



## **OPINION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON THE EEA PROGRAMMING DOCUMENT 2019-21 AND THE ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2019**

Article 8, paragraph 4-5 of the Regulation (EC) No 401/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the European Environment Agency (EEA), requires the Agency's Scientific Committee (SC) to be consulted on the Multi Annual Work Programme (MAWP) respectively the Annual Work Programme (AWP) before its submission by the Executive Director to the Management Board for adoption.

On 21<sup>st</sup> February 2018, the Scientific Committee was invited to provide its opinion on the draft programming document (PD) 2019-21 and the draft AWP 2019. The PD 2019-21 reflects an extension of the MAWP 2014-2018 through to 2021.

Following discussions at the 70<sup>th</sup> SC meeting on 17 May 2018, the Scientific Committee agreed on the opinion presented hereafter. Reference is also made to the specific matters mentioned in the SC's Opinion on AWP 2018, most of which remain relevant to AWP 2019.

The Scientific Committee welcomes the draft EEA PD 2019-21 and the AWP 2019. The PD/AWP is well structured and effectively identifies key strategic and operational priorities for the next years.

The Scientific Committee remains concerned that austerity measures adopted by the EU continue to have undesirable implications for the EEA's activities. The addition of new tasks, many of which appear to be underfunded, combined with the prospect of further cuts in funding, will further increase the pressure on the Agency's resources. It will further undermine its capacity to discharge its current portfolio of responsibilities, and risk compromising its ability to discharge the functions outlined in its founding Regulation. There is an urgent need to enter into discussion with all relevant partners and stakeholders about which activities should be discontinued.

The withdrawal of the UK from the EU could significantly impinge on the implementation of the PD/AWP in various ways that at present are very difficult to predict. The EEA Regulation (EC 401/2009) Article 19 establishes that EEA is open to membership for countries that embrace the objectives of the Agency. It will be important that information about the opportunities and

modalities of EEA membership is made clear to all parties, so as to ensure an informed basis for deciding on the future arrangements for all Member States including the UK. Greater contingency planning for all eventualities (including an abrupt 'no deal' withdrawal) is advisable.

Whereas the EEA serves as data provider to support measures for protecting the environment, the EEA Regulation Art. 2 prescribes that it is also expected 'to assess the results of such measures' and to ensure that the public is well informed about the state of the environment. The SC congratulates the EEA on its careful plans for the forthcoming SOER 2020, which will provide an important stimulus to reflecting on existing policy measures and their effectiveness, in a broader, more 'systemic' perspective. Relevant measures to consider include those contained in various sectoral policies (energy, agriculture, transport, fisheries).

With its forthcoming programme seminars the Scientific Committee is eager to mobilize its own expertise as well as that of external experts to support the knowledge generation and sharing activities of the Agency. A recent seminar was devoted to the use of big data and revealed that it could potentially lead the Agency to develop new ways of working with citizens, business and public authorities. One of the areas revolves around new markets for data analytics. EEA has established a hard won reputation over decades as a trustworthy information provider based on robust and reliable data sources. This reputation should be carefully safeguarded. The new opportunities offered by big data should only be seized after a very careful evaluation of the risks and opportunities, including the legitimacy of new data providers.

The Commission led evaluation of the EEA and EIONET is expected to be concluded by early autumn 2018. Notwithstanding an extensive work program for the evaluation and a brief presentation made by the consultants to the 67<sup>th</sup> SC meeting, only the Chair of the Scientific Committee was invited to contribute directly to the evaluation, which the SC considers to be a missed opportunity. The SC hopes that its expertise will be fully taken into account when the responses to the Commission led evaluation are discussed and implemented.

The Scientific Committee congratulates the EEA on the PD/AWP 2019 and looks forward to supporting the EEA and its partners in the implementation of this work.

Copenhagen, 17 May 2018

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Prof Per Mickwitz, Chair EEA Scientific Committee