

Opinion of the EEA Scientific Committee
on the EEA Evaluation by Arthur Andersen

4th draft

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During its meeting of 20 October 2000, the Scientific Committee (SC) discussed the selected parts of the Evaluation Report, deemed of specific interest for the Scientific Committee:

- ❖ Section 1 - Synthesis Report dated September 2000
- ❖ Section 2 – Recommendations dated September 2000
- ❖ Pages 99-102 of Section 3 – Effectiveness analysis dated July 2000.

It submits the following opinion to the Management Board.

A. General comments

The Scientific Committee expresses concern about the methodology used to convey/conduct the evaluation.

The Scientific Committee is particularly disappointed about the analysis by the consultants of the scientific quality and content of the Agency's output. There is no systematic evidence presented in the parts of the report that we saw as to the objectivity, reliability and comparability of the various EEA outputs and their utility to the Community and the Member States in assessing their environmental performance.

It is an important deficiency in the evaluation (which focuses most of its attention on inputs rather than outputs). The Agency might consider commissioning a separate report, using appropriate methodology and scientific expertise, to provide comprehensive and systematic feedback on the content, quality and presentation of the EEA outputs.

B. Specific comments

❖ Section 1 - Synthesis Report

The first paragraph of the Executive Summary was judged erroneous and not in line with the wording of the EEA mandate as stated by the EEA Regulation (page 5 – first paragraph).

❖ Section 2 – Recommendations

- Heading 1: General recommendations - 2nd sub-section: Promote simplification in all areas (page 3): it is difficult to understand what is meant by the *'production of complex outputs, (...) complex tools and methodologies'*.
- Objections were raised to the idea that DG Environment is the sole client of the EEA (page 10 – last paragraph). The EEA is not an ordinary consultancy organisation and it serves a wider audience than DG Environment or even the European Commission. This is a condition of its independence and credibility. Its key clients are the Community Institutions and Member States.
- A clear difference must be drawn between the EEA's clients and users: the views expressed are too limited and do not take into consideration the EEA's co-operation with international organisations (page 11 – last paragraph).
- The added value of the EEA lies particularly in its capacity to produce some own initiative's reports, when it feels it advisable and takes the risk of investigating new fields (page 12 – first paragraph).
- The SC members did not endorse the proposal of having the EEA to *'provide a publication area ... for external scientific and expert reports'* (page 14 – first paragraph), because the quality control of such publications could not be ensured and this *'publication area'* would be beyond the EEA's responsibility, yet it would be blamed for any fault in these publications.
- The SC members agreed upon the idea that the EEA should be the 'leader' of the ETCs and provide stronger guidance (page 19 – second paragraph).
- The SC realises that there should be a proper balance between support staff and scientific staff, but there are still large gaps in coverage, which ought to be filled by way of priority (page 32, 3rd and 4th paragraphs and top of page 33). In particular, recruitment in the field of scientific editing in English is strongly needed.

❖ Pages 99 to 102 of Section 3 – Effectiveness analysis

The paragraphs commented were part of *'3.2 Effectiveness of the organisation' / '3.2.2 Scientific Committee'*.

- The 3 paragraphs on the **advisory role** of the SC on the workprogramme (page 99) were considered as misleading and needed to be clarified (assumptions made by Arthur Andersen were not correct). The SC does not represent the interests of the research community, whatever this is. It is there to provide scientific advice. There would be no sense in adding NGO representatives to it. NGOs have their own agenda. The proposition was not sustained.
- The 8 paragraphs on the role of the SC in **quality control** (pages 99 and 100) did not raise consent:
 - The quote in footnote number 142 was considered as misleading: the SC is not *'in charge of controlling the quality of EEA publications'*. It appears that this was quoted from the minutes of an informal meeting of the Management Board with PHARE Countries representatives.
 - The SC clearly agreed on the fact that it has not been doing a general quality control of the EEA publications. In any case, the SC does not have the resources to do so.
 - The review of some drafts of some publications has been done on a voluntary basis by SC members.
- The 3 paragraphs commenting the **topic-oriented structure** of the SC in the **quality control** (pages 99 and 100) did not raise consent:
 - The interpretation by Arthur Andersen of the present fields of expertise is not correct and SC members have always been interlinking with other members and experts, since it is not realistic to believe that one member can cover one field.
 - In the enlarged EEA, more members will be nominated, which is welcome by all the SC members and there is no fear to *'hinder management or co-ordination'* (page 101 – second paragraph).
- The wording of the 4 paragraphs dealing with the willingness of the SC to play a **more active role in the strategic guidance** was found unclear (3rd paragraph is unclear) and assertions erroneous (first sentence of the 4th paragraph).
- The conclusion (i.e. third paragraph) of the description of the **vision of the SC role** was considered as not correct. The SC has made it clear that it does not look for more power.

Attention is drawn to the attached *'Note on the developing Role of the EEA Scientific Committee'*, first produced in 1998 and updated in June and November 2000.

