Position paper from the Eionet National Focal Points (NFPs) to the Management Board on the conclusions of EU Commission's Staff Working Document (SWD(2018)470)

- Having regard to the Commission evaluation of the European Environment Agency (EEA) and its European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet)
- Having regard to decisions of the Management Board (MB) in its meeting of 4-5 December 2018 (Item 4; Item 6, specifically (b) in 'conclusions requiring further reflection')

The Eionet National Focal Points to the European Environment Agency:

▪ Welcome the overall positive conclusions of the evaluation that "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" (p. 61)." NFPs also take note of the further conclusion that EEA/EIONET is very cost-effective (p. 58).

▪ Appreciate the decision of the Management Board on 19 June 2018 to invite NFPs to provide a coordinated input to the work of the Evaluation Working Group, in particular with respect to issues of relevance to the Eionet network.

▪ Acknowledge the approval of renewed "Rules Of Procedure" by the MB in December 2018, that include, among others a request to Eionet "to perform an internal review on how to modernize the network, in light of the changing context for EEA and its network (…) and to report back on its findings and proposals for a revision of the network set-up".

▪ Recognise that since the end of the evaluation period (i.e. end of 2016) there have been several changes across work streams which have already contributed to addressing some of the SWD findings (SWD, Section 6.3.1).

The Eionet NFPs have reflected upon the Evaluation and the SWD and developed an overall collective strategic view grouped around a number of issues as detailed below. The Eionet NFPs:

1. **Welcome and encourage an Eionet Review, aiming at modernising the network in several dimensions for the next EEA/Eionet strategy period.**

2. **Request to have an active role in this process and are prepared to lead tasks.**

3. **Recommend that this review should:**

a) Revisit and better communicate roles and tasks of Eionet actors;

b) Re-affirm the MB role in providing strategic guidance (p. 61) and consequently, support the MB role in priority-setting within EEA and Eionet activities (p. 36) and suggest the MB involves NFPs in their decision process;

c) Consider measures that improve the everyday organisation, planning and methods of working together;

d) Support the development of (new) modern tools (such as Eionet Planner, online collaborative tools and more complex technological solutions such as Reportnet 3.0) and promote their use;

e) Support a discussion about ways to increase the presence and visibility of EEA/Eionet at national level, revealing its benefits to promote national involvement.

f) Enable all European countries to take part in the activities of EEA/Eionet, in order to assure comparable, policy-relevant environmental information covering the entire continent thereby promoting knowledge sharing and capacity building.

Furthermore, the NFPs suggest the following activities, defined in 4 sub-categories.
The NFPs:

4. **STRATEGY AND PRIORITY SETTING**

    a) Recommend that NFPs are involved in developing an 'EEA/Eionet strategy 2021—2027'. NFPs could use the opportunity to reflect on their roles and tasks and ways in which to modernise the network to facilitate future work and alignment with the next strategy document (as envisioned by an Eionet review process).
    b) Recommend that NFPs are invited to reflect on how the network could better involve the NFPs and NRCs, e.g. by considering the coordination role and tasks, and by reflecting in what way data flows, reporting, reports, the work done by NRC and NFPs could support decision making and strategic planning.

5. **NETWORKING AND ENSURING RESOURCES**

    a) Encourage the Eionet review to consider links and overlaps with the European Knowledge Community and other EU Agencies (SWD p. 45-46).
    b) Are ready to support the EEA in communicating more efficiently about Eionet's outputs (towards NRCs, public authorities, media/citizens and other national stakeholders).
    c) Suggest finding new ways to enhance national engagement, taking into account the resources necessary at national level.

6. **EIONET ORGANISATION AND PLANNING**

    a) Welcome the EEA effort to maintain the "Eionet Planner" in close collaboration with an ad hoc group of NFPs.
    b) Welcome the recent publication of the "cooperation guidelines" as pushed by a joint effort of the EEA and the NFPs.
    c) Encourage the EEA and NRCs to continue using technology such as webinars and online tools to enhance work between the regular NRC meetings.

7. **OTHER ISSUES**

a) Encourage EEA/Eionet to promote synergies and/or interoperability between EEA reporting tools (e.g.., Reportnet 3.0) and other systems (among others, Eurostat, INSPIRE, SEIS -see 5.3.1 in the SWD), and to provide assistance to countries as needed.

b) Encourage the use of NRC meetings and the Eionet collectively to also "promote exchange of knowledge and best practice" (§ 5.5.1 in the SWD).

c) Are ready to help the EEA use and work across the entire MDIAK-C chain to strengthen the coherence between the interests of the EC, the stakeholders and the members of the network (§5.1.3 p.32 in the SWD).