptation; Human health and the environment; Circular economy and resource use; Sustainability trends, prospects and responses.

While each of these work areas will be reflected in the new European Topic Centres that will become operational from 2022, the SPD could provide more substantial insights into how the visions described in the strategy are being operationalized into short term objectives and outputs, and what is to be considered the responsibilities of the new Topic Centres vis-à-vis the EEA itself. As a major shortcoming of the draft SPD, many AWP-2022 activities of the work areas are described in rather generic terms, so that frequently it remains unclear what specifically is the aim for the coming year. Some work areas are described better than others. Moreover, the Scientific Committee would have liked – under activity area 5 on 'sustainability trends, prospects and response' – to see more Agency efforts devoted to behavioral aspects,

beyond SOER and beyond simply providing support to the Commission. Activity area 1 on biodiversity deserves more operational clarity in relation to the strategy. Finally, we miss coverage of the European Topic Centres in the SPD.

The Scientific Committee recommends highlighting the key reports or comparable outputs that will be produced during the coming year, as is done now only in a few instances. It also seems that all 'activity areas' (why not 'work areas' as in the strategy?) should relate to all five strategic objectives of the strategy, and should indicate how they will be operationalized into activities during the coming year. It is suggested that the sections 'activity description' could more logically follow the 'changing strategic context' sections, which is more than an editorial comment, since we consider it to be rather essential that the EEA places its activities in context.

Overall, the Scientific Committee encourages the EEA to reflect a higher level of ambition in the programming of activities. Although the EEA obviously has tied many resources and efforts into routine activities of monitoring and reporting, there are emerging demands from the changing contexts that cannot be ignored. We find it important that the EEA dedicates some resources and attention to these purposes, to enable qualified and timely input.

One example relates to the emerging demands in the context of the European Commission's Farm-to-fork strategy and the next phase of the Common Agricultural Policy, both of which will require the use and availability of robust environmental indicators of environmental pressures and the protection of biodiversity for the future allocation and spending of EU funds. We encourage the EEA, as part of its activities, to begin identifying what data and assessments are available and what would be needed. Another example relates to the implementation of the EU's research and innovation missions, where the Agency is well placed to contribute. The involvement of the EEA in drafting the EU's sustainable finance taxonomy serves as an excellent example of what can be accomplished by a timely and proactive response to emerging demands.

We congratulate the EEA for the PD2022-2024 with AWP2022 and look forward to supporting the EEA during its implementation.

Copenhagen, 27 May 2021

*SIGNED*

Prof. Per Mickwitz, Chair of EEA Scientific Committee