



# Annual Plan 2017

Approved by the Board of the Foundation E.E.A.C.



## PREFACE

### *Ongoing challenges, changing atmosphere*

In a time of growing anti-establishment sentiment, councils for the environment and councils for sustainable development are tasked with the difficult challenge of creating arenas where stakeholders can meet and develop solutions for promoting sustainable development – solutions that transcend separate interests and that take account of public and private interests.

The EEAC Network and the EEAC member councils fulfil the role of intermediaries between the EU and national and regional governance bodies. This role is becoming increasingly important. Relations between the European capitals and EU institutions seem to be under pressure, with some political leaders interpreting growing levels of Euro-scepticism as a call for ‘less Europe’, whereas the complexity of environmental and sustainable development challenges requires cross-border holistic solutions, and therefore strong European cooperation.

The EEAC Network believes that the transition towards a more sustainable Europe – a transition that addresses the environmental, economic, social and cultural dimensions of sustainability – is both necessary and possible. Nevertheless, we take the aforementioned challenges very seriously. The EEAC Network will therefore make serious and continuous efforts to fulfil its role as facilitator of an operational framework for joint activities, knowledge sharing, dialogue, informed debate and deliberation among various stakeholders and disciplines. In addition, the EEAC Network will keep seeking to bridge the gap between scientific knowledge and policy-making, possibly contributing to new interfaces.

In order to realise these aims, the EEAC Network will hold several workshops and Working Group activities, and plans to organise a very timely and topical 25th Annual Conference. In our Annual Plan, you will find information about the agendas of the four EEAC Working Groups and the aims of the Board, as well as information about the EEAC Annual Conference 2017. The Annual Plan also outlines the principles and values on which the EEAC Network is based.



Arnau Queralt-Bassa  
Chairman of the EEAC Network

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# 1. THE NETWORK

## 1.1. Principles and Values

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 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.

## 1.2. General Objectives

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.

## 1.3. Members and Governance

As of January 2017, the EEAC Network consists of 14 member councils from 11 different European countries and regions.

The EEAC is 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.

The positions of the board members were confirmed during the annual plenary session of the EEAC Network in October 2016. Currently, the following five persons, representing four councils, are seated in the board: Arnau Queralt (Chair), Miranda Schreurs (Vice-Chair), António Abreu (Vice-Chair), Laurence Monnoyer-Smith (Secretary), and Ron Hillebrand (Treasurer).

## 2. WORKING GROUPS

EEAC Working Groups (WGs) are a key mechanism of collaboration in the EEAC Network. The WGs bring together the views of individual advisory bodies on topics, such as circular economy, energy and climate change, marine affairs, sustainable development, and water (created after the 2016 APS).

The five Working Groups of the EEAC Network present the agendas for 2017 in this Annual Plan. These agendas jointly represent the focus-content of the network in 2017.

### 2.1. Circular Economy Working Group

#### **Aims**

A green and circular economy offers advantages that require the support and alignment of the social agenda (labour), the education/innovation agenda (knowledge building, new skills), the financial agenda (fiscal change), the economic development agenda (new business models), and the environmental agenda (waste regulations, environmental goals).

This broad agenda poses a serious challenge for governments, the private sector and civil society. Hence, mutual learning, knowledge sharing and capacity building will continue to be vital, especially because the task ahead is too complex and multi-faceted to define a blueprint. The Working Group aims to contribute to the process of mutual learning, knowledge sharing and capacity building.

The meetings of the EEAC Working Groups are open to key European, national and sub-national institutions, experts and stakeholders. Their contributions enrich our views and their participation raises the network's profile in (some) strategic debates. Therefore, the Working Group aims to strengthen connections with external partners.

#### **Focus**

Among other things, the Circular Economy Working Group will focus on governmental interventions which may benefit the implementation of a circular economy in the light of relevant international commitments such as the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement (COP21). More specifically, this focus may include matters such as fiscal policies, governance structures and changing labour markets.

#### **Activities**

Members of the Working Group will attend the joint EESC-EC conference entitled '*Circular Economy: one year after adoption, working together for the future*', and will contribute to the establishment of a Stakeholder Forum for the Circular Economy in Europe. **(March 2017)**

Furthermore, a Working Group document will be drawn up by the Chairwoman in cooperation with all member councils. This document will provide an outline of existing circular economy policies in the EEAC member countries, and will include reflections on these policies by the different councils. The document aims to exchange knowledge between the member councils, define the role of advisory bodies, and provide an update on the state of affairs relating to the circular economy at the European level. The document will be made available prior to the World Circular Economy Forum in Helsinki **(June 2017)**, to which the Circular Economy Working Group has been invited.

The Circular Economy Working Group intends to hold a final workshop in Brussels (**September 2017**). At this workshop, the three key challenges identified in the Working Group document will be the main focus of attention. External specialists and EEAC members will engage in informed debate and participate in knowledge exchange.

## 2.2. Energy and Climate Change Working Group

### ***Aims***

The Energy and Climate Change Working Group aims to deal with both a short-term challenge (climate change laws) and a more long-term challenge (divestment). With respect to climate change legislation, exchanging knowledge and best practices and organizing a follow-up to the previous year are the main aims. Starting an informed debate on exit strategies for fossil fuel investments and infrastructure is the second main aim that the Working Group will address in 2017.

As the EEAC Working Groups are all about mutual learning, knowledge sharing and capacity building, the Energy and Climate Change Working Group also seeks to strengthen its working relationships with external partners, particularly climate change committees and commissions from all over Europe.

Furthermore, the Working Group aims to inform its members about European processes regarding energy and climate change, as combined in the Energy Union.

### ***Focus***

The Working Group Chair defined the challenge of 'dealing with the phase-out of the old energy regime'. This includes such matters as investment lock-ins in fossil fuels, the costs of dismantling nuclear facilities, fossil fuel dependency as an income for states, etc. These challenges are expected to bring opposing political, economic and societal forces into action. With the Paris Agreement coming into force as of 4 November 2016, changes are inevitable and councils should now start thinking about exit strategies.

The last Working Group session – on climate change laws – generated a great deal of engagement and commitment and featured excellent presentations. It was therefore generally considered desirable to organise a follow-up meeting. Due to the progress of the Paris Agreement, the focus will increasingly shift to national/regional implementation. The Working Group has agreed to host a second event in the summer of 2017.

### ***Activities***

In 2017 the Energy and Climate Change Working Group will also be a partner in the 'Climate Futures' debate sessions. This partnership was created in January 2016. The 'Climate Futures' debate entitled 'Financing the Low-Carbon Energy Transition' Was held in Barcelona on **17 February 2017**.

During the Energy Week 2017 (in **June 2017**), the Working Group will meet for the second workshop in a series dedicated to the functioning of national and regional climate change legislation. The EEAC councils and external experts – including climate change committees – will meet to exchange knowledge and experiences.

**After the summer period**, the Working Group Chairman will present a Working Group document that will provide an update on the state of affairs at EEAC member councils concerning the implementation of renewable energy policies. This document will also focus on the 'political climate' with respect to

renewable energy in the different EEAC member states. The document aims to enhance knowledge sharing and to inform EEAC members about developments at the European level.

The Working Group will organise a last 2017 workshop on the phase-out of the old energy regime, most likely in **November 2017**. The event aims to generate informed debate on this emerging issue in the energy field.

### 2.3. Fresh Water Working Group

In the 2016 APS, some council members proposed the establishment of a specific EEAC working group on Fresh Water. This implied that the existing WG on Marine Affairs and Water changes both its name and focus. The two co-chairs of this WG fully accepted this modification.

#### ***Focus***

As part of its policy cycle, a review of the Water Framework Directive is planned for 2019. In prelude to this planned review of the directive the Working Group would like to start working on this issue.

#### ***Activities***

The Fresh Water Affairs Working Group is planning a session which will take place in Brussels in the cause of spring (**April/May 2017**). The Chairman is aiming to organize two sessions during one day.

### 2.4. Marine Affairs Working Group

#### ***Aims***

Several topical issues related to marine affairs will be on the global agenda in 2017. Three milestone conferences (see below) will deal with topics relevant to the focus areas of several councils in the EEAC Network. The Marine Affairs Working Group therefore aims to tailor its 2017 agenda to the leading global issues.

Furthermore, the Working Group aims to facilitate knowledge sharing, mutual learning, and the exchange of best practices, not only with our partner councils but also with external stakeholders.

Their contributions enrich the views of Councils, and the Councils can contribute by sharing unique national and sub-national insights, ideas and best practices. Together with external partners, the Working Group aims to develop clear messages which can be sent to the various international forums, such as the previously mentioned international conferences and the European Commission.

#### ***Focus***

The relevant global agendas serve as the starting point for the Working Group in 2017. Consequently, our agenda covers issues such as sustainable management and protection of marine and coastal ecosystems, as well as prevention and significant reduction of marine pollution of all kinds, including from land-based activities, marine debris and nutrient pollution.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are also at the core of the activities of the Working Group. The topic of MPAs is highly relevant, because the deadline for realising the Aichi Targets (in 2020) is fast approaching. It will therefore be important to evaluate and review how MPA practices fulfil Aichi-Target 11, and to synergise MPA management techniques with progress in meeting Goal 14 of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### **Activities**

The Working Group intends to organise a meeting at the end of the **1<sup>st</sup> quarter / beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2017**. This meeting may be used to formulate 'take away messages' for the three leading international conferences which will be organised later in 2017.

as previously mentioned, the Working Group plans to organise a side event at one of the following global events:

- United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (United States, June 2017)
- Fourth International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC4) (Chile, September 2017)
- Our Ocean Conference 2017 (Malta, October 2017)

## **2.5. Sustainable Development Working Group**

### **Aims**

As of January 2016, 193 countries have started to move from the commitments made at the UN to the task of integrating and implementing the 2030 Agenda at the national and sub-national level. Although progress has been achieved, a variety of significant challenges remain.

The Co-Chairs of the EEAC Working Group intend to remain involved in a range of platforms including the Open SDGClub.Berlin and the European Sustainable Development Forum, and to maintain relationships with a variety of stakeholders including EESC-SDO, ESDN, and other relevant partners.

There is a need to strengthen the interface between science, policy-making and concrete action. The Working Group Chairs aim to facilitate this interface by utilising the unique role that EEAC member councils play at the national and sub-national level.

The Working Group also seeks to be a platform for informed debate and knowledge sharing, bringing together the sustainable development expertise of the different national and sub-national councils.

### **Focus**

The Working Group has formulated four main questions on which its activities are focused:

- How can the EEAC network contribute to the implementation of the 'Communication on the next steps for a sustainable European future', and to the next steps of the European Commission?
- How can advisory councils contribute to strengthening the accountability of governments, civil society and the business community with respect to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda?
- How can we re-shape financial systems to help realise the goals of the 2030 Agenda?

- How can the interface between science, policy-making and concrete action be strengthened, and what role could EEAC member councils play?

### **Activities**

The Sustainable Development Working Group is exploring possibilities and/or has taken concrete action to contribute to four events:

The Working Group has joined the organisation of the conference entitled 'Make Europe *the* World Leader of Sustainable Development: A Unique Opportunity to Build a Stronger European Union'. This conference will take place in Rome on **23 March 2017**. The conference aims to bring European state and non-state actors together to discuss how these actors should change to become 'champions' of the SDGs, and to demonstrate in the current times of anxiety that the European political, financial, economic and cultural leaderships can join forces to make the EU *the* champion of sustainable development.

The Working Group will also participate (as a partner) in the 'International Conference on Sustainable Development Goals: actors and implementation', which will be held in Barcelona from **14 to 16 June 2017**. This conference is hosted by the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNi), which is supported by UNESCO and the United Nations University (UNU).

The Sustainable Development Working Group is also exploring the possibilities to organise a side-event at the High-Level Political Forum 2017 (to be held in **July 2017**). The possible themes of this meeting ('*eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world*') may be relevant to the focus areas and main questions identified by the Working Group for 2017.

The Working Group has formulated the ambition of organising a joint workshop together with EESC-SDO on a specific topic related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This workshop is to be held in the **autumn of 2017**. Possible topics may be relevant to the focus areas of the Sustainable Development Working Group.

Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Working Group will continue to be actively involved in several planned multi-stakeholder forums for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (including the EESC-SDO European Forum for Sustainable Development).