

Spring Update 2016

EEAC Network

Introduction by the Chair

Dear members of the EEAC Network

We start this foreword with excellent news: in January the EEAC foundation was established in The Hague, fulfilling the mandate given by the EEAC members to create a standalone legal entity that supports the functioning of our network.

A key person in the process of establishing this foundation was Christian Hey, former SRU secretary general. Christian has been a key player in the past and present of our network, and he also contributed to put the basis for a promising future. In April 2016, he was appointed as director at the regional government of Hessen (Germany) and, due to his new professional responsibility, he had to resign to their responsibilities in the SRU council and to his post of EEAC foundation treasurer. We would like to thank him, once again, for his strong commitment to the network.

Ron Hillebrand, secretary general of the Dutch Council for the Environment and Infrastructure (RLI), replaced Christian Hey as member of the board of the EEAC foundation. The new treasurer was unanimously elected by the members of the network and he assumed the treasurer post on 8th April. We would like to express our most sincere gratitude to Ron for his willingness to assume this new role.

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The EEAC Working Groups has had an active start to this year. The Working Group Energy kicked off with a successful event on the outcomes of the Paris Agreement. The event, which was co-hosted by CADS, the CIBOD think tank, and EEAC network, gathered over one-hundred participants in Barcelona. You will find some more information on this event and the other EEAC activities in this newsletter.

Besides the activities of the working groups the Council for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia and the EEAC Preparatory Committee have started the preparations of the 24th EEAC Annual Conference. This year's conference will take place in Barcelona on 20-21 October 2016. Please find more information about the next EEAC Annual Conference in this EEAC update as well.

With four upcoming Working Group events, active cooperation with amongst others EESC and ESDN, and the 24th EEAC Annual Conference ahead, we would like to state that we are looking forward to the months further on. We kindly ask you to read this newsletter and we hope to welcome many of you during the upcoming EEAC events.



On behalf of the board of the EEAC Network, Arnau Queralt

EEAC News

New EEAC website set to go live

The new website of the EEAC Network will go live in May 2016, and will have a functional and user-friendly design. www.eeac.eu will be the online platform to inform EEAC members and partners about topics including the activities of the working groups, EEAC annual conferences, and the activities of the member councils.

Ron Hillebrand appointed EEAC Treasurer as of 8 April 2016

The board of the EEAC announced that Ron Hillebrand (Secretary General of the Dutch Council for the Environment and Infrastructure) has unanimously been elected as the new treasurer of the board of the EEAC foundation. He assumed the position of treasurer on 8 April 2016.

After being elected, Ron stated he was 'grateful for the confidence placed in him by the members of the EEAC', and emphasised he would 'do his very best to help guard, preserve and improve the cooperation within EEAC'.

EEAC collaborates with European Economic and Social Committee

The board of the EEAC has shared its ambition to strengthen its relationships with external partners and EU institutions. This ambition is part of the EEAC annual plan 2016.

Efforts made by the EEAC board –and other parties – have resulted in collaboration between the Sustainable Development Observatory of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the EEAC.

The EEAC Network is involved in the preparatory process of defining the EESC's position on the establishment of the so-called *European Sustainable Development Forum*. Furthermore, the EEAC will be engaged in organising a joint EESC-EEAC conference focusing on the role of society to initiate a *transition towards a sustainable European future*.

With the conference, EESC and EEAC would like to create the opportunity to call for a European policy framework that will put sustainable development back at the centre of EU policies, and to demonstrate that elements of change are already there, but need an enabling framework in order to become effective.





Annual Conference Preparatory Committee 2016

CADS would like to share the decision on the next Annual Conference with the members of the EEAC network. Consequently an Annual Conference Preparatory Committee has been installed which includes representatives from different councils, amongst others: the NFFT, CNADS, Minaraad, NCSDCC, Rli and RNE.

24th EEAC Annual Conference to be held in Barcelona on 20-21 October 2016

The 24th EEAC Annual Conference will take place in Barcelona on 20-21 October 2016. This year's event will be organised jointly by the EEAC and the Advisory Council for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia (CADS).

Europe is being challenged by a variety of shifts and shocks. The ability to deal with these developments seems more important than ever. Therefore, the further integration of the concept of resilience in European policies is of major significance. Although the concept of resilience is increasingly used in several fields, also in the context of environmental and sustainable development, there still seems to be a gap between scientific output and the needs of policy makers on this topic.

In order to try to bridge the gap between science and policy, the EEAC network intends to organise a two-day conference during which we will discuss how resilience should be taken into account in policy-making in order to deliver sustainable and forward-looking policies. There will be contributions from a wide variety of representatives from different disciplines, who will be invited to share their knowledge and insights.

The plenary conference event will take place over a day and a half, and will bring together representatives from e.g. global and European institutions, national and regional governments, research institutes, non-governmental organisations and advisory bodies.

The programme will be shared in due time.

Publications by EEAC member councils

NESC: Farmers Work to Resolve Environmental Challenges in the Burren

The Irish National Economic and Social Council (NESC) published a paper on the development of Burren Life. The Council has the aim to use the paper as possible input to thoughtful reflection and discussion on environmental policy, social innovation and agriculture.

[Read more](#)

CADS: Energy and SDGs in the heart of CADS agenda

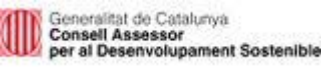
The Advisory Council for Sustainable Development of Catalonia (CADS) is currently preparing an exhaustive report on the implementation of UN 2030 Agenda in Catalonia. The council is analysing the main challenges that Catalonia might face regarding each Sustainable Development Goal. This document will be presented before summer 2016 to the Catalan Government. On the other hand, CADS has recently published the following reports:

- 1) Report on the National Agreement for Energy Transition of Catalonia;
- 2) Report on Catalonia’s demographic challenges at mid-long term, focused on labour market and ageing;
- 3) Report on Catalonia’s River Basin Flood Risk Management Plan.

Rli: Reform of environmental law: realize your ambitions

The Dutch Council for the environment and Infrastructure (Rli) published an advisory report which contains recommendations to the national government on how to achieve the aims of the reform through the implementation of the Environment and Planning Act. How can a balance be struck between providing development opportunities and protecting the public interest?

[Read more](#)



In the spotlight: EEAC Member Councils publications on TTIP

SRU: Making TTIP environmentally sound

The German Advisory Council on the Environment (SRU) advocates an environmentally sound character for the planned Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the EU and the USA. The SRU presented concrete proposals in a statement published in February 2016.

In its report RUR has stated that among other things, TTIP aims to bring about harmonisation or mutual recognition of environmental and consumer protection requirements and technical rules. However, this can also affect areas where the two sides of the Atlantic have very different ideas about the form protection should take, for example in the fields of agriculture and food production. Here steps must be taken to ensure that there is no lowering of standards and no delay in establishing regulations to protect the environment.

The question of how to assess risks is particularly important from an environmental point of view. The USA and the EU take different approaches to the question how to proceed in cases of scientific uncertainty. European environmental legislation is guided by the precautionary principle, which permits state action to avert environmental risks even where the evidence is still uncertain.

Another aspect of central importance is balanced and effective involvement of civil society in the preparation and implementation of TTIP, SRU argued.

→ Continue

The SRU also expresses an opinion on the private arbitration tribunals planned under TTIP. Here the SRU welcomes the EU proposal to establish a permanent court. If the EU does not succeed in gaining acceptance for this proposal, TTIP should dispense with arbitration tribunals entirely. It is in any case questionable whether there is a need for such additional opportunities for legal action between democratic constitutional states.

[Read more](#)

NFFT: Resolution on the TTIP negotiations

The Hungarian National Council for Sustainable Development (NFFT) submitted a resolution on the negotiations of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) articulating criticism, stating that The council acknowledges the European Union's commitment to concluding TTIP but upholds the position that the adoption of the agreement is unacceptable and is harmful for the public good until a variety of criteria has been met.

When discussing the global and environmental impact of TTIP NFFT has argued that while trade is typically known to contribute to the increase of social welfare, transport necessary for trade activities leads to a reduction in social welfare due to its significant external economic impacts and environmental pollution effects. Economies desiring to benefit from trade may also suffer from excessive specialization possibly leading to unilateral dependence on a harmful scale on a specific industry (e.g. vehicle industry) or to the reduction of ecological or cultural diversity, variety as a result of an excessive expansion of a specific production method (e.g. establishment and maintenance of large monocultures in agriculture).

→ NFFT: Resolution on the TTIP negotiations

Consequently, adequate domestic economic policy control and the introduction of regulatory means to incorporate external economic impacts is required. It would also be indispensable to introduce regulations simultaneously with TTIP for the whole of the EU and the US in order to facilitate the reduction of global environmental impacts, e.g. greenhouse gases generated by transport, to an efficient level.

Furthermore NFFT argues that actions to boost economic activity only serve the public benefit if the method of the economic activity adapts simultaneously and trade also promotes the transition toward a society that is resource efficient, lives within its own ecological means, has institutions supporting the prevention of sustained inequalities causing exclusion and pursues sustainable patterns of production and consumption.

[Read more](#)

**FRDO: Opinion on the Implementation of SDGs**

At the request of the Belgian Minister of Foreign and the Belgian Minister of Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development the Federal Council for Sustainable Development (FRDO) published an opinion on the implantation of the SDGs.

[Read more](#)

RNE: More courage! Sustainability must prove it is politically relevant

The German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) calls for more political courage. Sustainability must be made politically effective in every shape and form. 'This involves doing more than "business as usual": we expect the forthcoming revision of the Sustainability Strategy to produce significant and important steps forward, the Council stated in its latest opinion.'

The RNE recommend that the revision will be aligned to a variety of principles such as: High level ambition, vertical integration, Increased capacity of third parties to act, intensified international dialogue on sustainability and taking up new challenges.

[Read more](#)

EEAC Working Group News

Working Group Energy: COP-21 a Counter in Climate Policy

EEAC's Energy Working Group was involved in the organization of a workshop on the outcomes of the COP21 negotiations. The workshop was organized together with the Advisory Council for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia (CADS) and think-tank CIDOB, and aimed to reflect on the results and consequences of the Paris Agreement.

A panel of international experts was invited to discuss several key issues following the Paris Agreement. The panel included Prof. Miranda Schreurs, Dr Teresa Ribera, Prof. Josep Enrich Llebot and Dr Bert Metz.

Over one hundred participants gathered in Barcelona to engage in debate and knowledge-sharing on 5th February 2016.

Please [find here](#) the column and the mainline summary on the Paris Agreement workshop, written by Folmer de Haan (Chair of the EEAC Energy Working Group)



Working Group Marine and Water Affairs: Discussing Maritime Spatial Planning in the *European Green Week 2016*

This year the *European Green Week* will focus – amongst others- on *Oceans*. Therefore the Working Group Marine will gather for a workshop during the *European Green Week 2016* to discuss the lessons learned from the implementation of the maritime spatial planning policies.

The workshop is aiming to enable mutual learning by bringing together European and national experts to share knowledge, experience and views on the lessons learned from the implementation of the maritime spatial planning policies. Special attention will be paid to subjects such as monitoring, the relation between maritime spatial planning and marine protected areas and to the general challenges ahead.

The event will take place **in Brussels on Tuesday 31 May 2016.**

[Read more](#)

Working Group Circular Economy

After the European Commission issued its Circular Economy Package a variety of international gatherings has been organized. The events have enabled industries, business and civil society to reflect on the proposed Circular Economy Package. On behalf of the EEAC several Working Group members actively participated in numerous events – amongst others- in Brussels and Rotterdam.

The working group will meet once this year. The Working Group Circular Economy and the Dutch Council for the Environment and Infrastructure ([Rli](#)) will co-organize a workshop on the challenges of implementing circular economy at the national and regional level. **The event will take place in Brussels on 13th September 2016.**

More information will be disseminated soon.



Working Group Sustainable Development : A European SD Forum

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-SDO invited – amongst others- the EEAC Working Group Sustainable Development to support in the preparation of the EESC’s Opinion.

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. Representatives of the EEAC Working Group on Sustainable Development attended the first hearing of the preparatory process in Brussels on 6th April 2016.

The mainline summary of the hearing was published shortly after the event and shared with the members of the working group on Sustainable Development . in general the following conclusion were drawn:

- The proposed Forum is widely welcomed and encouraged from many perspectives. It provides a new participatory governance framework that is essential in the SDG context.
- There is a need to define civil society and business players, and clarify who they actually represent. The full diversity of non-governmental stakeholders needs to be represented.
- Extra efforts need to be made to engage groups who would not usually be involved.
- Participation based on the principle of self-organization needs to be respected to encourage ownership and genuine democratic involvement.
- It is key that the Forum complements, and not overlaps, other existing forums.
- It still needs to be worked out how the Forum will be operated in practical terms.

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