



EEAC Network Annual Plan 2016

Preface

The European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils network (EEAC) utilized 2015 to design and implement a permanent legal structure for the network under Dutch law. As of January 2016 the EEAC network is managed as a standalone legal entity. In order to set clear targets and goals and to fulfil transparency obligations, as mentioned in the statutes of the EEAC, the board of the EEAC network presents its annual plan 2016.

The positions of the board members were reconfirmed during the annual plenary session of the EEAC network, November 2015. Currently the following five persons, representing four councils, are seated in the Board: Arnau Queralt (Chair), Miranda Schreurs (Vice-Chair), António Abreu (Vice-Chair), Sophie Gaudeul (Secretary), and Christian Hey (Treasurer).

In the annual plan you will find information about the agenda of the four EEAC Working Groups, the aims of the board and information about the EEAC annual Conference 2016, to be held in Barcelona. As closure the principles and values of the EEAC Network are listed.

On behalf of the board of the EEAC Network,



Arnau Queralt Bassa
Chairman EEAC Network

1 EEAC Working Groups: Agenda 2016

1.1 The Working Group Sustainable Development

The implementation of Agenda 2030 on both the European and national levels, is of major interest for the members of the EEAC Working Group Sustainable Development. Agenda 2030's implementation is thus one of the main topics to be addressed by the working group agenda 2016. Besides the question of implementation, the working group will also focus on the different initiatives to institutionalize SD consultation on the European level as part of the Agenda 2030 implementation process.

The working group will meet several times this year, in order to prepare opinions and to share knowledge on the Agenda 2030 implementation process. Due to the scope and the relevance of the topic the process of option making and knowledge sharing will be coordinated with several external partners, like the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN).

There are several initiatives and events in which the working group will participate:

- The European Commission announced the *"Next steps for a sustainable European future"* initiative in its work programme 2016. The initiative *"aims to set out a new approach to ensure Europe's economic growth and social and environmental sustainability beyond the 2020 timeframe, taking into account the Europe 2020 review and the internal and external implementation of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda."* The European Commission is currently working on the roadmap regarding the next steps for a sustainable European future. The roadmap is expected to be ready early 2016. The next step will be a public consultation (expected) in the second semester 2016.

The EESC is asked by the European Commission to organise a conference bringing together stakeholders and civil society groups in order to discuss the Commission's initiative and provide input. The EESC invited the EEAC and other groups to participate in the preparatory process of the conference. Early February 2016 EEAC representatives joined a first preparatory session of the EESC on this topic. In addition to the joint conference initiative the EEAC will prepare a letter assembling viewpoints on the Commission's proposal.

Besides the initiatives by the European Commission and the EESC several other initiatives were tabled during the last months. The board of the EEAC was mandated by the annual plenary session to make an overview of the different initiatives. On request the working group sustainable development will publish a written overview on these different initiatives. The working group aims to submit the overview in March/April 2016.

- In 2015, the European Sustainable Development Action Weeks (ESDW) took place for the first time. It is the aim of the ESDW to stimulate and make visible activities, projects and events that promote sustainable development in Europe. With 4.116 activities in 29 European countries, the ESDW was a major success. The EEAC was proud ambassador and partner of the initiative. In 2016 the second edition will take place from 30 May till 5 June 2016. The Working Group Sustainable Development aims to participate again this year. The board also decided that the EEAC network will be engaged as partner of the ESDW.

- The Dutch EU Presidency has requested an exploratory opinion on the establishment of the so called European Sustainable Development Forum from the EESC. The EESC is invited to make a proposal on how a mechanism for civil society involvement at the EU level could be practically set up, managed and financed in order to make it an effective tool for participatory governance of the 2030 Agenda. The EEAC expressed its willingness to cooperate. Therefore the Network will support the preparation of the EESC's opinion.

1.2. The Working Group Energy

The working group energy will focus on two main topics: the progress of the European Energy Union and the Outcomes and effects of the COP21 negotiations. The working group will work on the governance of the Energy Union and will engage in monitoring of the EU renewable policies (to be launched 2016). Related to the post COP21 process the working group will focus on the expected effects of the COP21 outcomes as well on the discussion about the financial and fiscal aspects of the decarbonisation and the European Commission's effort sharing proposal.

The working group Energy is planning to (co)-organize several events in 2016.

- The working group started 2016 with a workshop in Barcelona on the 5 February, in cooperation with the Advisory Council for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia and the prestigious think-tank CIDOB. During the workshop the outcomes of the COP21 negotiations were analyzed. Amongst others Miranda Schreurs (German Advisory Council for the Environment) Teresa Ribera (IDDRI) and Bert Metz (IPCC) shared their analysis with the audience.

Furthermore, a short overview of energy related advisory work, ongoing or finished last year, executed by the EEAC member councils will be produced. This overview will be submitted early 2016, just after the working group event which took place in Barcelona. The overview will be written in order to gain additional focus for the work of the working group. Moreover, the chair of the working group aims not only to produce summaries of the events but wishes to add an editorial reflections on the outcomes of the sessions.

- The second gathering of the energy working group will take place during the Energy Week (13 to 17 June 2016), to be held in Brussels. During this meeting the councils will focus on the topics of climate laws and planning. The workshop should enhance the exchange of ideas and experiences of the different councils.
- The chair of the working group will make an effort to get in touch with different climate change committees in member states, such as the UK and Denmark.
- Pending on the exact focus of the EEAC annual conference the working group will share its insights and will gather one additional time in 2016.

1.3. The Working Group circular economy

The working group circular economy will engage in several events which took and will take place after the launch of the circular economy package by the European Commission. Last year the working group focused on mutual knowledge exchange amongst its members and gathering viewpoints of external partners. In 2016 the working group circular economy will engage in several events, either organized by partners or by the working group itself. A key issue is reflecting on the European

Commission's circular economy package. For the first half of the year there are three main events on the agenda of the working group:

- The Dutch EU presidency organized a stakeholder dialogue in Rotterdam on 25 January 2016. The objective of the dialogue was to discuss challenges and opportunities for the circular economy in Europe, based on practical experiences. These discussions aimed at facilitating identification of common priorities for national and EU policies, and provide input for discussion in the Council of Ministers on the Commission's proposal for a circular economy. As Chairman of the EEAC, Arnau Queralt joined this event. Other EEAC members also joined the event.
- The EEAC Working Group Circular Economy joined the European Economic and Social Committee hearing on circular economy. The hearing took place in Brussels on 28 January. The member councils of the EEAC network attending the hearing shared their opinion on the circular economy package proposal of the European Commission.
- The Dutch Council for the Environment and Infrastructure (Rli) is looking into the option to invite all EEAC colleagues to come to Amsterdam or Brussels to share ideas and thoughts on the implementation and governance of the circular economy (package) on the national and regional levels. The message of the EEAC will be addressed to the civil servants who are involved in this topic in Member States and at the regional level. Special attention will be paid to the representatives of the Dutch presidency.

The working group will re-evaluate its agenda for the second half of 2016.

1.4. The Working Group Marine and Water Affairs

The Marine Working Group plan for 2016, will address three main topics:

- Developing an overview of the current situation, experiences and conditions of implementation associated with the Maritime Spatial Planning Framework Directive throughout Europe. Also a discussion about indicators for monitoring the results and benefits of implementing the Maritime Spatial Plan will be promoted exploring the possibility of reaching common principles to be followed.
- Good management in Marine Protected Areas - covering the socio-economic benefits that MPAs provide to communities, as well as links with the international commitments of the EU regarding the CBD Aichi Target 11.
- Blue Economy - How to integrate Good Environmental Status with Blue Economy and how the blue economy can be brought into the practical life of communities, companies so that it does not remain as just a conceptual issue.

The Working Group plans to have two meetings and one workshop plus a third meeting during the Annual Conference in Barcelona. The first meeting should happen between April and May and the second will be combined with the workshop to be held in Brussels, during the second half of June 2016.

2 Aims of the Board

2.1 Increase and Strengthen Working Group Activities

The working groups and their activities are at the core of the EEAC network. For this reason the board encouraged the working group chairs to propose an ambitious, but feasible, agenda for 2016.

The agendas strive to be useful for the working group members, and to touch upon issues which are relevant for the work of the councils. Furthermore, an agenda of interest to external stakeholders and partners is an aim.

The board invited the Working Group chairs to accommodate at least one Working Group activity which has a '*workshop-character*': including an extended agenda, external speakers and a variety of internal and external participants. The workshops could, for example, be organized in cooperation with EEAC member councils or with external partners.

2.2 Increase of the number of councils and advisory bodies involved in the network

Mutual cooperation, knowledge sharing and enrichment of the advice that individual advisory bodies can give to their governments (as a consequence of international cooperation with fellow advisory bodies) are core aims of the EEAC network. In order to strengthen the process of international knowledge sharing the EEAC network strives to bring together councils which have a versatile structure, functioning and which are located over the whole European area. As a consequence the board continues to try to expand the contacts the EEAC network has with partner councils and advisory bodies outside the network. In 2016 the board will inform non-EEAC councils, which have expressed their interest in the work of the network, about the main initiatives for 2016 and inviting them to join EEAC events.

2.3 Strengthen the relation with external partners and EU institutions

The board strives to improve the connections with European institutions active in the fields of sustainable development, environment and the physical domain as well as with other external networks and partner organizations active in these fields. The contacts will be strengthened by inviting external partners to join EEAC activities as well as by actively cooperating with external partners and by strengthening the process of mutual exchange of knowledge and information.

3 The EEAC Annual Conference 2016 (19 to 21 October 2016)

The Advisory Council for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia (CADS) will host the EEAC Annual conference 2016. CADS would like to share the decision on the next Annual Conference topic with all the members of the EEAC network. All councils will be invited to present their proposals and to consider the existing proposal coming from the board to dedicate the conference on the wide topic of resilience (*'Towards a more resilient Europe*). Under this umbrella the focus could be on food, society/health, energy and climate change resilience. Early March a decision will be taken on the final topic of the conference.

4 General Principles and Values of the EEAC network

Current social and economic dynamics are putting heavy pressures on the planet. This is due to existing production and consumption patterns that are resource intensive, waste producing, polluting, and causing problems ranging from climate change to loss of ecosystem resilience. New models must be developed in order to ensure that this and future generations can prosper. Structures that are highly resource efficient, based on low carbon energy, protective of natural capital, and promoting of social justice and human welfare must be established. The EEAC believes that a transition towards a more sustainable Europe, which addresses the environmental, economic, social and cultural dimensions of sustainability, is both necessary and possible.

5 General Objectives of the EEAC network

The EEAC provides an operational framework for joint activities, knowledge sharing, dialogue, informed debate and deliberation among different stakeholders and disciplines. It seeks to bridge the gap between scientific knowledge and policymaking and to enrich the advice that individual advisory bodies can give to their governments by encouraging exchange of experience among members.

The EEAC network also enables its members to better anticipate and prepare for forthcoming strategic issues at the European level and in international/global sustainable development related negotiations and debates.

6 EEAC network Facts

6.1 *Functioning and Member Councils*

The EEAC is a network governed by the Annual Plenary Session (APS), which meets at least once a year and deliberates on past and future goals and activities. The APS elects a board to facilitate the functioning of the network. The board consists of a chair, vice chair(s), secretary, and treasurer who consult with working group (WG) chairs and conference hosts as necessary.

As of January 2016, the EEAC network consists of 13 member councils from 9 countries.