

5 November 2013

## **OPINION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON THE EEA MULTIANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2014-2018 AND THE ANNUAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2014**

Article 8, paragraphs 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 Scientific Committee (SC) to be consulted on the Multiannual Work Programme (MAWP) and the Annual Management Plan (AMP) before their submission by the Executive Director to the Management Board for approval.

The Scientific Committee's opinion is given on the basis of the draft MAWP 2014-18 and AMP 2014 circulated in advance of the October 2013 SC meeting, following a wide consultation process with the Agency's key partners and integration of the comments received. Information about these developments was presented to the SC on a regular basis.

The SC discussed the draft MAWP 2014-18 and its implications for the AMP 2014 during in depth discussions at its 55<sup>th</sup> and 56<sup>th</sup> SC meetings and in two seminars held on 27 February 2013 and 2 October 2013, and agreed on the main points of the opinion presented hereafter.

Following the careful planning process of the Multiannual Work Programme 2014-2018 and AMP 2014, the EEA SC:

- shares the vision of the draft MAWP 2014-18 as outlined in its key goals:
  - to be the prime source of knowledge at European level informing the implementation of European and national environment and climate policies;
  - to be a leading knowledge centre to support long term transition challenges and objectives;
  - to be the lead organisation at European level facilitating knowledge-sharing and capacity-building in the field of environment and climate change;
  
- welcomes the MAWP 2014-2018 as an overall ambitious, well-written and well-balanced document, providing strategic work directions for the EEA organised around four key strategic areas –(i) Informing policy implementation; (ii) Assessing systemic challenges; (iii) Knowledge co-creation, sharing and use; (iv) EEA Management, within the EU 2050 agenda of long-term transition towards sustainable development, with a substantial effort to frame environmental issues in the broader social and economic context, under the perspective of better fulfilling its mission towards policy-makers and the public;

- welcomes the clear alignment of the MAWP with the vision and objectives of the 7<sup>th</sup> Environment Action Programme;
- appreciates and supports the willingness of preserving the ultimate EEA goals for high quality and timely products aimed to pro-actively advise the EU environmental policy in front of a budget cut of around 5%. In this regard, the SC hopes for an increasing role of EEA in knowledge transfer to an empowerment of member countries on environmental issues, as well as a more active role by the Environmental Topic Centres (ETC) with the EEA gathering and summarising key findings and providing knowledge transfer;
- recommends that addressing health inequalities in relation to environmental exposures, as explicitly recognised in the EU 2020 strategy, should be considered more explicitly in EEA work;
- stresses the importance for the EEA to continue not merely to provide knowledge about the state of, and outlook for, the environment ('what will happen') but also to provide knowledge about possible path to address environmental issues ('what can happen'). In this regard, and in the framework of an objective of long-term transition towards sustainable development, recommends that EEA more systematically looks at the environmental impact of sectorial policies;
- considers that the establishment of the European Environment Academy (EEAcademy), is a key element of the strategy to provide a central framework encompassing mutual capacity-building and knowledge-sharing activities. The Scientific Committee recognises that by closely following and integrating scientific developments in its work, the EEAcademy could play a pivotal role in reinforcing synergies among the different relevant institutions, including in particular the other 'Group of Four' partners (DG Environment & CLIMA, Eurostat, JRC and DG RTD) as well as WHO Europe, DG SANCO, OECD, and other Agencies' and Community Bodies' Scientific Committees. Such synergetic environment, along with the sharing of infrastructures, such as SEIS, Inspire and Copernicus, will facilitate addressing interdisciplinary and multifaceted cross-cutting environmental challenges that have to this day often received lower priority, yet have great relevance within a 2050 perspective. A non exhaustive list of such environmental challenges would include those posed by multiple stressors and synergetic effects; the exploitation of new energy sources such as shale gas extraction by hydrofracking; and the extension and upgrade of the environment and health monitoring infrastructure, including monitoring of airborne allergens, and the harmonization of health data gathering, including hospitalization data and biomonitoring data, throughout EU;
- suggests that the EEAcademy might also contribute to the interface between environmental knowledge, other stakeholders and the public at large. Activities that might help in this regard include summer schools on science-policy-society interfaces and science-media communication; a web forum and other activities dedicated to relevant emerging issues and scientific or social controversies; as well as support and participation to specific local initiatives;
- recommends that the EEA be given a more active role in strategic orientation of relevant Horizon 2020 work programmes;

- notes the EEA commitment to highlight, discuss and deal with uncertainty in all the aspects of the EEA products, along the MDIAK chain from monitoring to knowledge, and future developments, including the application of the precautionary principle. In this regard, the EEA shall have an active role in promoting linkage with Horizon 2020 programs as the appropriate tool to properly and systematically address uncertainty through focussed research projects in all science fields. Special attention should be given to assessing and communicating uncertainty, particularly in issues such as climate change, where action is necessary now to reach the objective of keeping the average global temperature rise below 2°C and to implement adaptation to foreseeable threats of uncertain proportion. Promoting preparedness to systemic challenges should be accompanied by specific programs on how to face opposition to change. In this regard, extensive efforts are necessary to spread the EEA information;
- recommends that work on externalities is of key importance. Cost-benefit analyses should be part of future EEA reports, where costs and benefits are not understood to be solely of a short term economic nature, but also include social and ecological pros and cons. For instance in the case of climate change, assessments of environmental and health benefits of action should be accompanied by estimates of the cost of inaction, and accompanied by the cost of adaptation, energy efficiency, including good practice on implementing and matching renewable energy targets. The subsequent impact on the environment, health and economy, including co-benefits of policy measures undertaken in these areas, and the effectiveness of industrial policies in reducing the release of pollutants should also undergo careful monitoring and evaluation;
- stresses the importance of data traceability and transparency, as well as open access to data and information;
- recognises the value of referring to the life-cycle impacts of Europe's consumption and production on other parts of the world and emissions' savings on imported items to Europe.

The SC confirms its appreciation of the well-designed preparation process of an ambitious, forward looking and stimuli rich MAWP 2014-2018 and AMP 2014 and congratulates the EEA Executive Director and the entire staff for the excellent work.

Copenhagen, 5 November 2013

*SIGNED*

---

Dr. Sybille van den Hove  
Chair, EEA Scientific Committee