

Consolidated annual activity report 2021



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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2022

ISBN 978-92-9480-462-4
ISSN 1977-8449
doi: 10.2800/604801

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Management Board's analysis and assessment

Introduction

The Management Board welcomes the Consolidated Annual Activity Report for 2021 (CAAR 2021) and makes the following observations.

Commentary of overall achievements

The Management Board welcomes the following achievements by the EEA in 2021, recognising the continued challenge of working under the current circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Management Board noted the resilience of EEA staff to adapt to new ways of working and their sustained commitment to delivering to a high level.

- 2021 was the first year of implementation of the EEA-Eionet Strategy 2021-2030, which is aligned with the EU policy priorities. The engagement with the countries and network partners in the Eionet mapping exercise and the overall Eionet modernisation exercise paves the way for a successful adaptation of the Network to delivering the ambition level set by the Strategy. The Management Board notes the importance of the role of the Management Board Advisory Committee in delivering on this ambition level, and in providing opportunities for countries to share experiences and supporting the development of action plans for countries to transform the national Eionets.
- Effective management of the governance processes and functioning of MB and Bureau was ensured during 2021. The continued adaptation of ways of working in the online setting ensured timely decision-making throughout the year.
- The EEA undertook new tasks supporting the delivery of Europe's environment ambitions as part of the European Green Deal (EGD) and the 8th Environment Action Programme (8th EAP), also contributing to Europe's global commitments, thus strengthening EEA's position as a major source for policy-relevant environmental information.
- Preparatory work leading to the establishment of the European Scientific Advisory Board for Climate Change under the European Climate Law was completed with operations starting in 2022, growing the EEA's role in supporting the delivery of Europe's climate targets.

- New European Topic Centres (ETCs), aligned with the strategic objectives, for the period 2022-2026 were designated during 2021. The designation of the ETC on Biodiversity and Ecosystems is foreseen in 2022.
- The delivery rates for EEA key performance indicators 2021 were high: with budget execution rate of 95.2% of the annual budget, 89% delivery rate of key reports and assessments, and high engagement with key stakeholders and network partners throughout the year.
- Despite the challenging circumstances, the effective cooperation with Eionet, EU institutions, as well as global actors was maintained. The cooperation with other EU Agencies under EEA's chairmanship of the EU Agencies Network was also key in a context of increasingly integrated EU policies.
- The new Copernicus Contribution Agreement was agreed and the further integration of Copernicus data with EEA products and data flows strengthens EEA's role as environmental information provider.
- EEA's investments continued to be adapted to embrace digitalisation as a building block to implement the EEA-Eionet Strategy.

Recommendations

With the aim of ensuring efficient operation in the period to come, the Management Board puts forward the following recommendations:

- Recognising that 2021 was the first year of the implementation of the EEA-Eionet Strategy 2021-2030, the Management Board recommends that the ambition of the Eionet modernisation exercise should be to fundamentally transform the Eionet network to ensure its fitness for purpose for delivering the ambition level of the Strategy, respond to future challenges and strengthen added value for countries.
- The Management Board recommends that the EEA improve the Single Programming Document process with the provision of clear timelines and deadlines for everyone

involved, to ensure good governance so that the version sent for adoption in December to the Management Board is the final one. The Management Board also recommends early discussions and agreement on resource elements with the European Commission in this context.

- The Management Board notes the importance of the EEA having sufficient resources allocated to support functions in order to continue to deliver on its functions. In relation to the issue of support functions often missing from resourcing plans of new activities, the Management Board encourages the EEA to continue to actively engage with the European Commission to ensure an adequate

balance between operational and support tasks, and to work with the Management Board on suggesting ways forward on how the impact of these resource gaps can be minimised.

- The Management Board notes the importance of the EEA continuing to provide regular information to the Board on the follow-up actions to audit recommendations.
- The Management Board recommends that the EEA to continue providing a commentary to the follow-up observations from the discharge authority and the actions undertaken by the Agency to address the observations.



Executive summary

The year in brief

The year 2021 was the first of implementing the EEA-Eionet strategy 2021-2030. During the year, the EEA played a key role in supporting environmental and climate actions responding to European policies, the European Green Deal (EGD) and the proposal for the Eighth Environment Action Programme (8th EAP), as well as to Europe's global commitments.

The EEA-Eionet strategy constitutes the basis for the EEA Single Programming Document 2021-2023, while the annual work programme for 2021 is structured around the work areas set out in the strategy. The EEA continued to inform the implementation of EU environmental policy during 2021. Data flows, assessments and briefings continue to be a major input to policy implementation.

The following highlights provide a snapshot of the EEA's work during the year.

1. Biodiversity and ecosystems

Enhancing monitoring and reporting, and providing regular indicators for EU biodiversity, marine and freshwater policy, including:

- publication of a national protected areas data set with related assessment overview;
- continued support to the Knowledge Centre on Biodiversity;
- continued support to the United Nations (UN) Convention on Biodiversity process for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework;
- publication of the *European maritime transport environmental report*;
- launch of the MapMyTree tool, under the 3 billion trees commitment of the EU biodiversity strategy;
- support to the European Commission on matters relating to protected areas, water directives and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive;

- publication of briefings and reports covering topics such as marine biodiversity, water scarcity and droughts, water management challenges and bathing water management.

2. Climate change mitigation and adaptation

Delivering data, information and knowledge contributing to mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, including:

- progress reporting on climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- publication of assessments and indicators on mitigation progress and the potential in various sectors to support the achievement of mid-term targets;
- support to the negotiations on the European Climate Law and the establishment of the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change;
- information on and assessment of climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptation. Collaboration EC (RTD, CLIMA) on EU Mission on Adaptation to prepare visibility of results via the Climate-ADAPT platform;
- knowledge on the just transition elements of the EGD and the social implications of climate mitigation policies.

3. Human health and the environment

Delivering data and information to improve knowledge of the health impacts caused by air, water and soil pollution, noise, chemicals and the changing climate in Europe, including:

- support to the zero pollution action plan;
- data on air pollutants and emissions in support of the national emission reduction commitments and ambient air quality directives;
- the launch of a new web portal to support noise reporting;
- support to the chemicals strategy for sustainability, including publishing an EEA briefing on the 'safe and sustainable by design' principles.

4. Circular economy and resource use

Delivering data and information to assess the progress of Europe's transition towards a circular economy, and improving knowledge of the environment and climate pressures caused by Europe's production and consumption, including:

- support to the implementation of the circular economy action plan within the EGD;
- implementation of one of the phases in the 'Bellagio process' — an international dialogue to set out the principles and stimulate better monitoring of circular economy goals;
- provision of targeted knowledge for three sectors: textiles, plastics and buildings;
- a country-specific analysis on performance towards the Waste Framework Directive;
- an assessment on material flows and sustainable resource use.

5. Sustainability trends, prospects and responses

Delivering assessments and indicators in support of EU sustainability ambitions and underlying policy processes, including:

- a report on knowledge for action and empowering the transition to a sustainable Europe;
- improved indicators on sustainability transitions;
- continued contributions to the development of the EU sustainable finance taxonomy;
- contributions in the field of economics, including the report on green growth and economic resilience;
- work on the role of cities in sustainability transitions, with a focus on the EU Urban Agenda;
- work to support the European Commission on foresight studies; cooperation with other organisations working on foresight, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Additional support to policy

The EEA plays a key role in leading the zero pollution monitoring framework by developing a baseline against which to monitor progress towards targets and objectives. The EEA Scientific Committee contributed to this zero pollution ambition by reviewing the emerging issues identified.

The EEA provided key support to the European Commission and European Parliament through expert advice on the proposal for the 8th EAP and its monitoring framework.

An enhanced collaboration between the EEA and EC-DG RTD was developed; missions of both organisations drive on the common commitment to support the European Green Deal knowledge requirements.

In the international arena, EEA activities were aligned to EGD priorities with expert contributions to relevant events, including the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) and the meeting of the contracting parties to the Barcelona Convention. The EEA continued its support to the UN Convention on Biodiversity for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

The EEA further contributed to the implementation of EU policies through its chairmanship of the European Union Agencies Network and most of the sub-networks.

To support of the objectives of the European Climate Law, adopted in 2021, a European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change was established and will serve as a point of reference on scientific knowledge relating to climate change to underpin the EU's climate actions and efforts to reach climate neutrality by 2050.

Communicating for impact

In 2021 the EEA completed the first phase of its indicator improvement process, with the publication of shorter, sharper and more policy-relevant indicators. The EEA continued to strengthen citizen engagement through its communication activities, with audiovisual content, online debates, the annual photo competition and local communication activities.

In addition, the EEA developed products designed for citizens, including the European City Air Quality Viewer, which ranks air quality across cities, and a mobile app version of the European Air Quality Index.

The EEA launched several new digital and knowledge products in 2021, including the European Climate and Health Observatory and the European Climate Data Explorer within the Climate-ADAPT platform and interactive web reports on air quality and climate hazards.

Networks and partnerships

The Eionet review was finalised in 2021 with the new structure in place from 1 January 2022, strengthening cooperation under the EEA-Eionet strategy. The EEA-Eionet digitalisation framework and communication framework were adopted and several key activities undertaken.

Data, technology and digitalisation

The EEA's role as a trusted entity for the Copernicus land monitoring service and cross-service in situ coordination was confirmed with the signing of a new contribution agreement for the period 2021-2027. Collaboration between the EEA and the Group on Earth Observations was strengthened with the signing of a service-level agreement for the period 2021-2023. The EEA launched several new digital knowledge products.

The Eionet review was finalised, adopting the new Eionet group structure and reviewed Eionet core data flows.

The EEA and COVID-19

The unique challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic that were experienced in 2020 also persisted for most of 2021. Nevertheless, the EEA responded well, showing resilience and flexibility, which allowed it to continue its activities and successfully deliver its work programme without any significant disruptions or negative impacts.

The EEA in brief

The EEA's mission is 'to support sustainable development and to help achieve significant and measurable improvement in Europe's environment through the provision of timely, targeted, relevant and reliable information to policy-making agents and the public'.

The EEA is a decentralised agency of the EU. The EEA/Eionet Regulation ⁽¹⁾ established the EEA ⁽²⁾, as an independent EU body with its own legal personality and for an indefinite period. The Agency's Founding Regulation also established Eionet ⁽³⁾ and includes the provision that the Agency is open to countries that are not members of the EU ⁽⁴⁾.

The Agency's main task is to provide sound, independent information on the environment. The Agency is a major information source for those involved in developing, adopting, implementing and evaluating environmental policy, and also for the general public.

The EEA's overall mandate, established in the EEA/Eionet Regulation is:

- to help the European Community and the EEA member countries make informed decisions about improving the environment, integrating environmental considerations into economic policies and moving towards sustainability; and
- to coordinate Eionet.

The overall objective of the EEA is defined in Article 1(2) of the Agency's Founding Regulation:

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, the objective of the Agency and of the European Environment Information and Observation Network shall be to provide the Community and the Member States with:

- a. 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, and to that end;
- b. the necessary technical and scientific support.

EEA funding consists of an EU subsidy (subject to approval by the budgetary authority and non-core budget) and payments for services rendered. The EU Financial Regulation (and its rules of application) and the Framework Financial Regulation apply. The European Parliament is the Agency's discharge authority.

With respect to human resources, the Staff Regulation defines the overarching principles for EEA staff, and implementing provisions have to be adopted in agreement with the European Commission. Furthermore, the establishment of and mandate for both the EEA Management Board and the EEA Scientific Committee are defined, as well as the responsibility and accountability of the Executive Director as the legal representative of the Agency.

(1) Regulation (EC) No 401/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the European Environment Agency and the European Environment Information and Observation Network (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32009R0401>).

(2) The EEA was formally established in 1990 by Council Regulation No 1210/90 (EEA/Eionet Regulation). The EEA/Eionet Regulation came into force in late 1993 and was amended by Council Regulation No 933/1999 and then again by Regulation No 1641/2003 of the European Parliament and the Council. In the interests of clarity and rationality, the regulation was codified by Regulation (EC) No 401/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009.

(3) European Environment Information and Observation Network — Eionet portal (<https://www.eionet.europa.eu>).

(4) Agreements with the EEA in the context of Article 300 of the Treaty have been established with the following non-EU countries: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.

The EEA's organisational structure for 2021 included three hierarchical levels:

- Executive Director's Office, led by the Executive Director;
- eight programmes, led by Heads of Programme;
- 18 groups, led by Heads of Group.

See the organisational chart in Annex 3.

Article 41 of the EEA Financial Regulation entitles the Director to delegate the powers of budget execution and for these to be sub-delegated. Powers to execute each type of expenditure are delegated to the Head of Programme, with the Head of Administration having delegation for all types of expenditure. Sub-delegation, limited to only the approval of payments for certain expenditure, is given to Heads of Group in the administration programme.



1 Achievements of the year

Part 1 of this report is structured around the Agency's five activities, as set out in the EEA's Single Programming Document 2021-2023 ⁽⁵⁾. The overall achievements for 2021 are placed in the context of the multiannual goals, key objectives and performance indicators, and are reported in comparison with the performance indicators, specific objectives and expected results defined in the EEA's annual work programme 2021.

The EEA's performance framework is closely related to the key performance indicators (KPIs) for the Executive Director,

aiming to achieve a quantitative monitoring of the Agency's performance in relation to its operational work planning and to its financial and human resource management. The EEA performance framework is structured around five performance objectives (Table 1.1) which are monitored by 16 multiannual KPIs (Table 1.2).

The monitoring of the 'output' and 'Eionet' KPIs are based on the operational performance across the EEA's five activities of the annual work programme.

Table 1.1 EEA annual performance objectives

Performance objective	Type
Sustainable financial and human resources use, and adequate and efficient internal control systems	Input
Timely and qualitative delivery of key products planned in the EEA work programme	Operational output
Development and distribution of EEA products aligned with user needs	Uptake
Sustainable interaction between the EEA and its network	Eionet
Sustainable human resource management	Staff well-being

Table 1.2 EEA multiannual key performance indicators

Performance objective	No	Key performance indicator (KPI)	KPI measurement	Baseline (2019)	Target	2021 realisation
Input	1 ^(a)	Staff occupancy rate	Realised staff resources in annual establishment plan (%)	96.7%	Min. 95%	99.3%
	2 ^(a)	Budget execution — outturn	Rate of annual outturn and carry forwards of EEA core budget (%)	100%	Min. 98%	100%
	3 ^(a)	Budget execution — cancellations	Cancellation rate of payment appropriations in year <i>N</i> (%)	0.5%	Max. 2% of core budget	0.0%
	4 ^(a)	Budget execution — execution	Payments executed within legal/contractual deadline (%)	99.5%	100%	95.2%
	17 ^(a)	Audit compliance	Rate (%) of recommendations from Court of Auditors implemented (with deadline in year <i>N</i>)	75%	-	Not applicable

Note: ^(a) Mandatory KPIs of the Executive Director.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/single-programming-document-2021-2023>

Table 1.2 EEA multiannual key performance indicators (cont.)

Performance objective	No	Key performance indicator (KPI)	KPI measurement	Baseline (2019)	Target	2021 realisation
Eionet	7 ^(a)	Eionet — data submission	Annual performance for Eionet core data flows (%)	92%	90%	86%
	12	Eionet — meeting delivery	Delivery rate of planned Eionet meetings (%)	95%	90%	95%
	13	Eionet — satisfaction	Average participant satisfaction rating (%)	95%	80%	93%
Output	5 ^(a)	Annual work programme delivery — assessments	Delivery rate of key reports/assessments (%) as planned for year <i>N</i>	93.1%	Min. 90%	89%
	6 ^(a)	Annual work programme delivery — indicators	Share of core set indicators updated (%) as planned for year <i>N</i>	96%	Min. 90%	>90%
Uptake	8	Media visibility — EEA references	Articles with reference to the EEA (no)	14,152	Stable/increase	23,066
	9	Media visibility — social media	Followers on social media (no) (Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn combined)	114,046	Stable/increase	207,404
	10	Web traffic	Registered sessions on the EEA website (no)	6,300,000	Stable/increase	9,817,181
	11	Downloads	Registered use of map services (no) (measured as 'machine-to-machine' traffic)	375,000,000	Stable/increase	658,948,125
Staff well-being	14 ^(a)	Staff satisfaction	Average favourable rate for common items for agencies (%)	61%	-	63%
	15 ^(a)	Learning	Average registered time for learning and development (days)	4.11	7	4
	16 ^(a)	Absence	Annual average short-term sick leave (days)	9.7	Stable/decrease	5

Note: ^(a) Mandatory KPIs of the Executive Director.

Regarding budget execution (no 4), as staff had to work from home because of COVID-19 restrictions, there were instances of invoices not being uploaded in a timely manner, due to lack of access within the deadlines, which resulted in an increase in delayed payments.

The delivery of key reports and assessments (no 5) was slightly below target: a total of 61 publications were planned, of which 49 were published and six carried over to 2022.

Regarding the annual work programme delivery (no 6), 61 indicators were planned for 2021, of which 55 were published. In total, 21 core set indicators were planned in 2021, of which 21 were published.

The main drivers for the annual score of data flows (no 7) being slightly below target are low scores in the timeliness of delivery of the Water Information System for Europe (WISE-2) data flow and the European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (E-PRTR).

Fewer hours were recorded against learning and development (no 15) while the number of training opportunities offered remained the same. It is hard to determine the exact reason, however, as because of the continuing COVID-19 restrictions, sessions have been online and have, out of necessity, been shorter. There may also be a need for more clarity among staff with regard to time recording.

With regard to audit compliance (no 17), all recommendations from the European Court of Auditors (ECA) were implemented by September 2021, and therefore there were no data to report on this indicator at the end of the year.

1.1 Activity 1: Biodiversity and ecosystems

Specific objective: To ensure the delivery of data, information and knowledge contributing to measuring ecosystem health, its improvement and the halt of biodiversity loss across terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems, including measures that lead to it.

Activity 1: Key performance indicators

KPIs	Target 2021 (%)	Achieved 2021 (%)
EEA reports produced	90	71
Core set indicators updated	90	50 ^(a)
Eionet core data flows	90	80
Network meeting satisfaction ^(b)	80	Not applicable

Note: ^(a) The KPI score of 50% represents four indicators of which two are considered not achieved by the end of 2022. One of these was postponed to 2022, due to delays in the availability of underpinning datasets, the other was released and published in April 2022.

^(b) It was not possible to break this down per activity area; work is in progress to rectify this for 2022.

Achievement of objectives and results

Action 1: Enhanced monitoring and reporting, and provision of regular indicators for EU biodiversity, marine and freshwater policy

- The national protected areas data set was published online with a related assessment overview, which shows a minor increase in the land area protected and a negligible increase in the marine area.
- The Natura 2000 protected areas data set was published online with related work on the creation of EU lists and assessment of the sufficiency of the network submitted to the Commission.
- The creation, and processes for sharing, of statistics on protected areas was further enhanced. This was a key contribution to the Agency's involvement with the Knowledge Centre on Biodiversity, to ensure that both the Agency and the Joint Research Centre (JRC) show the exact

same figure. We have engaged with the team involved in the Knowledge Centre on Biodiversity to ensure that the work of the Agency is central to its ongoing development.

- To ensure that the Natura 2000 reporting form is in line with the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 (collection on conservation objectives and measures for each site) a series of proposed modifications was submitted for consultation.
- We have continued to develop the suite of information systems across the programme. A new demonstration version of the freshwater component of the Water Information System for Europe was launched. Continuing work was undertaken on the marine component of this system as well as the biodiversity system. The Forest Information System for Europe has continued to grow and address policy-relevant questions and initiatives such as the 3 billion trees ⁽⁶⁾ commitment and the related Map My Tree tool ⁽⁷⁾.
- A number of indicators were updated in 2021, with further indicators under development to address emerging policy questions.
- The new indicator on pesticides in water was published and was extremely well received.
- The Agency continued to support the United Nations (UN) Convention on Biodiversity process for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.
- Two key water directives, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Bathing Water Directive, were opened for review in 2021 with EEA contributions, including the EEA report *Bathing water management in Europe: Successes and challenges*. This work will continue until the review process is finalised. EEA contributions throughout the year were also critical to the development of the Nature Restoration Law.
- In spring 2021, we co-organised and supported a series of workshops relating to the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (UWWTD), including the UWWTD impact assessment workshop on reporting in spring 2021, urban waste water and sludge in the circular economy and the context of climate neutrality, and a workshop on cost-benefit analysis in the UWWTD impact assessment, in the lead-up to the final report on the UWWTD, due in Q1 2022. The UWWTD country pages were launched simultaneously with the new demo version of WISE-Freshwater. The upcoming EEA report *Beyond water quality: sewage treatment in a circular economy* served as background information for the EEA's contribution to the stakeholder conference on the revision of the UWWTD.

⁽⁶⁾ 3 Billion Trees (<https://forest.eea.europa.eu/3-billion-trees/introduction>).

⁽⁷⁾ MapMyTree (https://ec.europa.eu/environment/news/mapmytree-new-data-tool-count-planted-trees-europe-2021-12-09_en).

- The Green Week in June 2021 also focused on zero pollution, during which annual bathing water quality results were launched and sessions on Marine LitterWatch and digitalisation opportunities to monitor Europe's environment with regard to chemicals were held, also with the JRC.

Action 2: Developing knowledge to support terrestrial, marine and freshwater resources and ecosystem-based management

- The *European maritime transport environmental report 2021* was published; this report provides a factual analysis of the environmental pressures exerted by the maritime transport sector and presents up-to-date information on the relevant EU and international environmental standards. It is the result of joint efforts between the EEA and the European Maritime Safety Agency in close cooperation with the European Commission.
- The ecosystem accounting framework, in which the EEA has played a significant role over the past two decades, was formally adopted by the UN in New York.
- The Agency continued providing support to the Commission on matters related to protected areas, with particular regard to the ambitions of the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030, as well as to the forthcoming Nature Restoration Law. This was evident in the note the Commission sent on criteria and guidance for protected area designations⁽⁸⁾. There has been continued ad hoc support to the Commission regarding marine protected areas, especially with regard to bottom trawling fishing in Natura 2000 sites. Regarding the Nature Restoration Law, there has been support across the terrestrial, freshwater and marine realms.
- The EEA continued to support the Knowledge Centre on Biodiversity.
- The Agency continued to provide support to the Commission on aspects related to the water directives and Marine Strategy Framework Directive, including a keynote speech at the Future of Our Seas conference.
- The EEA report *Water scarcity and droughts in Europe* provided a key contribution to the water resources and water scarcity-related policy initiatives, including the Water Framework Directive. Outreach activities were conducted towards policymakers, including the water and marine directors, and at the Dialogue for the Future conference.

- In addition, a briefing dedicated to marine biodiversity was published, together with an EEA report entitled *Drivers of and pressures arising from selected key water management challenges — a European overview*.

Throughout 2021 we recruited extensively to support current and future ambitions. The first of these recruits has been developing the ecosystems perspective to the zero pollution action plan (ZPAP) in conjunction with the EEA's health and sustainable resource use programme (HSR).

1.2 Activity 2: Climate change mitigation and adaptation

Specific objective: Deliver data, information and knowledge contributing to mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.

Activity 2: Key performance indicators

KPIs	Target 2021 (%)	Achieved 2021 (%)
EEA reports produced	90	77
Core set indicators updated	90	100
Eionet core data flows	90	100
Network meeting satisfaction ⁽⁹⁾	80	N/A

Note: ⁽⁹⁾ It was not possible to break this down per activity area; work is in progress to rectify this for 2022.

Achievement of objectives and results

Climate change mitigation, energy, transport

In 2021, new progress reporting on climate change mitigation and adaptation under the Governance Regulation on the Energy Union and Climate Action was conducted using Reportnet 3.0. A new website⁽⁹⁾ on climate change mitigation and energy was launched, which provides access to the reported data and related assessments. The EEA facilitated reporting on a range of data and information on greenhouse gas emissions, ozone-depleting substances and fluorinated greenhouse gases, fuel quality and fuel greenhouse gas intensity, and average CO₂ emissions from new cars and vans. The EEA also published the first data on the CO₂ performance of manufacturers of heavy-duty vehicles⁽¹⁰⁾.

⁽⁸⁾ Criteria and guidance for protected areas designations — Staff Working Document (https://ec.europa.eu/environment/publications/criteria-and-guidance-protected-areas-designations-staff-working-document_en).

⁽⁹⁾ Climate and Energy in the EU (<https://climate-energy.eea.europa.eu>).

⁽¹⁰⁾ Monitoring of CO₂ emissions from heavy-duty vehicles (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/co2-emission-hdv>).

To support policymaking on the achievement of mid-term climate targets and climate neutrality, the EEA, together with the European Topic Centre on Climate Mitigation and Energy (ETC/CME), completed assessments on mitigation progress and potential in various sectors, many of them based on data reported under EU legislation. These included the publication of more than 20 indicators on progress in various policy areas. The annual *Trends and projections in Europe* report was also published and assessed progress towards achieving the interlinked targets of decarbonisation, renewable energy deployment and energy efficiency gains.

New knowledge development was undertaken to link the energy transition with circular economy priorities, resulting in a report on waste streams at the nexus of the two policy areas. A joint briefing by Eurofound and the EEA was published in October 2021 on the just transition elements of the European Green Deal (EGD) as relates to the social implications of climate mitigation policies and measures across Europe. The annual *Transport and environment report* compared the sustainability of different modes of European passenger transport. Finally, studies on the benefits of prosumerism in energy generation and on trends in sustainability in the mobility system were concluded. The final reports on these studies are expected to be published in early 2022.

The EEA further supported the negotiations on the European Climate Law and the establishment of the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change. A study of national climate advisory bodies in Europe contributed to this.

Climate change adaptation

In February 2021 the new EU adaptation strategy was launched. This strategy presents the path towards reaching climate resilience objectives by 2050 by making adaptation smarter, faster and systemic. To support key objectives of the strategy, the European Commission launched the Horizon Europe mission on adaptation to support faster adaptation and finance on solutions and preparedness for the impact of climate change to protect lives and assets across regions in Europe and Destination Earth's Digital Twin on Adaptation to support smarter adaptation.

The EEA continued its activities directly supporting adaptation policy developments implementation by providing timely data, indicators and assessments and by maintaining information systems to support solutions on climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptation. Based on the reported information on the progress on climate change adaptation under the Governance Regulation on the Energy Union and Climate Action, the new country pages within the

Climate-ADAPT platform were prepared. As a part of the EU adaptation strategy objectives, the EEA, together with the partners, launched the European Climate and Health Observatory in March, which provides easy access to a wide range of relevant publications, tools, websites and other resources related to climate change and human health. In a joint collaboration with the Copernicus climate change service (C3S), the EEA published the European Climate Data Explorer and an interactive EEA report entitled *Europe's changing climate hazards*. To support the policy process on closing the climate protection gap, the EEA published a briefing and indicator on economic losses and fatalities from weather- and climate-related events in Europe.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation in land management

The EEA works towards setting up a thorough monitoring, reporting and verification system, to support the implementation of the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) Regulation, which needs to be operational as of 2023. To that extent, the EEA organised the first, and voluntary, trial review of the LULUCF sector included in the Member States greenhouse gas inventories. With the support of ETC/CME, new and more automated checks on reported LULUCF emissions and removals data were developed and tested during the initial checks phase of the EU inventory compilation.

To support the aim of the LULUCF Regulation to increase the use of geospatial data sets in inventory compilation, the EEA performed Member State-specific case studies on how to use Copernicus land monitoring service (CLMS) data in LULUCF calculations; the results have been used to develop the technical specification for the so-called LULUCF instance, which will be produced in 2022.

The EEA, by participating in stakeholder workshops and providing direct expert advice to the Directorate-General for Climate Action (DG CLIMA), contributed to the development of the 'Fit for 55' package, which sets specific Member State and EU targets for the LULUCF sector. These targets aim for a combined agriculture and LULUCF sector that is carbon neutral by 2035 and aims to safeguard and analyse the co-benefits and trade-offs for biodiversity.

In relation to assessments on the co-benefits and trade-offs for land management, in 2021 the EEA commissioned a framework contract to provide data on the production and consumption of biomass and related climate and environmental impacts, which will be used in the publication of a comprehensive assessment on the role of biomass in the EGD.

A number of online Eionet network activities were held throughout 2021 with various expert groups on climate change topics.

1.3 Activity 3: Human health and the environment

Specific objective: Deliver data and information to improve knowledge of the health impacts caused by air, water and soil pollution, noise, chemicals and the changing climate in Europe.

Activity 3: Key performance indicators

KPIs	Target 2021 (%)	Achieved 2021 (%)
EEA reports produced	90	100
Core set indicators updated	90	100
Eionet core data flows	90	91
Network meeting satisfaction ^(a)	80	N/A

Note: ^(a) It was not possible to break this down per activity area; work is in progress to rectify this for 2022.

Achievement of objectives and results

A main priority in 2021 was supporting the ZPAP, in which the EEA is leading the zero pollution monitoring framework — developing a baseline against which to monitor progress towards the ZPAP targets and objectives. Work has been undertaken in close coordination with the Directorate-General for the Environment (DG ENV) and the JRC, with a first assessment planned in late 2022. Work to develop a new European Environmental Health Atlas, also a responsibility for the EEA in the ZPAP, is under way, with product launch planned for 2023.

The EEA continued its activities directly supporting policy implementation including coordinating reporting of key data flows on air pollutant emissions and preparation of relevant assessments. This included the National Emission reduction Commitments Directive reporting status 2021 data and briefing in August, together with the *European Union emission inventory report 1990-2019* submitted to the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution. This was followed by a briefing, *Counting the costs of industrial pollution*, published in September.

Supporting air quality policy implementation is also a main activity of the Agency, whereby 2021 activities were timed to help inform the Commission's revision of the ambient air quality directives ⁽¹⁾. The 2021 briefing on the status of air quality was launched in the same week as the World Health Organization (WHO) published new air quality guidelines ⁽²⁾ and the Commission organised the first stakeholder meeting on the revision of the ambient air quality directives, generating considerable press coverage. The 2021 briefing on the health impacts of air pollution was published prior to the Clean Air Forum held in Madrid, and it estimated the health benefits of meeting the new WHO guideline for fine particulate matter, as well as progress made towards the relevant ZPAP target. These briefings were updated and combined as the first online EEA air quality report to accompany the Commission's public consultation on the revision. Updated country factsheets on air pollution were also published in early December. The EEA launched two digital products designed to more broadly raise awareness of air quality issues among citizens, the European City Air Viewer ⁽³⁾ which ranks air quality in Europe's cities, and a mobile app version of the European Air Quality Index ⁽⁴⁾.

On environmental noise, the EEA developed a new mechanism for reporting noise data in line with requirements from the Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE) initiative. The EEA has actively supported the Commission and countries in implementing this new reporting mechanism with testing, guidelines and user videos developed, and an explanatory webinar with the Eionet National Reference Centre (NRC) on noise. A new web-portal to support reporting of noise information was launched. Assessment activities to map combined exposure to noise and air pollution and to identify good practice in noise management continued, with products due in 2022.

On chemicals, the EEA published a briefing on chemical that are safe and sustainable by design in January and co-led an Eionet webinar of the ad hoc expert group on chemicals with RIVM, the Netherlands National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, focused on the concept of essential uses of chemicals in November. Both topics were selected to support the chemicals strategy for sustainability, which envisages the future development of these two key concepts. The EEA has worked closely with DG ENV and the European Chemicals Agency to propose a framework of indicators for measuring progress under the chemicals strategy for sustainability. As a partner within the Horizon 2020 project HBM4EU, the EEA has continued to deliver a range of project communication products on chemicals, including delivering an assessment of the relevance of knowledge generated by the Information Platform

⁽¹⁾ Revision of the ambient air quality directives (https://ec.europa.eu/environment/air/quality/revision_of_the_aaq_directives.htm).

⁽²⁾ WHO global air quality guidelines: particulate matter (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀), ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide and carbon monoxide (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/345329>).

⁽³⁾ European city air quality viewer (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/air/urban-air-quality/european-city-air-quality-viewer>).

⁽⁴⁾ European Air Quality Index (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/air/air-quality-index>).

for Chemical Monitoring (IPCHEM). The EEA has also contributed to a new proposal responding to the Horizon Europe call on the European Partnership for the assessment of the risks from chemicals (PARC).

Ongoing work is focused on the environmental burden of disease, with a briefing on the environmental determinants of cancer due out in 2022 to support Europe's beating cancer plan. Support to the European Climate and Health Observatory was delivered — for more details see Activity Area 2. The EEA has also continued its cross-thematic activities to better document the benefits that nature yields for health; a briefing assessing the social distribution of access to green and blue space in European cities will be published in February 2022, including case studies from Eionet partner countries and making use of Copernicus land cover data to map green space in European cities.

A number of online Eionet network meetings were held throughout 2021, including meetings on air quality, air pollutant emissions, noise, and environment and health, as well as meetings of the ad hoc expert group on chemicals.

1.4 Activity 4: Circular economy and resource use

Specific objective: Deliver data and information to assess progress of Europe's transition towards a circular economy, and improve knowledge of the environment and climate pressures caused by Europe's production and consumption of raw materials including water, products, services and waste.

Activity 4: Key performance indicators

KPIs	Target 2021 (%)	Achieved 2021 (%)
EEA reports produced	90	100
Core set indicators updated	90	100
Eionet core data flows ^(a)	90	No data flows in this activity area
Network meeting satisfaction ^(b)	80	N/A

Note: ^(a) Included in the annual work programme for 2021 in error.

^(b) It was not possible to break this down per activity area; work is in progress to rectify this for 2022.

Achievement of objectives and results

The EEA's activities within this work area directly contribute to improving knowledge on the transition to a circular economy in Europe, and support the implementation and priorities of the circular economy action plan (CEAP) of the EGD.

In 2021, the EEA started an implementation phase in the 'Bellagio process' — an international dialogue to set principles and stimulate better monitoring of circular economy goals. One aspect of this work has been to consolidate a community of practice with Eionet and other stakeholders by means of a series of expert workshops. In addition, the EEA has undertaken studies that explore the potential use of novel data sources, technical metrics and signals that can complement the existing monitoring framework for the circular economy coordinated by Eurostat.

The CEAP structures actions at the sectoral level through selected key product value chains. The EEA has prioritised its work across these domains by delivering targeted knowledge for three sectors: textiles, plastics and buildings.

- **Textiles.** EEA assessments have helped develop a better understanding of the environmental and climate relevance of the sector. Specific contributions have informed the European Commission's upcoming European textile strategy (expected spring 2022). The EEA has also collaborated with a range of national stakeholders and European institutions. Two studies were commissioned in 2021 (one on the issue of microplastics from textiles and one on pathways for improved sustainability in the sector by fostering eco-design). Both studies will be published in early 2022 alongside the textiles strategy.
- **Plastics.** In addition to the work on textiles and microplastics, the issue of single-use plastics and how the further implementation of measures may have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic was a focus. The EEA has again also engaged in a number of stakeholder fora and networking activities around plastics at the UN level, including helping inform EU discussions on the possible future international agreement on plastics.
- **Buildings.** An assessment was started in 2021 to analyse how circular economy principles can contribute to decarbonisation. The activity will identify specific solutions and policy approaches to maximise the environmental benefits of the investments associated with the so-called renovation wave. Commencing with developing an improved understanding of the building stock in Europe, further activities will continue throughout 2022.

A priority activity for the EEA is also to support EU waste policy implementation. In 2021, the EEA delivered country-specific reports on an early warning mechanism. These profiles analyse the capacity of countries to reach targets set for several waste streams in accordance with the Waste Framework Directive. Outputs from the activity will be delivered in the spring of 2022, together with complementary analysis, designed to support the Commission's report to the European Parliament and the Council, as envisaged in the directive. The EEA also supported the review of the Waste Shipments Regulation by providing updated information on shipments within Europe. Additionally, the first report

on waste prevention, as mandated by the revised Waste Framework Directive, was published in December 2021, together with updated country profiles for those countries that recently revised these policies.

As part of its assessment-related activities, the EEA also explored selected areas of emerging environmental and climate concern in relation to waste. One example of this is the anticipated future resource needs and waste generation to support Europe's energy transition, in particular from the use of renewable energy technologies. Opportunities for the uptake of the circular economy principles as a tool to manage trade-offs were highlighted, as was the need for closed-loop supply chains in the energy sector to create better opportunities from the resource-waste angle.

On material flows and sustainable resource use, the EEA published a report on the sustainable sourcing of raw materials, with a focus on embedded greenhouse gas emissions. The report contributes to the increasing attention given to trade/global supply issues in climate policy and highlighted specific policy options to improve the interlinkages between mitigation policies and circular economy/sustainable resource use policies. In this area, the EEA also continued its support to the International Resource Panel, including through the ongoing contribution to the development of the upcoming *Global resources outlook*.

1.5 Activity 5: Sustainability trends, prospects and responses

Specific objective: Deliver assessments and indicators in support of EU sustainability ambitions and underlying policy processes.

Activity 5: Key performance indicators

KPIs	Target 2021 (%)	Achieved 2021 (%)
EEA reports produced	90	92
Network meeting satisfaction ^(a)	80	N/A

Note: ^(a) It was not possible to break this down per activity area; work is in progress to rectify this for 2022.

Achievement of objectives and results

We undertook four strands of activities during this first year of the EEA-Eionet strategy 2021-2030, which focused on:

1. integrated assessment of progress towards sustainability;
2. understanding of the systemic challenges that need to be addressed to achieve sustainability;
3. analysis of enablers of sustainability transitions; and

4. forward-looking assessments and stakeholder engagement towards achieving long-term policy objectives.

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to bring challenges to and opportunities for our work; for example, whereas working from home hindered the cooperative working essential for integrated assessments, online meetings enabled interactions with broader sets of stakeholders, who helped to improve our knowledge base.

For activities (1) and (2), the two main outcomes were the EEA report *Knowledge for action — empowering the transition to a sustainable Europe*, published in October, and the development of a sustainability measurement and assessment framework that will guide future assessments of progress and prospects for sustainability. The EEA also commenced a new series of outputs called 'Narratives for change', which is aimed at bringing new perspectives that could trigger change in the way we understand systemic challenges and act towards achieving sustainability. Two narratives were published on growth without economic growth and innovation for sustainability. All three knowledge types are key building blocks towards *The European environment — state and outlook 2025* report (SOER 2025).

The EEA completed the first phase of its indicators improvement process, which culminated in the launch of a new indicator system in December. Indicators are now shorter, sharper and more policy relevant, and with consistent metadata so they can be used by indicator practitioners beyond the EEA. We also supported the European Commission and the European Parliament with expert advice on the proposal for the Eighth Environment Action Programme (8th EAP) and its monitoring framework. Finally, the new ETC on Sustainability Transitions was chosen for the period 2022-2026. It will work with the EEA across the four activity strands to inform EU policies and the SOER 2025 on sustainability challenges and transitions.

On enablers, the EEA continued its contributions to the development of the EU sustainable finance taxonomy through the EU Platform and its technical working groups across all environmental objectives: climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity, water, circular economy and pollution control. Furthermore, the renewed EU sustainable finance strategy, published in July, lists strengthened EEA cooperation with the European Central Bank, the European Supervisory Authorities and the European Systemic Risk Board. Work also commenced on corporate reporting standards and new indicators for sustainable finance.

In the economics domain, we engaged with stakeholders and delivered further analysis and insights on the pivotal role of economics in the transition to sustainability. Three main outcomes were delivered:

1. an ETC on Waste and Materials in a Green Economy (ETC/WMGE) report entitled *Modelling the sustainability transition in between the European Green Deal and the Next Generation EU Fund* (published in August);

2. an ETC/WMGE report on *Sustainability transition and the European Green Deal: a macro-dynamic perspective* (published in December); and
3. the EEA report *Reflecting on green growth: creating a resilient economy within environmental limits* (published in November).

With the support of relevant urban stakeholders, the EEA developed a conceptual framework and selected six analytical lenses to assess the role of cities in their transitions towards sustainability, based on the EU urban agenda and the EGD. Six outputs were published during the period 2020-2021, reflecting 4 years of work and including an integrated assessment of the drivers of and opportunities for urban sustainability change, a methodological report, a briefing on the implications of COVID-19 for urban sustainability, two EEA reports (*Urban sustainability in Europe — avenues for change* and *Urban sustainability in Europe — learning from nexus analysis*) and a glossary of key terms encompassing all the work. All outputs are accessible through a specific web page ⁽¹⁵⁾ that was designed and implemented to communicate on urban sustainability.

On foresight studies, the EEA Scientific Committee contributed to the European Commission's horizon scanning as part of its zero-pollution ambition, as set out in the EGD, by reviewing the emerging issues identified. The EEA progressed three projects co-created with Eionet. We developed scenarios for a sustainable Europe in 2050, covering European solution scenarios and global context scenarios. With the 'Green shifts/Horizon scanning 2020-2025' we supported the Commission in identifying emerging trends and we developed an analysis on emerging social innovations in the food system with transformative potential. 'Strengthening the use of foresight in national state of the environment reports' has progressed well in cooperation with the Western Balkan countries.

The EEA also stepped up its support and cooperation with other foresight stakeholders, including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and its Government Foresight Community on low-carbon transitions and the European Commission Directorate-General for Research and Innovation on foresight for the next Horizon Europe work programme. We also increased support to the EU strategic foresight initiative through contributions on indicators and

stronger engagement with the European Commission JRC and Secretariat General.

1.6 Horizontal activities

1.6.1 Communicating for impact: boosting online outreach and delivering innovation

The 2021 publication plan, composed of approximately 60 outputs, was delivered with similar implementation rates as in previous years. We engaged in online outreach for EEA knowledge, for example around the first *European maritime transport environmental report 2021* (a joint report with the European Maritime Safety Agency), *EEA Signals 2021 — Europe's nature, Trends and projections in Europe 2021*, the *Air quality in Europe 2021* report and many more. Audiovisuals and online debates helped enhance the outreach. We engaged in selected conferences (Green Week, the Plastic Waste Free World Europe conference, Clean Air Forum) and implemented the photo competition Climate Change Pix.

We again raised the profile of the EEA both in press coverage and through social media outputs, on the topics of air pollution, climate change impacts, greenhouse gas emissions, marine pollution and chemicals, to continue to garner public and press attention.

In the first year of the EEA-Eionet strategy, the communications programme implemented several changes, including adopting the new EEA communication framework 2021-2030. We concluded a product review that has already delivered innovation for the 2022 product planning process. A web analysis project resulted in an ongoing major review of our online presence and the 'Improving EEA indicators' project delivered refreshed EEA indicators with greater communication potential.

In the context of chairing the EU Agencies Network (EUAN), we coordinated communication activities for all agencies and delivered a new communication framework for the network. Internal communication continued with a focus on the new intranet. Last but not least, we engaged in selected corporate and local communication activities, for example on Europe Day.

⁽¹⁵⁾ [Urban sustainability: how can cities become sustainable? — European Environment Agency \(europa.eu\)](https://europeanenvironmentagency.europa.eu)

1.6.2 Eionet — the European Environment Information and Observation Network

The EEA-Eionet strategy 2021-2030 and the Eionet modernisation process were the focus of discussions at the national focal point (NFP)/Eionet meeting in 2021.

The Eionet review was finalised by NFP/Eionet working groups in August 2021. The final proposal was endorsed at the Management Board meeting in September, together with the new Eionet group structure and reviewed Eionet core data flows. The new structure of Eionet has been in place since 1 January 2022. To facilitate strengthening cooperation under the new strategy and to make best use of the benefits of digitalisation, the EEA, in cooperation with the NFP/Eionet group, initiated work on a proposal for a revamp of Eionet digital tools.

The EEA took the necessary internal steps to operate in line with the new structure of Eionet by revising internal capacities and processes for coordination of the new Eionet groups, together with the internal informal network of country desk officers.

In the context of cooperation with the Western Balkan countries, a request for a non-cost extension of the current project (Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance, IPA II) was approved by the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR). Consequently, the project will continue until the end of July 2022, and the unused travel funds were redirected to further strengthen the thematic work in the region, mainly in the areas of air quality, the use of foresight in state of the environment reporting and biodiversity. To secure the continuation of engagement of Western Balkan countries in the work of EEA/Eionet, an IPA III funding proposal is under preparation through a wide consultation process with Western Balkan countries, EU Delegations, DGs NEAR, ENV and CLIMA, and EEA relevant programmes. The proposal is strongly linked to the green agenda for the Western Balkans and EEA-Eionet strategy 2021-2030.

1.6.3 Improving information delivery through the digitalisation framework

The EEA-Eionet digitalisation framework was adopted in April 2021, and an annual implementation roadmap is keeping an oversight of ongoing projects that contribute to this process. During 2021, a number of key activities were undertaken.

- The EEA data infrastructure, including the underlying general information and communication technology infrastructure, was modernised, which included outsourcing key cloud infrastructure components to a colocation centre and taking measures to strengthen cybersecurity.
- Reportnet version 3.1 was launched and various data flows were either newly started or migrated to the new platform.

- Projects exploring the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies were started in the areas of nature, air quality and combining water data and foresight methodologies.
- The EEA web presence project was launched to deliver a new EEA website, a dedicated data hub and new ways to disseminate domain content for completion in spring 2023.
- Selected Copernicus-based data flows were added to the EEA/Eionet core data flows given the growth in Copernicus data availability and the stronger integration into EEA products.
- The Eionet core data flow review was concluded with the inclusion of the abovementioned Copernicus data flow (Coordination of Information on the Environment — Corine — Land Cover, CLC) and biodiversity data from the Bern Convention, Industrial Emissions Directive, EU Registry and Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Article 4, data flows.
- In support of improved stakeholder integration, interaction and communication across Eionet and beyond, the Eionet 2.0 project was initiated at the end of the year as part of the overall Eionet modernisation. There was also an exchange on digitalisation experiences with Member States, mainly through the Network of Environment Protection Agencies and international organisations such as the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNECE.

These key activities were supported by the development of a learning and development programme to increase digital literacy for EEA staff and will, over the coming years, be extended to Eionet and other stakeholders.

Knowledge co-creation around the opportunities arising from and shortcomings of digitalisation activities in thematic domains is being explored in a number of briefings, scoping studies and smaller reports in the areas of waste, nature and climate change mitigation.

1.6.4 Working with the European neighbouring regions

During 2021, the EEA maintained an active dialogue with the European Commission services and relevant regional partners in ensuring continued engagement with the European Neighbourhood, building on the monitoring, data, indicator, assess and knowledge (MDIAK) activities under the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) project-funded work in the period 2016-2020.

In the southern Mediterranean, this included high-level discussion with the newly appointed Director of the Barcelona Convention (UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan, MAP) around mutually agreed strategic orientations in support of the new EU agenda for the Mediterranean. This cooperation

resulted in an agreed joint work plan between the EEA and UNEP/ MAP for 2023-2030, aligned with the multiannual strategic documents of both organisations and aimed at jointly addressing priorities derived from relevant global and regional instruments and processes. Moreover, the EEA and UNEP/ MAP had a joint contribution to the Mediterranean foresight study, MED 2050, implemented by the Plan Bleu Regional Activity Centre.

With respect to the Eastern Partnership engagement, the EEA maintained regular dialogue and provided EEA/Eionet input to relevant discussions with UNECE and UNEP in the context of the upcoming pan-European 'Environment for Europe' assessment, to be presented at the ministerial conference in Nicosia in November 2022. Relevant linkages and thematic support was ensured in the context of the regional EU-funded projects (EU4Climate, EU4Environment) on climate change adaptation, energy and open data aspects, and participation maintained in relevant regional fora (e.g. digitalisation dialogue with UNEP and UNECE in April, EU4Environment Regional Assembly in September).

1.6.5 EEA international engagement

EEA activities in the international context were aligned to support EU engagement and EGD priorities. An update of the EEA's international engagement framework was initiated internally and with relevant European Commission services. An internal coordination group was established to increase opportunities and share knowledge of EEA inputs to relevant international processes and events.

In 2021, the EEA maintained its expert contributions to relevant events, in close dialogue with the European Commission and in cooperation with international organisations, UN bodies and, as relevant, with global and regional conventions. EEA input focused on sharing EEA knowledge and information while increasing the outreach of the Agency's work:

- keynote speech at the Ministerial Meeting of the UNECE Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) on the existing challenges for green, safe and healthy mobility (May 2021);
- key intervention at the UNECE Meeting of the Parties of the Aarhus Convention, including organisation of a dedicated side event on access to environmental information supported by the digital agenda in the context of the EGD (October 2021);
- contribution to various UNECE meetings, e.g. Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators, Working Group on Environmental Assessment and Monitoring and Committee on Environmental Policy, as well as meetings of the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution;

- support to the EU Delegation and negotiations at the UN Climate Change Conference (26th Conference of the Parties, COP26) in Glasgow (November 2021);
- support to the EU Delegation and organisation of a side event during the meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP22) in Antalya (December 2021);

regular dialogue maintained with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on environmental data and knowledge, linking to the exchange of views and experience bilaterally with European environment protection agencies.

1.6.6 Support to Earth observation systems (Copernicus and Group on Earth Observations)

The activities delegated to the EEA are defined in the 2021 Copernicus work programme. This has been a year of transition, with activities under the delegation agreement 2014-2020 being finalised and a new contribution agreement signed for the period 2021-2027. The new contribution agreement confirms the EEA's role as an entrusted entity for the CLMS and cross-service in situ coordination. Extending the tasks towards global coverage for some biophysical parameters and a shift towards some near real-time products in the WEkEO Data and Information Access System (DIAS) and the deployment of user uptake activities confirms that the EEA can join the WEkEO partnership and contribute to its development. The scope of the CLMS portfolio will enable the EEA to support the European Commission and Member States to support the implementation of the EGD and the 8th EAP.

The EEA continued to focus on three primary strands of activities regarding cross-cutting coordination of the Copernicus in situ component, i.e. the maintenance of the overview of in situ data, improving the access to in situ data and creating partnerships with selected data providers.

Beyond the continuity of work on products from former years, some crucial and substantial files were successfully implemented:

- the production of the extended, including land cover and land use products, CLC (CLC+ Core) database up to a functional prototype;
- the finalisation of the EU-27 coverage of the database underpinning the above land cover and land use products with basic reference data (CLC + Backbone);
- the production of a high-resolution service on vegetation phenology and productivity (HR-VPP), providing updates information five times daily on the status of vegetation in Europe, and the high-resolution service on snow and ice coverage over Europe, resulting in CLMS moving into the era of producing near real-time data;

- the production of the first coverage of the European ground monitoring service, a mutualised service providing precision measurements to the nearest centimetre of ground movements based on Sentinel-1 interferometric synthetic aperture radar (inSAR) data.

Over the years, the EEA has cooperated with the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) and its set of systems (Global Earth Observation System of Systems, GEOSS). For the period 2021-2023, the EEA is engaging with the European Commission (specifically the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, DG RTD) through a service-level agreement to provide specific support actions on mainstreaming GEOSS sharing and management principles in support of Europe's environment. This led to strengthened collaboration between EEA and GEO in 2021.

The year 2021 was the first implementing year of the EEA-DG RTD service-level agreement and the following key milestones were achieved:

- A 3-year work plan was accepted in early 2021 detailing the activities envisaged, including showcases, activities and deliverables. The thematic focus of the showcases was defined around the accessibility to in situ data relevant to climate adaptation policies and activities.
- A proposal for the implementation of a future GEO in situ data strategy was developed. In 2021 and beyond, the EEA is taking up key roles in relevant GEO bodies such as the Data Working Group, the GEO Programme Board and the GEO Executive Committee.

As a result of the good spirit of collaboration and the first results of the service-level agreement, the European Commission has already expressed its interest in continuing the EEA-DG RTD collaboration beyond 2023.



2 Management

2.1 Management Board

The main Bureau/Management Board discussions focused on the implementation of the EEA-Eionet strategy 2021-2030, Eionet modernisation, and programme and budget planning for 2022 onwards.

The EEA Management Board held three regular meetings and one extraordinary meeting to discuss and approve the new functions and structure of Eionet. The EEA Bureau met six times. In addition, the Management Board Advisory Committee on the Eionet mapping exercise, created early 2021, met several times during the year to discuss and guide the Eionet review and mapping process. Because of the COVID-19 situation all meetings were held online.

2.2 Major developments

As a consequence of the new legislation for the **8th EAP** in 2020, the EEA received additional tasks contributing to EU climate and environmental targets, including the targets and objectives laid down in the biodiversity and farm to fork strategies, the EU's energy and circular economy targets and the objective of making the EU climate neutral by 2050 at the latest, in line with the Paris Agreement, while ensuring a green and just transition.

The **Eionet** review was finalised and the final proposal was endorsed at the Management Board together with the new Eionet group structure and reviewed Eionet core data flows (see Section 1.6.2).

There have also been some significant developments in the EEA's project-financed actions. Firstly, a new **Copernicus contribution agreement** was signed with the Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space (DG DEFIS) on 23 November 2021, allowing the EEA to continue to develop the CLMS and in situ coordination, and transitioning from the Copernicus delegation agreement, which ended on 31 December 2021. The new agreement extends to the end of 2028, with a budget of EUR 135 million.

Secondly, the EEA entered into three service-level agreements with the Commission for the first time:

- a 3-year project with DG RTD, 'Mainstreaming GEOSS data sharing and management principles in support of Europe's environment' (**EuroGEO**), under the Horizon 2020 programme;
- a 4-year agreement with the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) to support the health content developments and maintain the platform of the **European Climate and Health Observatory**;
- a 3-year agreement with the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) to support the implementation of **regional and urban environmental indicators and analysis** and to address regional and urban land use and various aspects of air pollution in Europe; the service-level agreement will commence at the beginning of 2022.

Preparatory work for the establishment of the **European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change** was undertaken to support the objectives of the European Climate Law, adopted in 2021. The advisory board will serve as a point of reference on scientific knowledge relating to climate change to underpin the EU's climate actions and efforts to reach climate neutrality by 2050 and will be supported by a secretariat hosted by the EEA, and activities will commence in 2022.

The EEA has been **chairing EUAN**, including most of its sub-networks. While the year was challenging for everyone because of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, the network and its members worked efficiently under the circumstances. Despite not being able to meet physically for the first plenary meetings during the EEA's term as chair, the Heads of Resources and Agencies meeting in October in Copenhagen was successfully arranged in a hybrid setting.

EUAN continued the work of its multiannual strategy 2021-2027, in line with the EU priorities of digitalisation, greening resilience and recovery. The Executive Directors Group on Administrative Excellence mandated the Greening Network to look into ways to sustain the greening transition contributing to the greening of the EUAN administration. EUAN also presented and endorsed the EUAN communication and stakeholder engagement framework. Finally, the EEA contributed to the successful conclusion of the shared support office pilot phase, consolidating the set-up and functioning of this vital support to the coordinating agencies.

Although the **COVID-19 pandemic** continued into 2021, there was an initial expectation of a return to 'normal' activities in the spring, which was eventually achieved over the summer. However, this was swiftly followed by another lockdown in the autumn, which continued for the remainder of the year. As a result, there were no significant physical meetings organised and therefore the budget savings were again used for investment in EEA work areas and information technology (IT). Despite the pandemic, the EEA was able to continue its activities and deliver its work programme without any significant disruptions or negative impacts. The EEA continued the transformation of its premises into open-plan space (activity-based working).

2.3 Budgetary and financial management

Budget performance

The EEA's approved budget for 2021 to deliver its work programme was reported in the Single Programming Document 2021-2023. In the consolidated annual activity report (CAAR), the EEA is required to report its performance in the management of the budget, specifically:

- any changes to the originally approved budget (amendments and transfers);
- implementation of budget appropriations against target;
- carry-over of amounts committed in 2021 but not paid by year end.

The following information is also required to be reported:

- a summary of procurement procedures by type;
- any major commitments for actions extending for more than one financial year;
- any interest paid to suppliers for late payments.

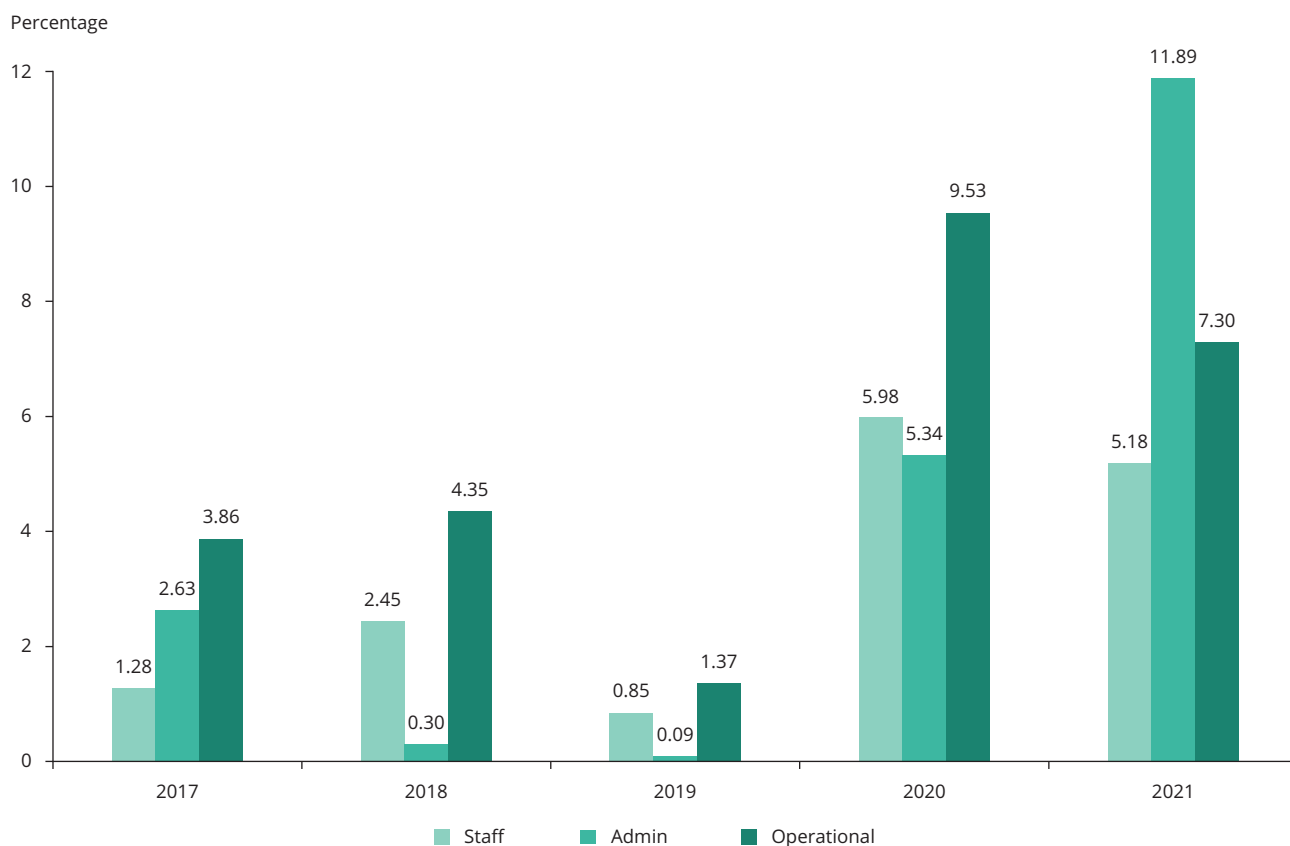
Budget amendments and transfers

Three **budget amendments** were made during the course of 2021 as follows:

1. An amendment for a service-level agreement with the DG RTD for the mainstreaming of GEOSS data (EUROGEO). The amendment was for the pre-financing for 2021 of **EUR 365,000**.
2. An amendment for two elements. These were a service-level agreement with DG SANTE for the **Climate and Health Observatory** with pre-financing of **EUR 118,000** in 2021 and an amendment of the Human Biomonitoring for Europe initiative (HMB4EU) to include additional funding of **EUR 265,000**.
3. The third amendment comprised several elements: firstly, the new Copernicus contribution agreement (**COPERNCA**) was signed with DG DEFIS with pre-financing of **EUR 12,000,000** in 2021; secondly, the final calculation of the European Free Trade Association and Swiss contributions gave a net increase of **EUR 181,484**; thirdly, a small correction of **EUR 13,000** was made to the EEA's EU subvention; and fourthly, the anticipated pre-financing for a new agreement with UNEP under the International Resource Panel was **EUR 700,000**.

The Financial Regulation allows the Executive Director to make **budget transfers** between expenditure titles without needing to consult the Management Board, providing the cumulative transfers **from** each title do not exceed 10% of that title's original budget appropriation.

Source of revenue	Original 2021 budget (EUR)	Budget amendments (EUR)	Final 2021 budget (EUR)
EU subvention	45,411,000	-13,000	45,398,000
Third countries' contribution	5,838,693	181,484	6,020,177
Core revenue	51,249,693	168,484	51,418,177
Grant, contribution and service-level agreements	631,000	12,818,000	13,449,000
Total revenue	51,880,693	12,986,484	64,867,177

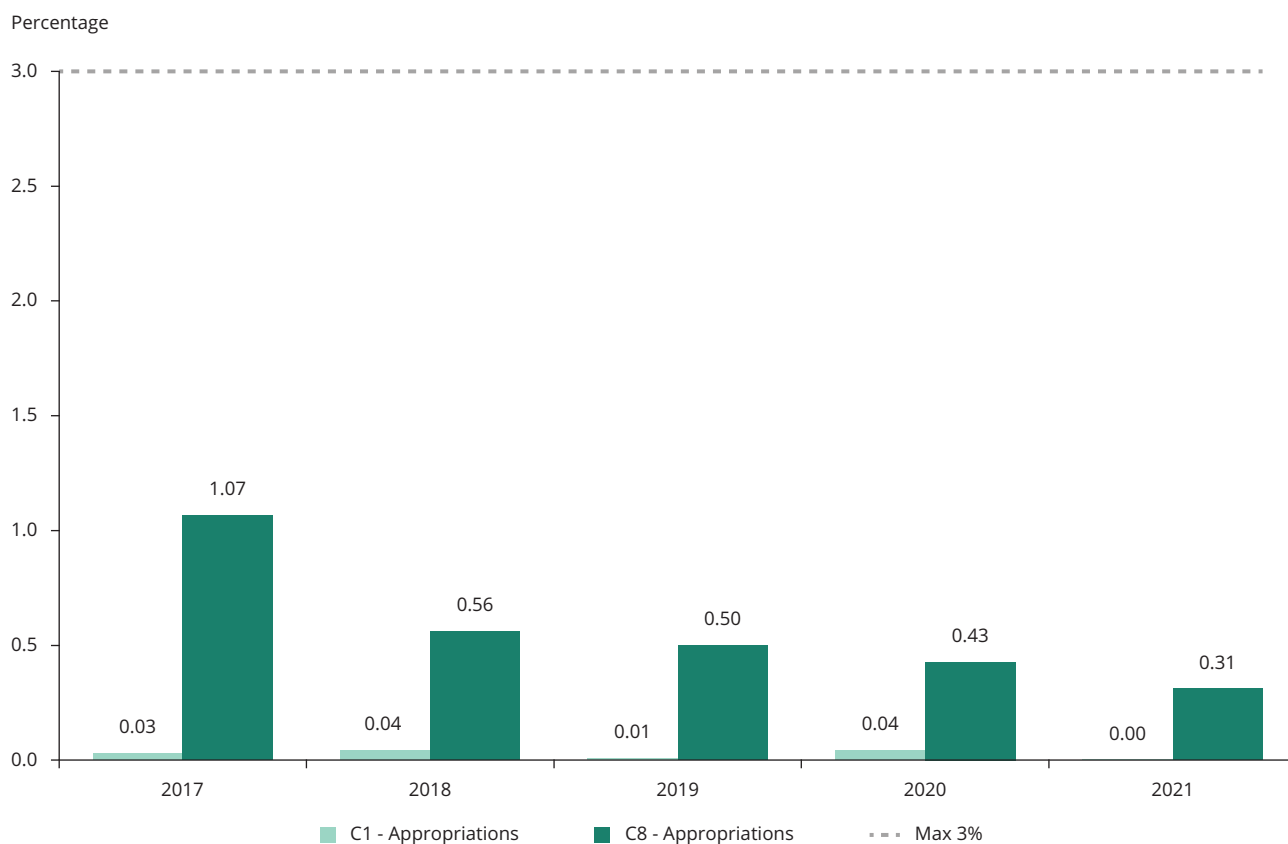
Figure 2.1 Transfers 2017-2021

Core expenditure	Original 2021 budget (EUR)	Budget amendments (EUR)	Budget transfers (EUR)	Final 2020 budget (EUR)	Transfers as percentage of original budget (%)
Title 1	30,453,743	168,484	-1,746,459	28,875,768	-5.7
Title 2	4,992,500	-	593,386	5,585,886	11.9
Title 3	15,803,450	-	1,153,073	16,956,523	7.3
Core expenditure	51,249,693	168,484	0	51,418,177	-

The budget transfers in 2021 were from Title 1 to Titles 2 and 3, with the transfer from Title 1 being well within the 10% threshold. The transfer from Title 1 was enabled primarily because actual salaries and allowances were EUR 1.1 million below the original budget. The continued travel restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that most of the budget allocated to missions was released and savings were also made on relocation expenditure for new staff joining the EEA. The transfer of EUR 0.6 million to Title 2 allowed investment in a third phase of converting the EEA's office space in its main building, Kongens Nytorv 6, to an open-plan activity-based working space. The transfer of EUR 1.2 million was used for much-needed investment in IT.

Budget implementation

Figure 2.2 shows the percentage of budget appropriations for the current year and appropriations carried forward from the previous year that were not implemented. The budget circular issued by the European Commission Directorate-General for Budget (DG BUDG) specifies that, to avoid penalties, the combined amounts not implemented should not exceed 3%.

Figure 2.2 Budget outturn 2017-2021

The EEA achieved excellent budget implementation in 2021, with cancelled appropriations well below the 3% threshold. Full implementation of C1 budget appropriations was achieved (100% implementation). The cancellation of C8 appropriations carried over from 2020 totalled EUR 160,082. Of this, EUR 64,755 was from Title 3, the largest amount from the settlement of the final cost statements of two ETCs. The other cancellations were small amounts across a number of budget lines in Title 1 (EUR 34,733) and Title 2 (EUR 60,595).

Carry-forward

The largest amount in the Title 3 carry-forward is EUR 2.2 million for the ETCs; their work programme reports and final cost statements will be submitted, verified and paid in the first half of 2022. The carry-forward also contains IT, communications and areas of work expenditure that were ordered in 2021 but not yet paid for. The increase in the Title 3 carry-forward is for IT expenditure; the additional investments from the budget transfers were made in the latter part of the

year and therefore still need to be completed and paid for. The Title 2 carry-forward is primarily for the third phase of conversions to the open-plan activity-based working space, which are ongoing.

Procurement procedures

The 2021 procurement plan, attached as Annex 11 to the Single Programming Document 2021-2023, adopted by the EEA's Management Board on 10 December 2020, anticipated the implementation of the following procurement procedures.

The first amended version of the 2021 procurement plan, which reflects the actual procurement needs, was approved by the EEA's Bureau at its 89th meeting on 16 June 2021, and the second amended version was approved by the EEA's Bureau at its 91st meeting on 8 December 2021.

By 31 December 2021, the actual procurement procedures implemented by the EEA were as follows.

Figure 2.3 Carry-forward development 2017-2021 — core funds

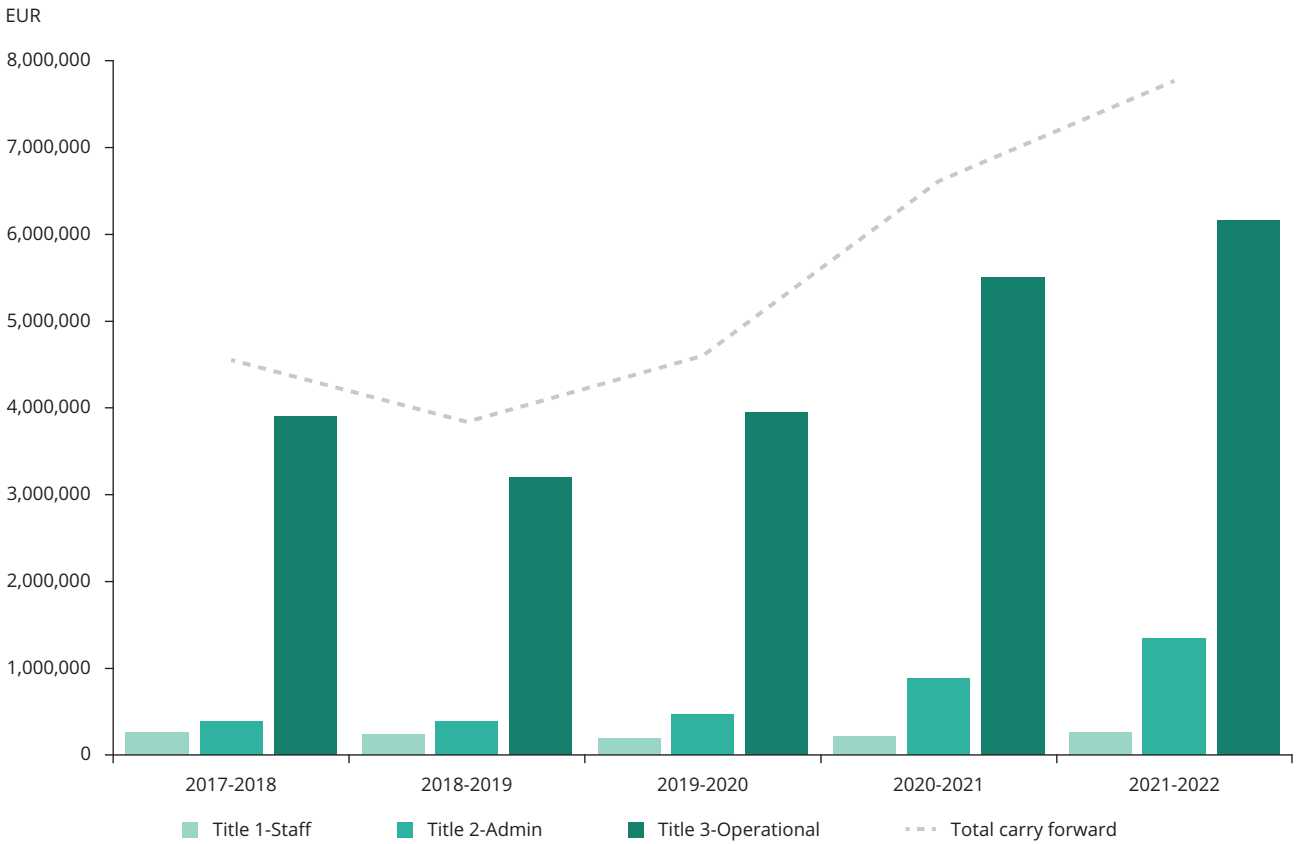
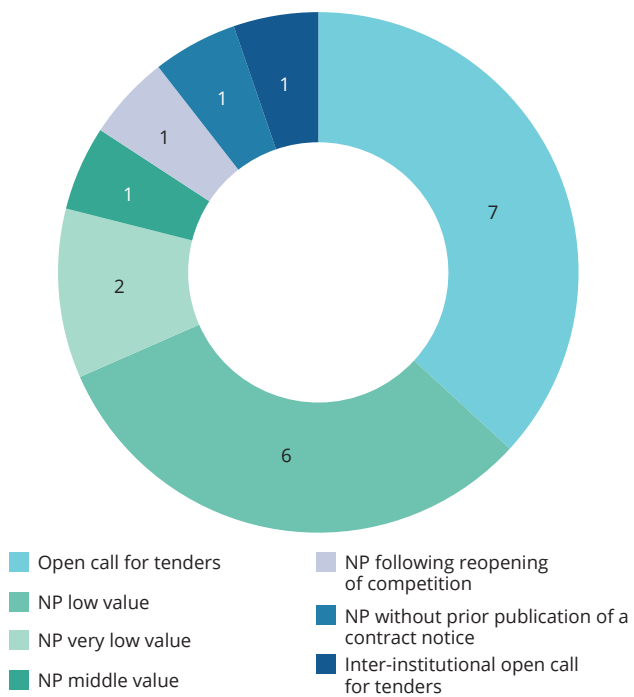
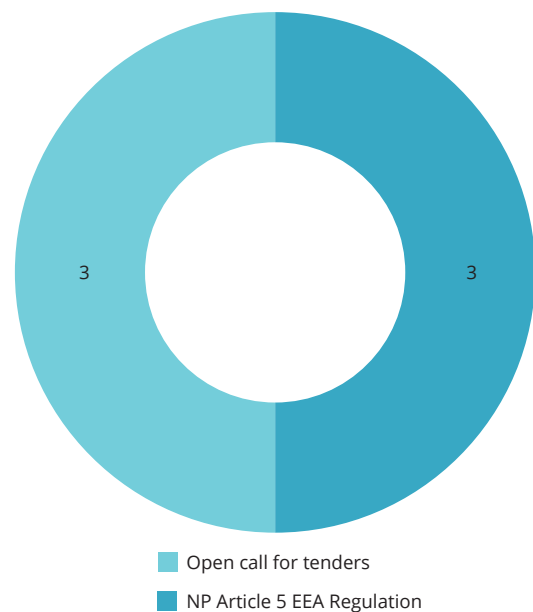


Figure 2.4 Core revenue: 19 procedures



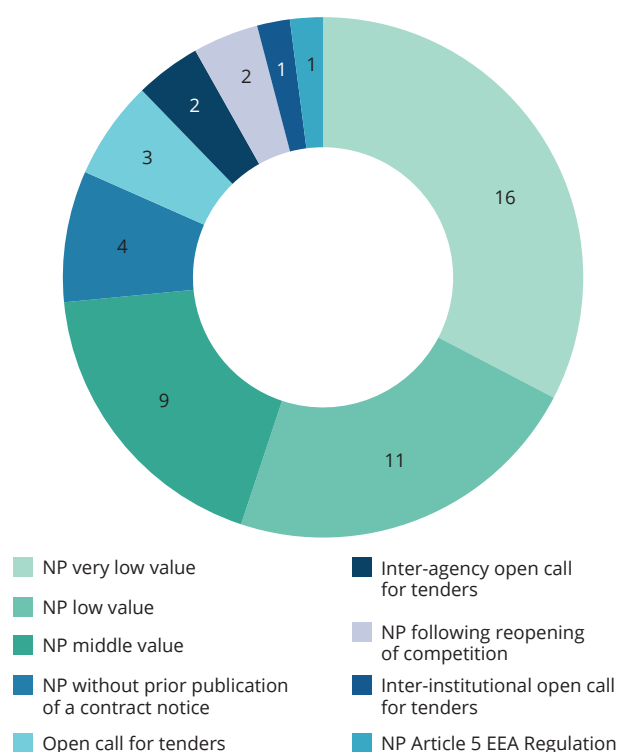
Note: NP, negotiated procedure.

Figure 2.5 External assigned revenue: 6 procedures



Note: NP, negotiated procedure.

Figure 2.6 Core revenue: 49 procedures



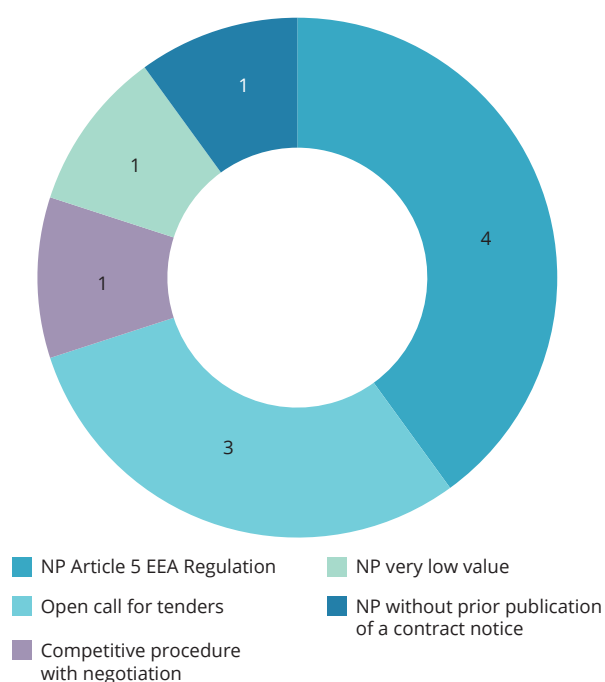
Note: NP, negotiated procedure.

The increased number of procedures for the implementation of the core revenue stems from various factors: in some cases, the initial tendering procedure was unsuccessful, resulting in the need to launch a new procedure; in others, various tendering procedures anticipated to be carried out in the course of 2022 were actually brought forward and launched in 2021 to respond to imminent needs entailed by either earlier consumption of the budget on existing framework contracts or additional needs under ongoing activities (e.g. the refurbishment of the Agency's premises), or other additional needs.

Negotiated procedures under point 11.1 of Annex I to the Financial Regulation carried out in 2021

Pursuant to Article 74(10) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 (the 'Financial Regulation'), the authorising

Figure 2.7 External assigned revenue: 10 procedures



Note: NP, negotiated procedure.

officer shall record, for each financial year, contracts concluded by negotiated procedures in accordance with point 11.1(a)-(f) of Annex I to the Financial Regulation. If the proportion of negotiated procedures in relation to the number of contracts awarded by the authorising officer increases significantly in relation to previous years, the authorising officer is to report to the Management Board, setting out any measures taken to reverse the trend.

The proportion of negotiated procedures under point 11.1 of Annex I to the Financial Regulation in relation to the number of contracts awarded by the authorising officer increased in 2021 compared with 2020. It should be noted, however, that most of the contracts awarded under such procedures are aimed at the provision of additional similar services or supplies entrusted to the economic operators to which the contracting authority awarded an original contract. The option for such negotiated procedures had been anticipated in the tender specification for the original contracts.

Table 2.1 Negotiated procedures under point 11.1 of Annex I to the Financial Regulation (FR) carried out in 2021

Fund source	Subject of the contract	Budget (EUR)	Type of contract	Legal basis
Core revenue	Provision of technical specifications for integrated customer relations management and email marketing solution to the EEA	28,600	Direct service contract	Point 11.1(a) ^(a) Annex I to FR
Core revenue	Provision of building repair and maintenance services to the EEA	500,000	Amendment to framework contract	Point 11.1(e) ^(b) Annex I to FR
Core revenue	Supply, installation, maintenance and repair of audiovisual equipment and consumables including on-site technical support and consultancy services	100,000	Amendment to framework contract	Point 11.1(f) (i) ^(c) Annex I to FR
Core revenue	Expert assistance on air pollution, climate change mitigation and adaptation	400,000	Amendment to framework contract	Art. 134.1(e) ^(d) FR 2012 (Point 11.1(e) Annex I to FR)
External assigned revenue	Provision of expert support in carrying out the knowledge development task under service-level agreement No SANTE/2021/C2/044 SI2.853034	99,174	Direct service contract	Point 11.1(b) ^(e) Annex I to FR

Notes: ^(a) Follow-up of an open/restricted procedure where no (or no suitable) tenders/requests to participate have been submitted.

^(b) New services/works consisting in the repetition of similar services/works.

^(c) Supplies of additional deliveries.

^(d) New services or works consisting in the repetition of similar services or works.

^(e) Artistic/technical reasons or exclusive rights or technical monopoly/captive market.

Table 2.2 Negotiated procedures under point 11.1 of Annex I to the Financial Regulation carried out in the last 5 years

Procurement procedures	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Average	2021
Total number of contracts awarded by the EEA authorising officer	32	34	35	29	57	37	59
Number of contracts resulting from negotiated procedures under point 11.1 of Annex I to the Financial Regulation	3	4	2	1	4	3	5
Proportion (%)	9.37	11.76	5.71	3.45	7	7.49	8.47

2.4 Delegation and sub-delegation

Article 41 of the EEA's Financial Regulation entitles the Director to delegate the powers of budget execution and for these to be sub-delegated. Powers to execute each type of expenditure are delegated to a Head of Programme, with the Head of Administration receiving delegation for all types of expenditure. Sub-delegation, limited to only the approval of payments for certain expenditure, is given to Heads of Group in the administration programme.

The delegations are valid for the calendar year; they are renewed at the beginning of each year, prior to the EEA's budget and finance system (ABAC) being opened for that year.

The delegations and access rights are audited by the EEA's internal audit capability (IAC). In 2021, no significant weaknesses were identified.

2.5 Human resource management

Brief description of the major human resource developments

After the EEA received an increase in its establishment table in 2020, for the first time since 2013, a significant increase followed in 2021, making a total of 140 approved posts. Despite certain constraints due to the pandemic and lack of support staff, the EEA was able to fill 99% of the approved posts (this is complemented by 80 contract agents and 20 seconded national experts; see Annex 4 for more detail).

Implementing rules adopted by the EEA in 2021

No Implementing rules were adopted by the EEA in 2021.

Brief description of the results of the screening/ benchmarking exercise

The EEA has been carrying out an annual screening/ benchmarking exercise since 2015, in accordance with the guidelines that were agreed by the EU agencies in their working group on a joint agency approach.

Following the austerity measures laid down in the multiannual financial framework, the EEA experienced a reduction in the numbers of support staff between 2014 and 2018. Since then, additional new tasks have been given to the Agency, with an increase in only operational staff. Consequently, the ratio of staff dedicated to operational activities has increased to approximately 85% (from 80%) and, as a consequence, the proportion of support staff has been reduced to 15%.

For additional information on human resource management, please see Annex 4.

2.6 Strategy for efficiency gains

In the 2018 evaluation of the EEA, the Commission concluded that the EEA-Eionet is very cost-effective, that the EEA has optimised task efficiency where possible and that the Agency has adapted very well to new EU policy developments. In the Single Programming Document 2021-2023 it was therefore concluded that there was limited scope for further efficiency gains and that, when the EEA is requested to take on new tasks in its work programme, these would need to be accompanied by the resources to perform them.

Nevertheless, the EEA has continued to pursue efficiency gains through shared services. Firstly, the EEA actively pursues joint procurement. On the one hand it has procured and leads several framework contracts that are also used by the Commission; on the other hand it uses a number of Commission-led framework contracts for its own needs. It also uses a variety of Commission services (e.g. payroll, IT security) and systems (e.g. ABAC, Sysper, Ares, e-Prior). In addition, the EEA takes part in shared procurements with the EUAN.

In the last few years, the EEA has focused on converting to electronic administration processes (procurement, finance and human resources), which has delivered efficiency gains and supported the EEA in quickly and effectively switching to a working-from-home environment at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to the pandemic restrictions, the EEA also introduced online recruitment, supported by the implementation of a recruitment platform (Systal), which allowed it to complete a large number of recruitments in both 2020 and 2021, giving low vacancy rates at the year-ends.

2.7 Assessment of audit and ex post evaluation results during the reporting year

Assessment of audit results

The ECA report on the EEA's annual accounts for the financial year 2020⁽¹⁶⁾ was published in October 2020 and expressed an unqualified opinion on the reliability of the accounts and an unqualified opinion on the legality and regularity of the transactions underlying the accounts. All recommendations from previous years are closed. The report can be found in Annex 9, and it provides the ECA's opinion and its observations. The next audit of the EEA's annual accounts will examine the 2021 financial year. It started with a preliminary desk review in October 2021, and the fieldwork took place at the beginning of February 2022.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Annual report on EU agencies for the financial year 2020

The Internal Audit Service (IAS) has conducted an in-depth risk assessment to establish its strategic internal audit plan for the EEA for the period 2022-2024. In addition, the auditors followed up on the recommendations issued for the audit on project-financed actions.

Ex post evaluation

Between 2016 and 2018, the European Commission carried out an evaluation of the EEA and Eionet, including the Founding Regulation. The evaluation covered the period from mid-2012 to the end of 2016 and took into account the previous evaluations of the Agency (such as that from April 2013). The evaluation followed the better regulation guidelines and thus included an analysis of five main themes: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and European added value.

The overall conclusion of the evaluation was that the EEA and Eionet fulfill the main objectives set out by the Founding Regulation. The evaluation found that the EEA and Eionet continue to be relevant and provide added value to the EU by implementing the multiannual work programmes in a largely effective, efficient and coherent way.

The evaluation recognised that Eionet is a unique network of environment and climate expertise that provides essential expertise in many areas and contributes to the efficiency of the EEA's work. There was margin for improvement in the information provided on Eionet activities, clarification of its role and increased visibility of the value added by the various Eionet components and how these interact with the EEA and the Commission services, notably in the area of reporting.

The EEA and Eionet were seen as essential data providers, both for the Commission and for EEA member countries. Although data collection was seen as working efficiently in all climate and many environmental fields, they did not always fully benefit from new technologies, such as Copernicus. The evaluation identified that these additional requests demonstrate recognition that the EEA and its network provide unique value for money. While additional but temporary resources accompanied some of these specific requests, the EEA had to adjust to a nominal freezing of the EU core subsidy and corresponding reduction in human resources, in line with the Commission policy for decentralised agencies.

The evaluation further concluded that the EEA has proved to be reliable in providing the necessary information to support EU policymaking and had adapted very well to new EU policy developments. The evaluation also noted that these accomplishments had been achieved against a backdrop of decreasing staff resources and increasing demand from the Commission to support new legislation on both the environment and the climate, as well as to support Copernicus.

The conclusions of the evaluation, and the recommendations of the Management Board thereupon, are being addressed by the EEA in its ongoing planning and, moreover, in the formulation of the EEA strategy to cover the period 2021-2030.

2.8 Follow-up of recommendations and action plans for audits and evaluations

There were no recommendations of the ECA to be addressed during 2021.

As for the IAS, the implementation of three important recommendations issued in the context of the project-financed audit performed have been reviewed by the auditors. They concluded that two were implemented and another one was considered not fully implemented.

2.9 Follow-up of observations from the discharge authority

The discharge process involves (interchangeably) the European Parliament and the Council.

On 26 January 2021 the European Parliament Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety for the European Parliament Committee on Budgetary Control (CONT) provided the final opinion concerning the 2019 discharge.

COREPER II (Committee of the Permanent Representatives of the Governments of the Member States to the European Union), which is the Council's main preparatory body, recommended on 10 February 2021 that the European Parliament grant the discharge to the EEA in respect of the implementation of the budget for the financial year 2019.

CONT discussed the 2019 discharge reports on 22 February 2021 and it was positive towards granting the discharge to all decentralised agencies and joint undertakings.

On 28 April 2021, the European Parliament in its plenary session granted the EEA discharge for the financial year 2019.

Follow-up on the 2019 discharge by the European Parliament

The EEA prepared a response to the discharge, *Report of the Executive Director to the Discharge Authority on measures taken in the light of the Discharge Authority's recommendations of 2019* in accordance with Article 107(2) of the Framework Financial Regulation.

2.10 Environmental management

An accredited eco-management and audit scheme (EMAS) environmental verifier has checked and validated the EEA's full compliance ⁽¹⁷⁾ with the EMAS Regulation and declared on 14 September 2021 that the data and information in the EEA's environmental statement 2020 ⁽¹⁸⁾ reflect a reliable, credible and correct image of the EEA's activities and environmental improvements. Subsequently, in October 2021, the EEA's EMAS registration was successfully extended ⁽¹⁹⁾ by a competent body under EMAS for another year.

The decision to raise the level of ambition from being a 'climate-friendly' organisation to a 'climate-neutral' one was reflected in the EEA's environment policy 2021 ⁽²⁰⁾.

For further details of the EEA environmental management see Annex 7.

2.11 Assessment by management

The CAAR 2021 describes the delivery of a work programme (Single Programming Document 2021-2023). Overall, the EEA has delivered well and achieved what it had set out to do by exceeding the set expectations of the KPIs.

It is the EEA management's assessment that the underlying factors ensuring the long-term performance of the organisation are sound and functioning well. Following the logic of the constituent elements of this report (achievements, management and internal control systems), 2021 has delivered a satisfactory result, compared with the risks and challenges the organisation has had to manage.

The EEA will continue to strive for continuous improvement in order to bring added value to all of its stakeholders.

⁽¹⁷⁾ 2021 Bureau Veritas certificate for 2010 statement (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/emas/2020-bureau-veritas-certificat-for.pdf/view>).

⁽¹⁸⁾ EEA environmental statement 2020 (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/emas/environmental-management-2020-statement>).

⁽¹⁹⁾ Certifikat for EMAS-registrering (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/emas/certifikat-eea-2020.pdf/view>).

⁽²⁰⁾ EEA environment policy 2021 (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/emas/eea-environment-policy/view>).



3

Assessment of the effectiveness of the internal control systems

3.1 Effectiveness of internal control systems

The assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems covers all principles of the EEA internal control framework. All principles adopted by the Management Board in 2017 are reviewed in the light of evidence that can be collected to demonstrate that the controls are effective.

In 2020, with the drastic change in working procedures due to the COVID-19 crisis, the EEA decided to move the intranet from a local network to SharePoint. This allowed all EEA staff to access easily key information for their work. However, some corporate information, such as procedures from the quality management system (QMS), were not transferred to SharePoint. Many procedures changed in the space of a few

months to adapt as quickly as possible to an unknown situation but remained in alignment with the business continuity plan.

After a year of working under new circumstances, which were prolonged in 2021, it appeared that the EEA needed to structurally change its ways of working. This materialised mainly with the launch of the project 'Future workplace' and, with regard to corporate procedures, a proposal to review the QMS format.

As a result, in 2021, the senior management team endorsed an approach to improve the QMS that ensures the inclusion of corporate information that is currently missing. The QMS improvement project will be conducted in 2022 and will remedy the weaknesses identified in the table below.

EEA internal control framework components		EEA internal control framework adoption by Management Board, December 2017	Assessment
1	Control environment	The EEA demonstrates a commitment to integrity and ethical values	Partially compliant: all staff no longer have access to the course on ethics and integrity
12	Control activities	The EEA deploys control activities through corporate policies that establish what is expected and in procedures that put policies into action	Partially compliant: some corporate policies that could previously be retrieved under the umbrella of the QMS structure are no longer available. Some others are now embedded in IT systems or under the relevant thematic sections
14	Information and communication	The EEA internally communicates information, including objectives and responsibilities for internal control, necessary to support the functioning of internal control	Partially compliant: there are many channels used to communicate about controls in particular with references under the relevant thematic sections. However, some key information, such as the procedures to allow staff to raise concerns about fraud, corruption and other serious wrongdoing, are no longer available because of the migration of the intranet

Cost and benefits of controls

A new requirement in the CAAR guidelines is that agencies report on the balance between the effectiveness, efficiency and benefits of controls.

In order to support agencies in consistently and effectively reporting this, the Internal Control Working Group of the Performance Development Network, which is a sub-network of EUAN, undertook the task of developing an informal guideline in 2021. The working group completed and shared the guideline in January 2022. The application of this guideline is voluntary; the EEA considers the guideline very useful and will apply it during 2022 to report accordingly in the next CAAR.

The EEA's controls are essential to ensure its legal compliance, application of sound financial management and protection of its reputation in the performance of its work programme and other activities. The benefits of its controls have been demonstrated by:

- the Court of Auditors has consistently expressed an unqualified opinion on the reliability of the accounts and unqualified opinion on the legality and regularity of the transactions underlying the accounts;
- the relatively few observations made by the Court of Auditors, the IAS and other auditors and the prompt action the EEA has taken in addressing the recommendations

accompanying these observations, thereby reducing the risks;

- the relatively few exceptions registered, which are reported to the Management Board in a timely manner;
- the EEA's timely and accurate payment of its suppliers;
- the EEA's very high budget execution in recent years.

The *ex post* evaluations of the EEA (refer to Section 2.7) found that the EEA's support activities, which include control activities, are performed efficiently and effectively.

3.2 Conclusions of assessment of internal control systems

The assessment of the EEA's internal control systems shows that some principles for which the EEA was compliant before 2020 are now partially compliant. This is explained by the need for the EEA's management to respond promptly to a completely new way of working in 2020. Despite uncertain circumstances, EEA staff managed to adapt quickly to the situation and delivered the work programme envisaged in 2020, while embedding new procedures.

In the context of a changing way of working that stabilised in 2021, the EEA will work on adapting new procedures to ensure full compliance with all internal control components.

3.3 Statement of the manager in charge of risk management and internal control

Statement of the Head of Administration

I, the undersigned,

Head of Administration within the European Environment Agency,

In my capacity as Head of Administration, I declare that, in accordance with the European Environment Agency's internal control framework, I have reported my advice and recommendations on the overall state of internal control in the European Environment Agency to the Executive Director.

I hereby certify that the information provided in the present consolidated annual activity report and in its annexes is, to the best of my knowledge, accurate, reliable and complete.

Signed in Copenhagen, 7 June 2022

Søren Brostrup Nielsen



4

Management assurance

4.1 Review of elements supporting assurance

Brief description of the building blocks of assurance

The information reported in Parts 2 and 3 stems from the results of the work undertaken by management and audits. Audit reports result from a systematic analysis of the evidence available and cover only a part of the EEA's many core activities. Furthermore, different audit capacities (the IAC, the Internal Audit Service and the ECA) cover different areas, and therefore, between them and the internal controls in the EEA, ensure a comprehensive basis for assurance.

This approach provides sufficient guarantees of the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in exhaustive scrutiny of the budget delegated to the Executive Director.

In conclusion:

- There were no reservations listed in the previous years' annual activity reports.
- All recommendations of the Internal Audit Service issued in relation to audits finalised in previous years have been closed.

- The EEA had not received final observations from the ECA at the date of publication of this report.
- There are no open observations from the European Parliament.

Summary analysis of the conclusions of any significant weaknesses reported in Parts 2 and 3, and an assessment of their combined impact on the declaration of assurance

Taking the above into consideration, no weaknesses were identified with regard to the financial management of appropriations within the EEA, and so no reservations are made in this context in the declaration.

4.2 Reservations

No significant weaknesses have been identified and there are no formal reservations.



5 Declaration of assurance

I, the undersigned, Executive Director of the European Environment Agency,

In my capacity as authorising officer,

Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view.

State that I have reasonable assurance that the resources assigned to the activities described in this report have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and that the control procedures put in place give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

This reasonable assurance is based on my own judgement and on the information at my disposal, such as the results of the self-assessment, ex post controls, the work of the Internal Audit Service, the work of the internal audit capability and the lessons learnt from the reports of the European Court of Auditors for years prior to the year of this declaration.

Confirm that I am not aware of anything not reported here that could harm the interests of the European Environment Agency.

Signed in Copenhagen, 7 June 2022

Hans Bruyninckx

Annex 1

Core business statistics

For details and analysis of the key performance indicators for 2021, please refer to Section 1, Achievements of the year.

Annex 2

Statistics on financial management

Annex 2 provides additional financial statistics requiring disclosure, which have not already been provided in Section 2.3.

Indication of commitments for actions that will extend for more than one financial year; major items only (greater than EUR 500 000)

Nothing to report.

Information on interest charged by suppliers through late payments (>30 days late)

All payments in 2021 were made within the deadlines set by the Financial Regulation. However, some contractors have shorter payment terms and some payments (0.5% of the total) were paid later than their terms but without any interest charges being paid.

Budgetary outturn for 2021

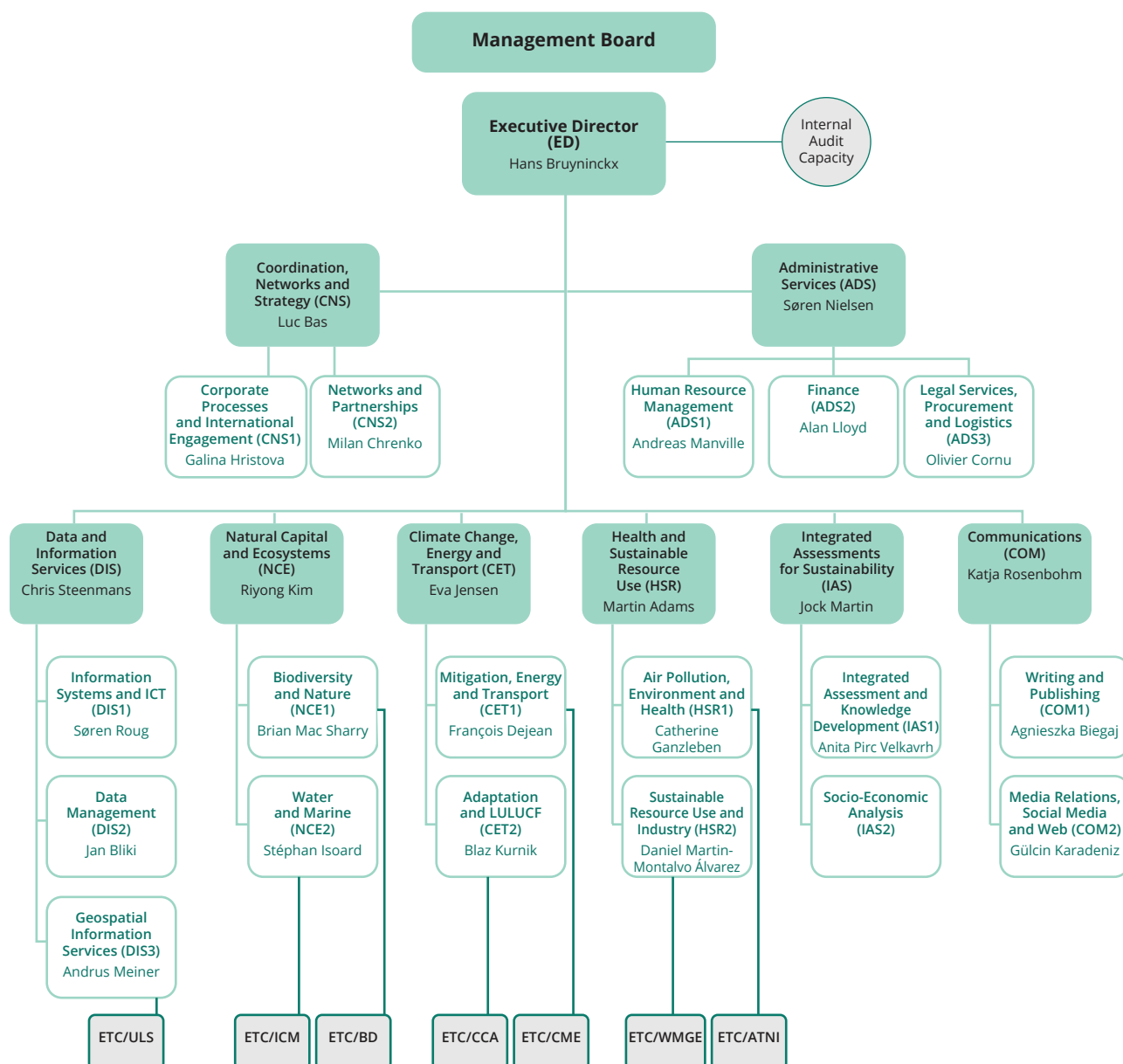
A positive budgetary outturn is to be reimbursed to the Commission. The positive outturn for 2021, exactly EUR 171,623, comprises the following components:

- cancellation of the current year's appropriations (C1 funds) that were not committed amounted to EUR 337, much lower than in the previous year (EUR 21,095);
- cancellation of unused payment appropriations carried over from the previous year (C8 funds) amounted to EUR 160,082, which was lower than in the year before that (EUR 203,867);
- exchange rate differences, as reported in the table below.

Budget outturn	2019 (EUR)	2020 (EUR)	2021 (EUR)
Reserve from the previous years' surplus (+)	-	-	-
Revenue actually received (+)	52,316,361	61,169,120	66,608,472
Payments made (-)	-55,223,813	-64,118,346	-57,559,461
Carry-over of appropriations (-)	-33,337,392	-27,834,239	-28,102,672
Cancellation of appropriations carried over (+)	226,600	203,867	160,082
Adjustment for carry-over of assigned revenue appropriation from previous year (+)	36,542,967	30,805,060	21,230,293
Exchange rate differences (+/-)	-14,898	9,700	-4,218
Adjustment for negative balance from previous year (-)	-291,565	-	-2,160,873
Total	218,260	235,162	171,623

Annex 3

EEA organisational chart



Note: As at 1 November 2021.

ATNI, Air Pollution, Transport, Noise and Industrial Pollution; BD, Biological Diversity; CCA, Climate Change Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation; CME, Climate Change Mitigation and Energy; ICM, Inland, Coastal and Marine Waters; ULS, Urban, Land and Soil Systems; WMGE, Waste and Materials in a Green Economy.

Annex 4

Establishment plan and additional information on human resource management

Table A4.1 EEA statutory staff and seconded national experts — 2021

Human resources	Authorised budget	Actually filled as of 31 December 2021	Occupancy rate (%)
Administrators (AD)	79	79	100.0
Assistants (AST)	61	60	98.4
Assistants/secretaries (AST/SC)	0	0	
Establishment plan posts	140	139	99.3
Contract agents (CA)	80	79	98.8
Seconded national experts (SNEs)	20	18	90.0
Total staff	240	236	98.3

Table A4.2 EEA Establishment table — 2021

Function group and grade	Amended budget		Actually filled as of 31 December 2021	
	Permanent posts	Temporary posts	Permanent posts	Temporary posts
AD 16	-	-	-	-
AD 15	-	1	-	1
AD 14	-	2	-	-
AD 13	1	6	-	2
AD 12	-	16	1	5
AD 11	-	10	-	9
AD 10	-	11	-	17
AD 9	-	9	-	8
AD 8	-	5	-	6
AD 7	-	7	-	15
AD 6	-	11	-	15
AD 5	-	-	-	-
AD TOTAL	1	78	1	78

Table A4.2 EEA Establishment table — 2021 (cont.)

Function group and grade	Amended budget		Actually filled as of 31 December 2021	
	Permanent posts	Temporary posts	Permanent posts	Temporary posts
AST 11	-	2	-	-
AST 10	1	5	1	3
AST 9	2	11	-	4
AST 8	-	11	1	7
AST 7	-	11	-	8
AST 6	-	10	-	10
AST 5	-	8	-	9
AST 4	-	-	-	12
AST 3	-	-	-	4
AST 2	-	-	-	1
AST 1	-	-	-	-
AST TOTAL	3	58	2	58
Total	4	136	3	136
Grand total	140		139	

Note: AD, administrator; AST, assistant.

Table A4.3 EEA contract agents and seconded national experts — 2021

Contract agents	2021 authorised	Recruited as of 31 December 2021
Function Group IV	59	60
Function Group III	11	11
Function Group II	10	8
Function Group I	-	-
Total	80	79
Seconded national experts	2021 authorised	Recruited as of 31 December 2021
Total	20	18

Table A4.4 Additional staff financed from grant, contribution or service-level agreements

Contract agents (CA) per agreement	Partner DG	2021 authorised
IPA 2020	NEAR	1
Copernicus delegation agreement	DEFIS	6
Copernicus contribution agreement	DEFIS	-
EuroGEO	RTD	2
Climate and Health Observatory	SANTE	1
Regional and urban environmental indicators	REGIO	-
HBM4EU	RTD	2
Total (Function Group IV)		12

Table A4.5 Entry level per key function for establishment plan posts

Key functions — general ^(a)	Type of contract (official, TA or CA) Function group; grade of recruitment (or bottom of the brackets if published in brackets)
Executive Director (level 1)	TA AD14
Head of Programme (level 2)	Official/TA AD11
Head of Group (level 3) ^(b)	Official/TA From AD6/AST6
Expert	Official/TA/CA From AD6/FGIV
Officer	Official/TA/CA From AST3/FGIII
Assistant	Official/TA/CA From AST1/FGII
Key functions — examples	Type of contract (official, TA or CA) Function group; grade of recruitment (or bottom of the brackets if published in brackets)
Head of Programme 'Administrative Services' (level 2)	Official/TA AD11
Head of Group 'Human Resource Management' (level 3)	Official/TA From AD6/AST6
Head of Group 'Finance' (level 3)	Official/TA From AD6/AST6
Head of Group 'Legal Services, Procurement and Logistics' (level 3)	Official/TA From AD6/AST6
Head of Programme 'Communications' (level 2)	TA AD11
Head of Programme 'Data and Information Services' (level 2)	TA AD11
Head of Group 'Information Systems and ICT' (level 3)	TA From AD6/AST6
Expert — Data Protection	Official/TA From AD6
Expert — Accountant	Official/TA From AD8
Expert — Internal Audit Capability	Official/TA From AD8

Notes: CA, contract agent; TA, temporary agent.

^(a) The text in bold indicates official EEA title.

^(b) Excluded from management allowance.

Annex 5

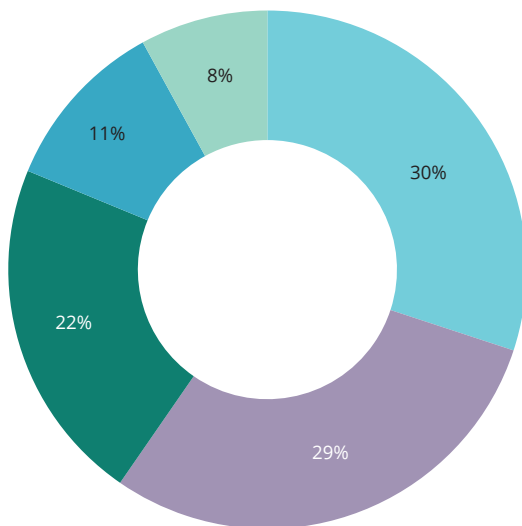
Human and financial resources by activity

The EEA has defined new activities under its strategy for 2021-2030.

The staff time and operational cost reported in the charts below are to deliver the EEA's annual work programme, and they exclude staff time budget to deliver project-financed actions funded by grant, contribution and service-level agreements.

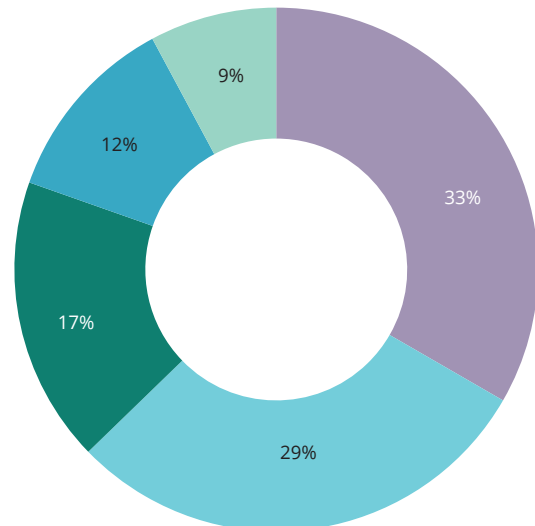
The allocation includes a proportional allocation of support, management, governance and administration activities and resources.

Figure A5.1 Staff time in 2021 by strategic activity



- 1. Biodiversity and ecosystems
- 2. Climate change mitigation and adaption
- 3. Human health and the environment
- 4. Resource use and the circular economy
- 5. Sustainability, trends, prospects and responses

Figure A5.2 Operational cost 2021 execution by strategic activity



- 1. Biodiversity and ecosystems
- 2. Climate change mitigation and adaption
- 3. Human health and the environment
- 4. Resource use and the circular economy
- 5. Sustainability, trends, prospects and responses

Annex 6

Contribution, grant and service-level agreements, and financial framework partnership agreements

General information						Financial and human resources Information		
	Start date	Total amount (EUR)	Duration (months)	Counterpart	Short description	2020	2021	
Grant agreements								
HBM4EU	January 2017	2,000,000	66	DG RTD	Human biomonitoring initiative in a consortium led by the German Environment Agency under Horizon 2020	Amount (EUR)	-	265,000
						Number of CAs	2	2
						Number of SNEs	-	-
Contribution agreements								
Copernicus delegation agreement	December 2014	87,000,000	97	DG DEFIS	Delivery of land services and in situ coordination under the Copernicus programme	Amount (EUR)	14,343 000	631,000
						Number of CAs	6	6
						Number of SNEs	-	-
Copernicus contribution agreement	November 2021	135,000,000	86	DG DEFIS	Continuation of Copernicus activities, replacing the current agreement	Amount (EUR)	-	12,000,000
						Number of CAs	-	12
						Number of SNEs	-	-
IPA 2020	February 2020	1,275,000	30	DG NEAR	Cooperation with Western Balkan countries under the IPA	Amount (EUR)	1,275,000	-
						Number of CAs	1	1
						Number of SNEs	-	-
Service-level agreements								
EuroGEO	December 2020	1,500,000	36	DG RTD	Mainstreaming GEOSS data sharing and management principles in support of Europe's environment	Amount (EUR)	-	365,000
						Number of CAs	-	2
						Number of SNEs	-	-
European Climate and Health Observatory	August 2021	1,500,000	48	DG SANTE	Supporting the content developments of the European Climate and Health Observatory	Amount (EUR)	-	118,000
						Number of CAs	-	1
						Number of SNEs	-	-

General information					Financial and human resources Information			
	Start date	Total amount (EUR)	Duration (months)	Counterpart	Short description	2020	2021	
Regional and urban environmental indicators	December 2021	1,324,000	36	DG REGIO	Supporting the implementation of regional and urban environmental indicators and analysis	Amount (EUR)	-	-
						Number of CAs	-	-
						Number of SNEs	-	-

Notes: The financial amounts reported each year are the R0 budget appropriations (revenue and expenditure) made in that year. The EEA has non-differentiated appropriations, so the budget appropriations for commitments and payments are identical. CA, contract agent; SNE, seconded national expert.

Annex 7

Environmental management

Context of the Agency and its environmental management strategy

The Agency commits in its environment policy to minimise its environmental impacts and continually improve its environmental performance. In November 2020, the senior management team decided that the EEA would become a 'climate-neutral' organisation. This decision is reflected in the EEA's environment policy for 2021 ⁽²¹⁾. Following the decision, the EEA commissioned a study to support the development of concrete pathways towards achieving climate-neutral operations at the EEA. The objective was to identify an array of feasible actions to reduce the EEA's greenhouse gas emissions and help deliver climate neutrality by 2030. Initial actions identified in the study and prioritised by senior management will already be reflected in the environmental management programme for 2022.

Overview of the Agency's environmental management system

The EEA uses an environmental management system, which was registered under EMAS in 2005. EMAS is part of the EEA's QMS. In 2020, the EEA's EMAS registration ⁽²²⁾ was successfully extended by a competent body under EMAS for another year.

Environmental management, procedures, responsibilities and annual activities are documented in the EEA environmental management handbook (EEA internal document).

Environmental aspects, indicators and targets

EEA activities have both direct and indirect impacts on the environment. Under EMAS, the EEA routinely

monitors the following environmental aspects in its environmental statement:

- use of electricity;
- use of energy for heating;
- water consumption;
- paper consumption;
- generation of waste;
- CO₂ emissions from business travel.

For each of the environmental aspects, the annual environmental statement report outlines details of objectives, monitoring and progress. It includes a summary table outlining the sources of the environmental impact, action plans, performance indicators, the performance of the previous year and the percentage change compared with data from the previous 5 years.

The environmental statement 2020 ⁽²³⁾ was published in 2021 after the competent body had confirmed the extension of the EMAS registration. Most of the environmental performance data for 2020 show a substantial fall, concomitant with the COVID19 pandemic. For example, the greenhouse gas emissions from business travel and meetings dropped by approximately 90% compared with the 2015-2019 average. The data also indicate significant reductions in the use of electricity, heating, water, paper and waste due to fewer staff being in the building on Kongens Nytorv.

⁽²¹⁾ EEA environment policy 2021 — European Environment Agency (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/emas/eea-environment-policy/view>).

⁽²²⁾ Certifikat EEA. 2021.pdf — European Environment Agency (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/emas/certifikat-eea-2020.pdf/view>).

⁽²³⁾ EEA Environmental Statement 2020 — European Environment Agency (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/emas/environmental-management-2020-statement>).

Annex 8

Annual accounts

Table A8.1 Calculation of budget outturn

Budget outturn	2019	2020	2021
Reserve from the previous years' surplus (+)	-	-	-
Revenue actually received (+)	52,316,361	61,169,120	66,608,472
Payments made (-)	-55,223,813	-64,118,346	-57,559,461
Carry-over of appropriations (-)	-33,337,392	-27,834,239	-28,102,672
Cancellation of appropriations carried over (+)	226,600	203,867	160,082
Adjustment for carry-over of assigned revenue appropriation from previous year (+)	36,542,967	30,805,060	21,230,293
Exchange rate differences (+/-)	-14,898	9,700	-4,218
Adjustment for negative balance from previous year (-)	-291,565	-	-2,160,873
Total	218,260	235,162	171,623

Cancellation of appropriations

Cancellation of commitment appropriations

EUR 336.86 of appropriation non-committed.

Cancellation of payment appropriations for the year

N/A

Cancellation of payment appropriations carried over

EUR 160,419 of payment appropriations carried over from 2020 were cancelled in 2021.

Justification

Budget outturn

A positive budgetary outturn is to be reimbursed to the Commission. The positive outturn for 2021, EUR 171,623, is composed of the following components:

Budget result specifications	2021	2020
C1 – Current year appropriations	-	-
Amount not cashed	-	0.42
Not committed	336.86	21,094.44
Amount not made available in the budget	0.32	-
C4 – Reuse of funds current year	-	-
Amounts not made available in the budget	15,422.54	499.38
C8 – Appropriations carried over from previous year	-	-
Cancellation of unused appropriations	160,082.08	203,867.40
Exchange rate difference (gain+/loss)	4,218.42	9,699.56
Total	171,623.38	235,161.20

Cancellation of unused payment appropriations carried over from the previous year (C8 funds) amounted to EUR 160,082, which is significantly lower than the year before that (EUR 203,867).

Annex 9

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Name
8th EAP	Eighth Environment Action Programme
C3S	Copernicus climate change service
CA	Contract agent
CEAP	Circular economy action plan
CLC	Corine Land Cover
Climate-ADAPT	European Climate Adaptation Platform
CLMS	Copernicus land monitoring service
COM	Communications programme of the EEA
CONT	Committee on Budgetary Control
COP	Conference of the Parties
Corine	Coordination of Information on the Environment
DG	European Commission Directorate-General
DG CLIMA	DG for Climate Action
DG DEFIS	DG for Defence Industry and Space
DG ENV	DG for the Environment
DG NEAR	DG for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
DG REGIO	DG for Regional and Urban Policy
DG RTD	DG for Research and Innovation
DG SANTE	DG for Health and Food Safety
ECA	European Court of Auditors
EDO	Executive Director's Office
EEA	European Environment Agency
EGD	European Green Deal
Eionet	European Environment Information and Observation Network
EMAS	Eco-management and audit scheme
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
E-PRTR	European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register
ETC	European Topic Centre
ETC/CME	ETC on Climate Mitigation and Energy
ETC/MMGE	ETC on Waste and Materials in a Green Economy
EU	European Union
EUAN	EU Agencies Network
GEO	Group on Earth Observations

Abbreviation	Name
GEOSS	Global Earth Observation System of Systems
HBM4EU	Human Biomonitoring for Europe
Horizon 2020	International initiative to tackle pollution in the Mediterranean by 2020
HSR	Health and sustainable resource use programme of the EEA
IAC	Internal audit capability
IAS	Integrated assessments for sustainability programme of the EEA
INSPIRE	Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IPCHEM	Information Platform for Chemical Monitoring
IT	Information technology
JRC	Joint Research Centre
KPI	Key performance indicator
LULUCF	Land use, land use change and forestry
Natura 2000	EU-wide network of nature protection areas established under the Habitats Directive and Birds Directive
NFP	National focal point
NRC	National Reference Centre
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
QMS	Quality management system
SOER 2025	The European environment — state and outlook 2025 report
UN	United Nations
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP/MAP	United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean action plan
UWWTD	Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive
WEkEO	EU Copernicus DIAS reference service for environmental data, virtual processing environments and skilled user support
WHO	World Health Organization
ZPAP	Zero pollution action plan



European Environment Agency

Consolidated annual activity report 2021

2022 — 55 pp. — 21 x 29.7 cm

ISBN: 978-92-9480-462-4

doi: 10.2800/604801

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