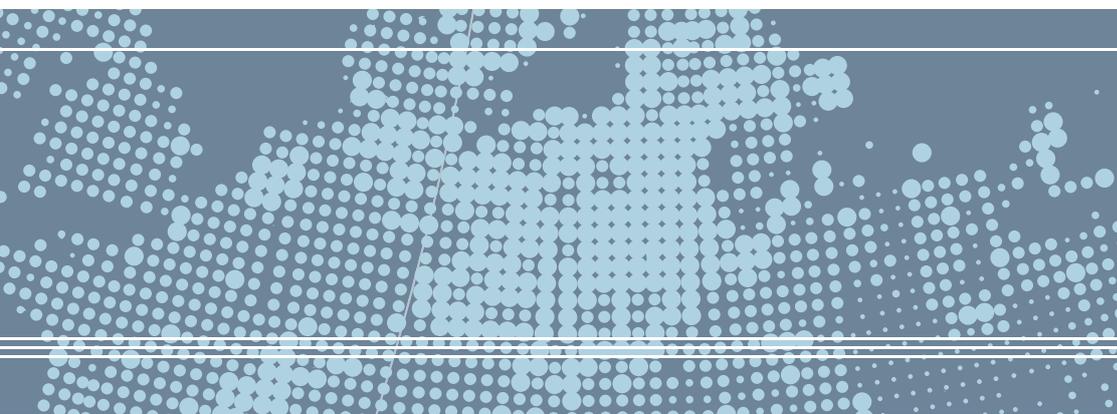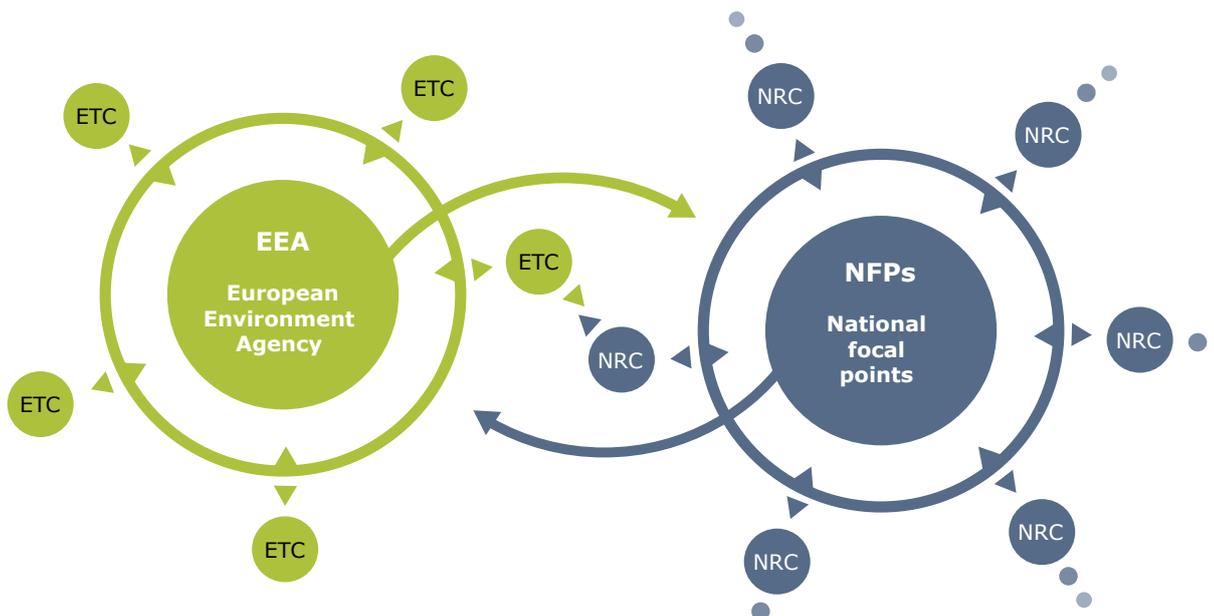# Eionet connects

Eionet origins and structure

Eionet mission

The European environment information and observation network (Eionet) aims to provide timely and quality-assured data, information and expertise for assessing the state of the environment in Europe and the pressures acting upon it. This enables policy makers to decide on appropriate measures for protecting the environment at national and European level and to monitor the effectiveness of policies and measures implemented.

Eionet is a partnership network of the European Environment Agency (EEA) and its member and participating countries. It consists of the EEA itself, a number of European Topic Centres (ETCs) and a network of around 900 experts from 37 countries in over 300 national environment agencies and other bodies dealing with environmental information. These are the national focal points (NFPs) and the national reference centres (NRCs).

The Eionet partnership is crucial to the EEA in supporting the collection and organisation of data and the development and dissemination of information. Information technology infrastructure (sometimes referred to as e-Eionet) supports the organisations and individuals in the network. This brochure describes the structure, working methods, outputs and future activities of Eionet.

Eionet origins and structure

> ### Eionet has grown as the EEA has enlarged
>
> Eionet was established in 1994 and has become a well-known provider of high-quality data and information on the state of Europe's environment and the pressures and driving forces acting upon it. As the number of EEA member countries has increased, so Eionet has grown.

In 1994, the EEA had 18 member countries and Eionet comprised 15 EU Member States: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom and three European Free Trade Area countries: Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

In 1996, the 10 EU candidate countries in central and eastern Europe: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia, became engaged in EEA activities and began to develop their national networks. Most joined the EEA in January 2002 alongside other interested countries such as Cyprus, Malta and Turkey. By 2003, all were EEA members and fully involved in Eionet, bringing the membership to 31 countries. The EEA was the first EU body to open its doors to the accession and candidate countries. Now Switzerland, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro participate in Eionet and the EEA work programme in advance of becoming member countries.

Through Eionet, the EEA brings together environmental data from individual countries concentrating on the delivery of timely, nationally validated, high-quality data. This forms the basis of integrated environmental assessments and knowledge that is disseminated and made accessible through the EEA website. This information serves to support environmental management processes, environmental policy making and assessment, and public participation at national, European and global levels.

Eionet origins and structure
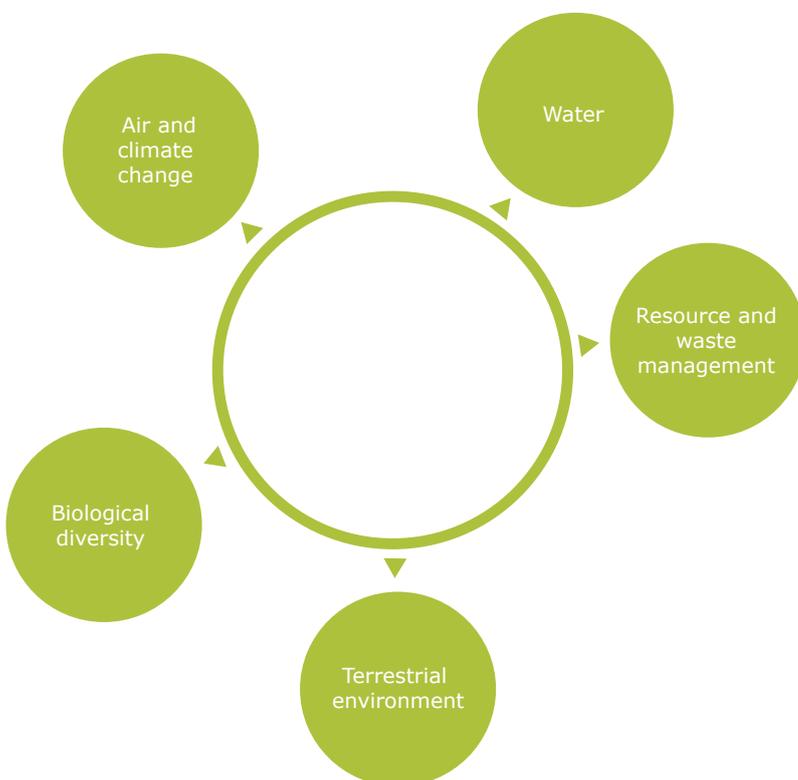
European topic centre (ETC)

A consortium of organisations from EEA member countries with expertise in a specific environmental area and contracted by the EEA to support the EEA work programme.

European topic centres (ETCs) are centres of thematic expertise contracted by the EEA to carry out specific tasks identified in the EEA strategy (five-year work programme) and the annual management plans. They are designated by the EEA management board following a Europe-wide competitive selection process and work as an extension of the EEA in specific topic areas. Each ETC consists of a lead organisation and specialist partner organisations from the environmental research and information community, which combine their resources in their particular area of expertise.

The ETCs, working together with member and participating countries, facilitate the provision of data and information from the countries and deliver reports and other services to the EEA and Eionet.

There are currently five ETCs covering air and climate change, water, the terrestrial environment, waste and material flows, and nature protection and biodiversity. The latter two will be superseded by ETCs on resource and waste management and on biological diversity respectively in 2005.
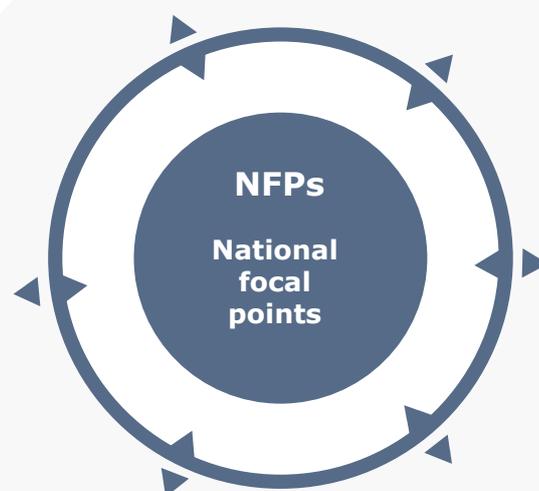
Air and climate change

Water

Resource and waste management

Biological diversity

Terrestrial environment

❯ **National focal point (NFP)**

An expert or group of experts in national environmental organisations nominated and funded by the country and authorised to be the main contact point for the EEA. The NFP coordinates the national network consisting of numerous national reference centres (NRCs) in order to support the implementation of the EEA work programme.
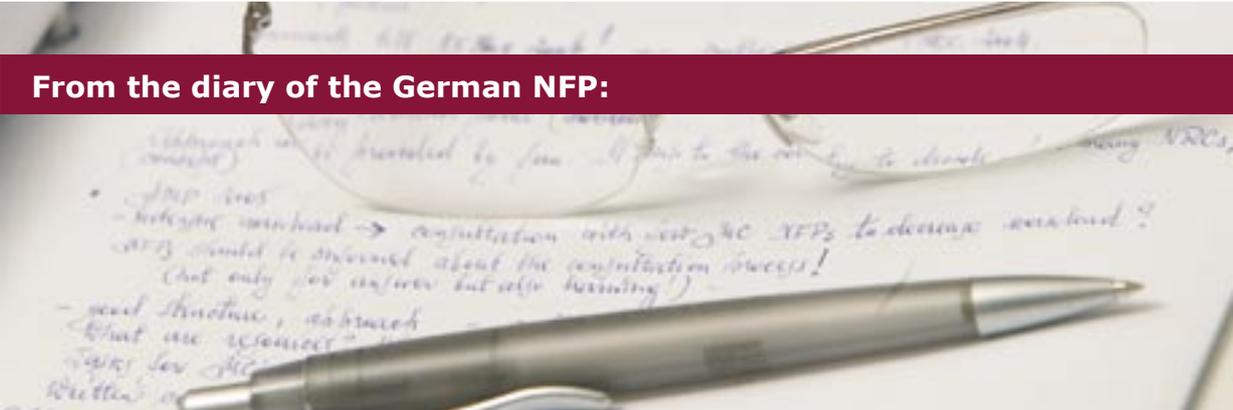
❯ NFPs are the main contact points for the EEA in the member countries. They are in charge of cooperation with the EEA and the ETCs and organise national coordination of activities related to the EEA strategy. Their working methods differ from country to country. This partly reflects the diverse nature of the national environmental systems within which they are based. For example, some NFPs are located in environment agencies, others are part of the environment ministry; some are in centralised national administrations, whereas others operate in decentralised, sometimes federal, systems.

NFPs maintain and develop the national network, facilitate and coordinate contacts, requests and deliveries between national and EU level. In addition, they act as advisers to their EEA management board members and develop contacts to other relevant networks such as Eurostat. In order to promote key EEA publications, many NFPs organise launch events and issue press releases.

NFPs

National focal points

Eionet origins and structure

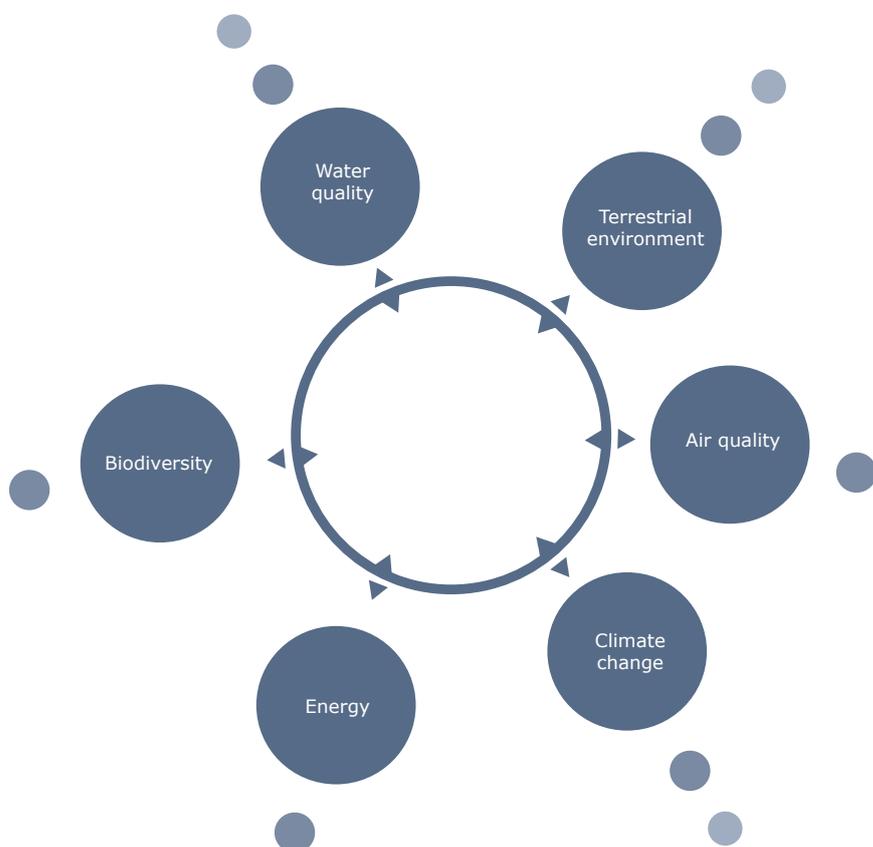|	
Monday	Receive papers for NFP/Eionet meeting in February Identify relevant NRCs and other experts for input Distribute drafts for comments: EEA annual management plan/ EEA translation policy/proposal for revision of Eionet structure
Tuesday	Remind NRC Air Quality: monthly ozone report is due! Upload to Circa: information on national CLC project Quality check: translation of EEA annual report Invitation from ETC Terrestrial Environment for annual Eionet workshop. Forward to NRC Land Cover, check Monday
Wednesday	Receive draft EEA report on energy Send document to NRC Energy for comments — remind to check correctness of national information Prepare national Eionet meeting: invitations, agenda, location, budget Phone NFP Norway, Bulgaria, Netherlands to discuss revision of Eionet structure
Thursday	ETC Waste request information on national policies and measures. Identify information sources Feedback from NRC Water and NRC Nature for NFP/Eionet meeting. No comments from NRC Air Emissions (remind next week!) Summarise country comments on draft EEA Signals Report
Friday	Inform management board member/senior management of country performance on Eionet priority data flows Prepare progress report for management board member to brief him for upcoming meeting at EEA

National reference centre (NRC)

An expert or group of experts in national environmental organisations nominated and funded by the country to work with the EEA and relevant European topic centres in specific environmental areas related to the EEA work programme.

National reference centres (NRCs) are nominated by member countries. They are nationally funded experts or groups of experts in organisations which are regular collectors or suppliers of environmental data at the national level and/or possess relevant knowledge regarding various environmental issues, monitoring or modelling. NRCs are established in specific areas of environmental activity, for example air quality, climate change, river quality, waste generation, biodiversity, energy and many more. They play a role in technical coordination of these topics and work with the EEA and the relevant ETCs. The NRC structure varies in accordance with the requirements and priorities of the EEA strategy.

Water quality

Terrestrial environment

Biodiversity

Air quality

Energy

Climate change

Eionet — a success story

> The Eionet group consists of NFPs, ETC managers, representatives of the European Commission and relevant EEA staff and meets three times a year with around 70–80 participants. The results of these discussions are fed into EEA management board meetings, which also take place two to three times a year, and in this way provide support to the decision-making process at the policy level.
>
> Each ETC regularly invites the relevant NRCs to Eionet workshops where they present the results of their activities and discuss and agree the way forward with the country representatives. These workshops help to maintain and strengthen good contacts between the ETCs and NRCs and between the countries themselves.

Based on input from the Eionet partners, the EEA has identified a set of priority annual data flows. These data, collected currently in the areas of air quality, air emissions, inland waters, marine and coastal waters, contaminated soil, nature conservation and land cover, are used to update the core set of environmental indicators which form the basis of EEA reports and assessments. A yearly progress report is produced by the EEA on country performance in delivering these data. This exercise is a useful tool to benchmark country performances and encourage all countries to improve their response. As far as possible, data and information which have already been reported by the countries in the framework of EU or international obligations are used within Eionet. This means that data collected once at a national level can be used for many purposes at national, EU and international level.

Tackling environmental problems needs a concerted European approach. Eionet has played a leading role in achieving this cooperation. Eionet covers a large part of Europe and has experienced 10 years of development and sustainability.

The network connects the best available national expertise on environmental issues with policy makers at the national and European levels.

Eionet — a success story

> An example of how the EEA was able to publish the first indicator-based thematic report on the state of and pressures on Europe's environment: '*Europe's water: an indicator-based assessment*' in 2003:

- September 2002, EEA requests the annual update of the priority data flows on water from the NFPs and the specialised water NRCs in 37 countries;
- September–December 2002, the NRCs deliver their data electronically to the EEA's central data repository;
- January–April 2003, ETC Water carries out essential quality checks in partnership with the NRCs and delivers the validated data to EEA for uploading to the web-based database, Waterbase;
- April–June 2003, ETC Water uses the data, supplemented with data from other European sources, to update the fact sheets of the indicators to be used in the water indicator report;
- July 2003, ETC Water and EEA experts agree the final draft of the report and distribute it to the countries via the electronic Eionet (e-Eionet) for comment and validation;
- September–October 2003, the EEA and ETC Water produce the final version and the EEA sends to publisher;
- November 2003, the report is published in paper form and on the EEA website and publicity procedures are activated.

Eionet — a success story

Countries have benefited from sharing advice, expertise and experience in developing national capabilities, particularly in the areas of data collection and management and in the production and dissemination of policy-relevant information.

The established ETCs cover the main environmental themes and their inclusion in Eionet strengthens the links between the countries and the EEA.

The extensive communication between NRCs and ETCs has improved the quality of data at national and European levels and, for many countries, has helped to strengthen capacities in the existing monitoring systems. For the new EU Member States, early EEA and Eionet membership has helped to raise the profile of environmental issues and influenced the nature and extent of national monitoring systems.

Data which countries are obliged to report to the European level are collected and analysed in a transparent way by the EEA and ETCs to give a picture of the state of, and pressures on, Europe's environment. In this way, it also becomes possible to benchmark the environmental performance of countries. Furthermore, EEA member countries are encouraged to develop their national networks in ways which assure compatibility with EU and international reporting requirements.

Eionet in the future

Requirements for environmental information are evolving. Conceived originally as a provider of environmental data and information, the EEA is now fully engaged with the European Parliament, European Commission and its member countries not only to report on the state of the environment but also on the outlook for the environment and the effectiveness of key environmental and sectoral policies. Over the next five years, the EEA and Eionet will expand their activities to support a variety of policy processes.

The EEA and Eionet work across four major thematic areas in direct support of the sixth environment action programme of the European Union. These are:

- tackling climate change;
- tackling biodiversity loss and understanding spatial change in the environment;
- protecting human health and the quality of life;
- sustainable use and the management of natural resources and waste.

Each of these is influenced by sectoral activities which also need to be considered, for example, agriculture, chemicals, energy, transport and land-use planning. Progress has been made on integration of environmental issues and information into sectoral policies, particularly transport, and work on energy and agriculture is ongoing.

Eionet in the future

Eionet has made significant contributions to, and will continue its efforts on:

- measuring progress towards the Kyoto Protocol targets with more accurate and timely assessments of greenhouse gases and benchmarking of Europe with other regions of the world;
- developing performance indicators for biodiversity policies, especially for Natura 2000 implementation, the 2010 target of halting biodiversity loss and the link to sectoral policies;
- supporting the spatial requirements of European and global initiatives including the thematic strategies on the marine environment and soil;
- further developing Eurowaternet, the European water monitoring network to support reporting on the water framework and other directives and the implementation of a water information system for Europe;
- assessment of public exposure to air pollutants;
- environmental and economic impact assessment of natural and technological hazards;
- waste and material flows assessments to support the drive to reduce waste generation and the decoupling of resource use from economic growth.

Eionet has evolved considerably over its first 10 years. It now stands ready to adapt its structure to changing issues and priorities. Through Eionet, EEA member countries are working towards the vision of a more streamlined and integrated approach to environmental information in Europe. Supporting environmental policy assessment and development through partnerships and shared information as exemplified by Eionet is a successful model that can be exported to and help connect other parts of the globe.

Institutions of the NFPs

EEA member countries

Austria
Umweltbundesamt (UBA)
http://www.umweltbundesamt.at/

Belgium
Intergewestelijke Cel voor Leefmilieu (IRCEL)
http://www.irceline.be/

Bulgaria
Executive Environment Agency
http://nfp-bg.eionet.eu.int/ncesd/index.html

Cyprus
Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment
http://www.cyprus.gov.cy/

Czech Republic
Czech Environmental Institute
http://www.ceu.cz/

Denmark
National Environmental Research Institute (NERI)
http://www.dmu.dk/

Estonia
Estonian Environment Information Centre
http://www.keskkonnainfo.ee/

Finland
Finnish Environment Institute
http://www.ymparisto.fi/

France
Institut Français de l'Environnement (IFEN)
http://www.ifen.fr/

Germany
Umweltbundesamt (UBA)
http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/

Greece
Ministry for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works
http://www.minenv.gr/

Hungary
Ministry of Environment and Water
http://www.ktm.hu/

Iceland
Environment and Food Agency
http://www.ust.is/

Ireland
Environmental Protection Agency
http://www.epa.ie/

Italy
Agenzia per la Protezione dell'Ambiente e per i Servizi Tecnici (APAT)
http://www.apat.gov.it/

Latvia
Latvian Environment Agency
http://www.varam.gov.lv/varam/P_inst/Elva.htm

Liechtenstein
National Office for Forests, Nature and Landscape
http://www.llv.li/amtstellen/llv-awnl/llv-awnl-home.htm

Lithuania
Environmental Protection Agency
http://aaa.am.lt/VI/

Luxembourg
Ministère de l'Environnement
http://www.environnement.public.lu/

Malta
Malta Environment and Planning Authority
http://www.mepa.org.mt/

The Netherlands
National Institute of Public Health and Environmental Protection
http://www.rivm.nl/

Norway
Norwegian Pollution Control Authority
http://www.sft.no/

Poland
Chief Inspectorate for Environmental Protection
http://www.gios.gov.pl/

Portugal
Institute of Environment
http://www.iambiente.pt/

Romania
Ministry of Waters and Environmental Protection
http://www.mappm.ro/

Slovak Republic
Slovak Environmental Agency
http://www.sazp.sk/

Slovenia
Environment Agency of the Republic of Slovenia
http://www.arso.gov.si/

Spain
Ministerio de Medio Ambiente
http://www.mma.es/

Sweden
Swedish Environmental Protection Agency
http://www.naturvardsverket.se/

Turkey
Ministry of Environment
http://www.cevre.gov.tr/

United Kingdom
Department for Environment, Food and
Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
http://www.defra.gov.uk/

EEA cooperating countries

Albania
Ministry of Environment
http://www.managenergy.net/actors/A2291.htm

Bosnia-Herzegovina
Federal Ministry for Physical Planning and
Environment
http://www.fmpuio.gov.ba/

Croatia
Croatian Environment Agency
http://www.azo.hr/default.asp

FYR of Macedonia
Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning
http://www.moepp.gov.mk/default-MK.asp

Serbia and Montenegro
European Integration Office
http://www.feio.sv.gov.yu/

Switzerland
Swiss Agency for the Environment, Forests
and Landscape (SAEFL)
http://www.umwelt-schweiz.ch/buwal/de/

Monaco
Bureau de la Coopération Internationale
http://www.gouv.mc/

TH-61-04-921-EN-C

лгария Belgique/België Ceská republika Danmark Deutschland Eesti Ελλάδα España
nce Ireland İsland Italia Κύπρος Latvija Liechtenstein Lietuva Luxembourg Magyarors
ta Nederland Norge Österreich Polska Portugal Romania Slovenija Slovenská republik
omi/Finland Sverige Türkiye United Kingdom България Belgique/België Ceská repub-
. Danmark Deutschland Eesti Ελλάδα España France Ireland İsland Italia Κύπρος Latv
chtenstein Lietuva Luxembourg Magyarország Malta Nederland Norge Österreich Pols
tugal Romania Slovenija Slovenská republika Suomi/Finland Sverige Türkiye United k
n България Belgique/België Ceská republika Danmark Deutschland Eesti Ελλάδα Esp
nce Ireland İsland Italia Κύπρος Latvija Liechtenstein Lietuva Luxembourg Magyarors
ta Nederland Norge Österreich Polska Portugal Romania Slovenija Slovenská republik
omi/Finland Sverige Türkiye United Kingdom България Belgique/België Ceská repub-

Where to go for more information

EEA:
http://www.eea.eu.int/
List of NFPs and ETCs:
http://org.eea.eu.int/organisation/nfp-eionet_group.html
Eionet infrastructure and tools:
http://www.eionet.eu.int/
Reportnet:
http://www.eionet.eu.int/reportnet.html
EEA strategy:
http://org.eea.eu.int/documents/strategy.pdf

ISBN 92-9167-699-3

European Environment Agency
Kongens Nytorv 6
1050 Copenhagen K
Denmark

Tel.: (45) 33 36 71 00
Fax: (45) 33 36 71 99

Website: www.eea.eu.int
Enquiries: www.eea.eu.int/enquiries

9 789291 676996

Publications Office

European Environment Agency