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**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Evaluation of the European Environment Agency (EEA) and its European Environment  
Information and Observation Network (EIONET)**

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The Regulation<sup>1</sup> setting up the European Environment Agency (EEA) and its European Environment Information and Observation Network (EIONET) came into force in 1990. It aims to provide the European Union and its Member States "*with objective, reliable and comparable information at European level*" and the "*necessary technical and scientific support*" to enable 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 so 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.*"

In 2016, the Commission initiated an evaluation of the EEA and EIONET, in accordance with the Better Regulation package, the Common Approach on EU decentralised agencies<sup>2</sup> agreed in July 2012 by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission and a request from the European Parliament of 2005. The process started with the publication of the Evaluation Roadmap<sup>3</sup>.

The **evaluation follows the Better Regulation Guidelines** and thus includes analysis of five main themes: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and European added value. The evaluation has not only been looking at the relevant EEA work programmes and activity reports, but also at the EEA Founding Regulation and how it was implemented, in relation to the above-mentioned Common Approach. The evaluation covers the period mid-2012 until end-2016 and takes into account the previous evaluations and resulting recommendations.

The evaluation was performed with the support of a consortium led by COWI (DK), which carried out a large stakeholder consultation, document analysis, targeted surveys, prepared case studies and produced a final study report.

The overall conclusion of the evaluation is that, during the 2012-2016 period, the **EEA and EIONET fulfilled the main objectives set by the Founding Regulation**, which continue to be relevant, and provided EU value added by implementing the multi-annual work programmes in a largely effective, efficient and coherent way. Both the Agency and its network worked overall well, with very good products and co-operation. EEA has proven to be reliable in providing the necessary information to support EU policy making e.g. in areas such as air quality, the follow-up on the 2020 climate and energy package, bathing water, and others. The EEA has adapted very well to new EU policy developments and has fulfilled its objectives in the context of decreasing staff resources and increasing expectations for further high quality deliverables by the Agency.

The evaluation has also identified **a certain number of issues** on the matching between the **scope** of EEA action and its resources, on **governance** mechanisms and on the **processes** for integrating data into policy-relevant knowledge.

In terms of its **scope**, the EEA faced during the evaluation period increasing demand from the Commission to support new legislation on both environment and climate sides and as entrusted entity for Copernicus Land service and in-situ co-ordination. This was clearly due to the recognition that EEA and its network provide unique value for money.

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<sup>1</sup> Founding Regulation EEC 1210/90 codified under Regulation (EC) No 401/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009, OJ L126 of 21.5.2009

<sup>2</sup> [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/agencies/overhaul\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/agencies/overhaul_en)

<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2018\\_env\\_002\\_eea\\_evaluation\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2018_env_002_eea_evaluation_en.pdf)

While additional but temporary resources accompanied some of these specific requests, EEA had to adjust to a nominal freezing of the EU core subsidy and corresponding human resource reduction in line with the Commission policy for decentralised agencies. In some cases, this freezing hampered the full implementation of EEA work programme, including work on support to EU legislation (e.g. reporting). The continuation of the nominal freezing of the EU core subsidy for 2021 -2027 proposed by the Commission would require further prioritization and eventual deselection of activities and tasks currently undertaken.

In terms of **governance**, the existing arrangements fulfilled their main functions and were perceived as broadly appropriate by many stakeholders. The EEA Management Board has not always fully played its role of strategic steer, including on resource prioritization. This was partially due to its working methods. Moreover, the multiplicity of additional technical coordination mechanisms between Commission services and EEA has sometimes affected negatively the overall structural coordination with the Commission

Overall the **processes** worked well and information management systems and generic planning and reporting instruments have improved. EEA and EIONET were seen as essential data provider both for the Commission and for the member countries. Some weaknesses were identified in EEA's role of integrating data into environmental policy-relevant knowledge. While data collection processes worked efficiently in all climate and many environmental fields, they did not always fully benefit yet from new technologies and processes, in particular in view of the substantial resources provided for Copernicus towards the end of the evaluation period. Effectiveness and efficiency gains can be expected from the ongoing streamlining and e-reporting infrastructure modernisation across the supported policy domains.

Overall, indicators fulfilled their role of providing comparable and robust knowledge. EEA delivered most of its reports as planned and with broad consultation, which however may need to widen the scope to reach all relevant actors, including from the sectors affected. There was some room for improvement in the timing, scope and formats of some EEA reports, to be better coordinated with the Commission's policy agenda.

The EIONET is a unique network of environment and climate expertise that provides essential expertise in many areas and contributes e.g. through the European Topic Centres to the efficiency of the EEA's work. There was margin for improvement in the information on EIONET activities, the clarification of the role and better visibility of the value added of the various EIONET components and how these interact with the EEA and the Commission services, notably in the area of reporting.

As the scope of the evaluation covers the period 2012-2016, a number of **on-going work-streams are already contributing to addressing some of the above findings**. Against this background, the present Staff Working Document also identifies "lessons learned".