

To: The EEA Management Board

4 April 2013

FEEDBACK FROM THE EEA MANAGEMENT ON THE DRAFT FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

These are the EEA Management comments on the recommendations resulting from the COWI evaluation report. The comments were sent to the Management Board as input to the official MB response to the European Parliament.

The EEA Management appreciates the general conclusion of the evaluation that the EEA and EIONET are well-established and well-functioning structures, delivering comprehensive and reliable outputs which, to a large extent, satisfy stakeholders' needs. The evaluation indicates that the EEA continues to be the most effective and efficient solution to providing credible information on the state of the European environment.

In its response, the EEA has taken into consideration the *Common Approach on EU Decentralised Agencies*, as regards the Road Map and the Action Plan and will report on any progress through performance indicators to be agreed with the Management Board every two years.

Feedback on specific recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Continue and further strengthen the dialogue with stakeholders

- The evaluation has found that the EEA already has a good dialogue with their stakeholders at all working levels and that this dialogue is absolutely essential for the EEA to ensure the relevance of its activities and the best possible match with stakeholders' needs. The EEA acknowledges the need to continue this dialogue, in agreement with the Management Board and to consolidate its activities into its forthcoming strategy as part of the priorities and activities to be implemented.
- In the dialogue with stakeholders, special care will be taken to outline the role of the EEA in implementing legislation as laid down in the 2012 *“Commission Communication on Improving the delivery of benefits from EU environment measures: building confidence through better knowledge and responsiveness”* and the 2013 *“DG Environment Staff Working Document: The EU Shared Environmental Information System – Implementation Outlook”*.

Recommendation 2: Maintain focus on delivering outputs of high quality as this is the basis for achieving impact

- In its work, the EEA is building on almost two decades of investing in the sharing of environmental information, in providing relevant assessments of high quality and ensuring that the necessary infrastructure is in place and that the EEA delivers according to its mission. In 2012, the EEA set in motion an EFQM process which will help to support the highest standards in the quality of the EEA's outputs and the efficiency of related processes. At the same time new and increasingly complex challenges continue to emerge (see the European Commission proposal for a new General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020 'Living well, within the limits of our planet' (COM (2012) 710 final) and the EP resolution of 20 April 2012, which stressed the need for a 7th EAP which focuses on implementation, enforcement, integration and the international dimension.
- The EEA and EIONET will endeavour to adapt the upcoming multiannual strategy to these emerging challenges. In order to be genuinely useful for policymakers the Agency's work on integrated assessments will focus on delivering more up-to-date information linked to a better implementation and a greater understanding of the systemic links between the various environmental, social and economic issues; and focus on how these links generate impact on the environment, as evidenced in the 2010 SOER assessment. This will require a strong emphasis on the underlying MDIAK chain of evidence and on methodological approaches that are specifically geared to a better assessment of systemic challenges such as ex-post policy analyses, ex-ante scenario analyses, and uncertainty assessments.
- The EEA, in collaboration with EIONET and other partners, will continue to implement a comprehensive quality assurance system for the data, indicators, assessments and information services for which it is responsible, including the SEIS and relevant international and EU standards where appropriate.

Recommendation 3: The Management Board of the EEA should consider how it can best exercise its strategic governance function

- The EEA will provide all necessary support to the Management Board in their continued efforts to ensure that their decisions are transparent and legitimate and on how best to engage in the governance of the EEA. Some steps have already been taken towards a more streamlined, strategic and transparent agenda setting.

Recommendation 4: Review and update of the planning system and approaches in order to provide transparency of prioritisation and greater accountability

- The EEA is recognised amongst EU institutions as having a well-functioning internal management planning system using activity-based budgeting and accounting principles.
- To increase transparency and the Agency's accountability vis-à-vis its main stakeholders, and based on its current internal management planning system, the EEA will simplify the structure, specify objectives and performance indicator and add more information on resource allocations to the various priorities in the strategy and the Annual Management Plan. This will also provide a better basis for EIONET partners when planning their work processes in relation to the new Multiannual Work Programme.

Recommendation 5: Reassess the use of the Scientific Committee with the purpose of ensuring enhanced value added to the work of the EEA

- A discussion on the purpose of the EEA's Scientific Committee and how to ensure the most effective outcomes is on-going. With the leadership of its new Chair and Vice-Chairs a series of alternative approaches have been proposed to establish a clear framework for cooperation to allow the Scientific Committee to give opinions and to interact with the EEA staff and Management Board. The EEA is looking forward to collaborating with the Scientific Committee and the Management Board in this process.