

Annual Plan 2019

Enabling exchange and being a gateway

The Board of Foundation E.E.A.C.
Paris, January 2019



The Network

The European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC) is a network of advisory bodies established by national or regional governments. EEAC members offer independent advice to their respective national or regional governments and parliaments related to the environment and sustainable development.

Belgium	Federal Council for Sustainable Development
Catalonia	Advisory Council for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia
Flanders	Environment and Nature Council of Flanders
France	National Council for Ecological Transition
Germany	German Advisory Council on the Environment German Advisory Council on Global Change German Council for Sustainable Development
Hungary	National Council for Sustainable Development National Environment Council
Ireland	National Economic and Social Council
Luxembourg	National Council for Sustainable Development
Montenegro	National Council for Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Integrated Coastal Zone Management
The Netherlands	Council for the Environment and Infrastructure
Portugal	National Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development

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1. The EEAC Network: aims, tasks, working methods

The EEAC is a European network of advisory councils that advise their (sub)national governments and parliaments on issues related to sustainable development and the environment. The EEAC Network aims to enrich the advice that individual advisory bodies can give to their governments and parliaments, to bridge the gap between scientific knowledge and policymaking and to connect the work of the (sub)national councils and the European policy level with regard to the environment and sustainable development.

To achieve its aims, the EEAC Network has two main tasks:

- A. to provide an **operational framework for joint activities, knowledge exchange, dialogue and informed debate** among advisory bodies and other stakeholders and disciplines; and
- B. to serve as **a liaison** between the work of the national and subnational councils and European policy level.

Different methods to enable exchange are put in place within the framework of the EEAC Network. Exchange is organised either online or offline. Online activities include the use of the EEAC website, social media and videoconference platforms. Offline activities include participation in and organisation of workshops, seminars and co-organised conferences.

To fulfil its role as liaison, the EEAC Network, through its board and members, participates in several national and subnational, European and global forums. It actively seeks cooperation with advisory bodies that are not or not yet members of the EEAC, and informs councils about relevant policy developments in the field of environment and sustainable development at EU level. The EEAC board has proposed a Framework for Action for the EEAC Network.

2. The EEAC Board's Framework for Action

The statutes governing the EEAC Network task the EEAC board with:

- ❖ *the management and financial management of the EEAC Network;*
- ❖ *enabling the EEAC Network to function as an operation framework for exchange;*
- ❖ *supporting and enhancing the liaison role of the EEAC Network;*
- ❖ *presenting an Annual Plan for the EEAC Network.*

The members of the board aim to fulfil these tasks to the best of their abilities while taking the following into account:

- ❖ *the member councils are the core of the EEAC Network;*
- ❖ *the board will centre-stage the needs of the councils and will cater to these needs.*

Furthermore, the board expects the following events to create and alter the context in which the EEAC Annual Plan will be implemented in 2019.

- ❖ *the European Parliamentary elections will take place and a new European Commission is expected to take office in 2019;*
- ❖ *Romania and Finland will hold the EU presidency in 2019;*
- ❖ *in 2019, the United Nations High Level Political Forum (HLPF) will meet twice to discuss the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals;*
- ❖ *the Conference of the Parties (COP 25) will take place in Chile in 2019.*

In consideration of its duties, the board has decided on the following set of concrete actions:

2.1. Actions to provide an operational framework for exchange

Actions to enhance online exchange

The board updated the EEAC website and made it an online one-stop-shop where information about the councils, their work and exchange is presented in a concise and attractive manner. Furthermore, the EEAC Network will continue to use its twitter account to promote work and activities of the network and its members. The board will also invest in a proper videoconference system. The system should allow councils and partners (internal or external) to have interactive online meetings.

Actions to enhance offline exchange

The board has identified seven thematic areas of common interest based on the agendas of the member councils: digitalisation, energy and climate change, food systems and land use, fresh water, marine affairs, sustainable development, and sustainable mobility.

The thematic areas of common interest will serve as the building blocks for the EEAC agenda in 2019 and will be updated throughout the year. The board will facilitate exchange among councils, as well as among councils and external partners on the areas of common interest. The board will facilitate this exchange through workshops, seminars and conferences. In addition, welcoming external advisory bodies to the EEAC Network is an important step to strengthen (knowledge) exchange.

2.2. Actions to enhance the board's role as liaison

The board will participate in several national and subnational, European and global forums to contribute to the fulfilment of the liaison role of the EEAC Network. At global level, the EEAC Network applied for UN ECOSOC Consultative Status and aims to participate in the UN HLPF 2019. Furthermore, the network will participate in the UN Global Festival of Action for sustainable development 2019 (Bonn, 2-4 May).

At European level, the Chair – together with the co-chair of the EEAC Working Group on Sustainable Development – will take the necessary steps to keep the network as an observer to the Multi Stakeholder Platform for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the EU. Furthermore, the board aims to participate in non-governmental coalitions, such as *Think2030*, the *OpenSDGClub.Berlin* and the *Ambition2030* initiative. In addition, the board will make

continuous efforts to strengthen partnerships with EU institutions, especially EESC SDO, think tanks and knowledge institutes as well as other organised civil society partners.

3. Thematic areas of common interest

To support the process of inter-council exchange, the board produced an overview of topics that are on the agenda of EEAC member councils. This overview identified seven thematic areas of common interest to the councils. This section briefly introduces the thematic areas.

3.1. Digitalization

Several EEAC member councils work on the issue of digitalisation. The councils work on the issue from different angles. There are two main approaches: A. The relation between digitalisation and the integrated concept of sustainable development; and B. digitalisation and its effects on sectoral developments, for example the labour market, mobility and the human environment.

Councils: FRDO, CADS, RNE, Rli and WBGU.

3.2. Energy and Climate Change

Different elements of energy and climate transition trajectories are on the agenda of several councils that advise on the transition from fossil to renewable energy sources, fiscal instruments and the effects of the transition on the living environment and industry.

Councils: CADS, CNTE, CNADS, Minaraad, SRU, WBGU, NESCS and Rli.

3.3. Food Systems and Land Use

Numerous councils focus on soil, land use, and food production and consumption. The common denominator of councils' work is to advise governments and parliaments on the required transition to ensure sufficient food to feed the (global) population in 2050, while minimizing the negative consequences of food production and consumption on life support systems.

Councils: CADS, CNADS, CSDD, Minaraad, NESCS, Rli and WBGU.

3.4. Fresh Water

In the run-up to its third management cycle, the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) is being reviewed. A selection of EEAC member councils are working on the issue of fresh water affairs in the light of the WFD, often in relation to other policy fields such as agriculture or financing mechanisms.

Councils: CADS, CNADS, Minaraad, CNTE, OKT, NESCS and SRU.

3.5. Marine Affairs

In 2019, a selection of EEAC member councils will commonly work on Marine issues. Focus areas differ among councils. They range from advisory work on integrated policy approaches for seas and coastal areas, maritime spatial planning, and the role of global agreements to the role of science in strengthening integrated maritime approaches. *Councils: CADS, CNADS, and CNTE.*

3.6. Sustainable Development

Enhancing sustainable development is a core aim of most member councils of the EEAC Network. Issues such as sustainable finance and fiscal instruments to enhance sustainability, the implementation of the 2030 agenda, and the relation between sustainability and the energy transition, digitalisation and education are on the agenda in 2019.

Councils: CADS, CNADS, CSDD, FRDO, NFFT and RNE.

3.7. Sustainable Mobility

Several EEAC member councils will look into (innovative) ways to overcome challenges and lock-ins in the field of mobility. Issues such as urban expansion, rising environmental and health concerns; the growing need to cut greenhouse gas emissions and the potential of digital and technical innovations are on the agenda.

Councils: CNADS, CNTE, NFFT and SRU.

4. Proposed exchange activities and a call for action

Proposals for exchange among councils and among councils and external partners have already been developed in four out of seven areas of common interest: energy and climate change, fresh water, marine affairs and sustainable development. The tentative proposals for exchange are included in Annex A.

The board calls upon the EEAC member councils to submit ideas for exchange on the issues of digitalisation, food systems, and land use and sustainable mobility during the first quarter of 2019. The agendas for exchange will be specified and updated throughout 2019 (they should be considered tentative for the time being).

Other areas of common interest can be considered. The board will support proposed activities to the best of its ability.

Annex A. State of affairs and activities

The EEAC Network will organise its annual activities along the lines of seven areas of common interest (digitalisation, energy and climate change, food systems and land use, fresh water, marine affairs, sustainable development, and sustainable mobility). Within the context of these areas, the network will bring together the views of individual advisory bodies and external stakeholders. Simultaneously, the EEAC will fulfil its role as liaison within this same thematic framework. In this chapter, proposals for exchange among councils and among councils and external partners in four out of seven areas of common interest are introduced.

1) Energy and climate change:

With the adoption of the regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union¹, the EU determined the overarching governance framework within which the climate transition will take place in European Member States in the years to come. This framework requires the introduction of a 10-year national policy cycle (Integrated National Energy and Climate Plans, NECPs) that includes regular stocktaking, measuring and re-assessments of national and subnational transition trajectories – with interlinkages to the EU's 2050 long-term energy and climate goals and strategy. This governance framework is a novelty. Never before have energy, climate and adjacent policy areas been brought together under one overarching governance structure.

Planned activities: To support the work of the member councils, the EEAC will work on 2 (of the five) dimensions of the Energy Union: energy efficiency and the decarbonisation of the economy. On these issues, a comparative overview with regard to the state of affairs, possible difficulties and proposed solutions will be provided. Such an overview can make a valuable contribution to peer learning. In addition, the EEAC Network will organise online exchange among councils and external national and European experts focussing on these two specific dimensions of the Energy Union.

2) Fresh Water Affairs

In the run-up to its third management cycle, the EU Water Framework Directive is being reviewed. Through March 2019 public consultation (part of the WFD fitness check) will take place. In early 2019, the European Commission is expected to launch its fifth WFD Implementation Report. These processes are expected to shine light on the partial success of the WFD implementation. Two issues stand out:

- a) the lack of a sound overview of investments in water policies; and
- b) the lack of a paradigm shift to a systemic approach in national and subnational water policies.

With regard to investments in water policies, there are no sufficiently clear data on the actual evolution of water-related investments and spending over the past years in relation to the Water Framework Directive. Budgetary constraints were already evident before the existence of the WFD, i.e. at the level of what the WFD now labels 'basic measures'.

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/topics/energy-strategy-and-energy-union/governance-energy-union>

Furthermore, within the implementation trajectory of the WFD, the budgetary situation has worsened due to the financial crisis of 2008 and its aftermath. All in all, there is reason to believe that investments are falling short of need, however no clear picture is available of the investment gap (also vis-à-vis other policy domains) within Europe or within Member-States.

Secondly, the paradigm shift to a systemic approach, which was claimed to be central to the WFD, seems not to have been fully integrated into the water policies of the Member States. System thinking would result in an approach that is more effective and cost-efficient. However, it can be observed that the ecosystem thinking incorporated into the WFD has raised important governance concerns. Relevant questions might be: In which concrete situations would a systems approach be relevant and helpful (= bottom up)? What expertise is needed? Which tools? What budgets? Which Member-States / Regions have come up with good solutions?

Planned activities: Online exchange among EEAC member councils related to the public consultation on the fitness check of the WFD was organised in January 2019. Furthermore, the WG will organise a roundtable on investment in water policy. This session aims to give insights on current spending and/or the weight of investment in water policies in relation to other budgets and/or needs.

The WG will organise a second session on the topic of system thinking in implementing the WFD. This session should enhance insights into the institutional problems that prevent the breakthrough of this approach, and the solutions for overcoming these problems. If possible, both sessions will be organised back-to-back, in the period between the end of the public consultation (March) and the upcoming EU elections.

3) Marine Affairs

There is broad recognition that seas and oceans face unprecedented human-induced threats, such as over-fishing; transportation, the effects of waste disposal, excess nutrients from agricultural runoff and the introduction of alien species. These threats put major pressure on the condition of seas and oceans, with increasing biodiversity loss consequently.

To bring this loss to a standstill, and even to try to reverse it, several global agreements have been drawn-up. The UN's 2030 Agenda (SDG14) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (Aichi target 11) are the current leading global frameworks to protect seas and oceans. EU member states signed up to both agreements. Consequently, European policy initiatives need to be in line with the aims of both frameworks.

The CBD's Aichi target 11 is set for 2020. During the latest CBD-COP (14) new targets were discussed. Consequently, new targets and challenges will arise in the post -2020 period. These challenges will affect existing and future EU marine policies. In time, preparation might enable the EU to bring its maritime policies – especially its maritime integrated policy- – into line with future global goals and agreements, ensuring proper protection of seas and oceans in Europe along with a sustainable blue economy.

Planned activities: EEAC member councils interested in marine affairs wish to seek exchange with (European) stakeholders to discuss the following aspects:

- A. the outcomes of the CBD-COP14;
- B. how European policies can contribute and further adapt to new global agreements post 2020,;
- C. the role of EBSAs (Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas) at the European level. Knowledge exchange should contribute to an in-time preparation process at the European level. EEAC member councils will follow each other's advisory work on the issue of maritime affairs. Although the scope of activity and topical angles differ among councils, possibilities for peer learning will be closely monitored.;
- D. the role of science to strengthen (an integrated) policy approach to the European seas and oceans. (following previous work by the EEAC and its partners on these issues).

4) Sustainable Development

Several EEAC member councils have developed initiatives to enhance the transition towards sustainable finance. Therefore, the issue of sustainable finance will be centre-staged on the 2019 agenda of the working group sustainable development. Councils acknowledge that the financial sector plays a crucial role in transforming economies and societies and in preserving the global commons.

Moreover, capital flows impact the environmental and social consequences of the real economy, while at the same time the finance sector is learning about environmental, political, economic and societal risks affecting investments. In addition, sustainable finance has momentum at European level. There is a dedicated legislative process on sustainable finance that is expected to shape financial streams in the near future. Developments at European level determine to a large extent further developments at national level. Therefore, EU action calls for special attention on the part of the advisory councils.

Planned activities: A number of advisory councils has decided to start a process of knowledge exchange on the issue of sustainable finance. The councils aim to mutually contribute to different national and European events and initiatives organised by fellow advisory councils on the issue of sustainable finance. The first example of such a seminar (Sustainable Finance: Better Safe than Sorry) is scheduled for January 2019. Other seminars on the issues are scheduled for March and for the third quarter of 2019. EEAC member councils also plan to further optimise their mutual knowledge exchange online. Insights from national, subnational, federal and European levels are to be actively shared and updated.

Planned liaison activities: In addition to the work on sustainable finance, representatives of the working group aim to continue taking part in the Multi-stakeholder Platform on the Implementation of the SDGs in the European Union, the Think2030 platform, the Global Festival of Action, the OpenSDGClub.Berlin, the Green Week '19 the HLPFs '19 and the European Sustainable Development Week.

Simultaneously, partnerships with fellow advisory councils for sustainable development, the European Economic and Social Committee (EDO), the European Sustainable Development Network, the European Environmental Bureau and the Institute for European Environmental Policies are considered key mechanisms for exchange.

Annex B. Councils and topics 2019 (will be updated)

Status of work	Councils and Topics
	Federal Council for Sustainable Development, FRDO-CFDD (Belgium)
working on	Digitalization (<i>Impacts of digitalization and different innovative economic models in terms of sustainable development, special attention paid to labour and mobility</i>)
working on	Sustainable Finance
Just finished	Maritime Affairs (<i>Maritime (Spatial) Planning for the North Sea Area</i>)
	Advisory Council for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia, CADS (Catalonia)
working on	Energy transition (<i>Moving from fossil to renewable sources in the light of the 2030 Agenda</i>)
working on	Maritime Affairs (<i>An integrated approach towards sea and coastal areas</i>)
just finished	Food Systems (<i>Focus on sustainable food production and consumption</i>)
interested in	Digital transformation (<i>Impacts of the digitalization in terms of sustainable development</i>)
interested in	Sustainable Finance
interested in	Fresh Water Affairs (<i>Fitness-check of the Water Framework Directive</i>)
	Flemish Advisory Council for the Environment, SAR-Minaraad (Flanders)
working on	Fresh Water Affairs (<i>Fitness-check of the Water Framework Directive</i>)
working on	Circular Economy: (<i>Waste and material use legislation</i>)
working on	Environmental issues (<i>Air quality</i>)
Just finished	Energy transition (the sub-national climate and energy plan, governance approach)
interested in	Digitalization and Energy (<i>Transition discourse</i>)
interested in	Common Agricultural Policy (<i>Upcoming refit</i>)
	Council for Ecological Transition, CNTE (France)
working on	Opinion on the merger of environmental agencies in France
working on	Energy Transition (<i>Focus on the composition of national energy mix and 'greening' French households</i>)
working on	Mobility and Transport (<i>Making both sectors more sustainable</i>)
just finished	Deforestation (<i>How to reduce the process of deforestation in France</i>)
interested in	Fresh Water Affairs (<i>Fitness-check of the Water Framework Directive</i>)
interested in	Marine Affairs (<i>general interest in the matter</i>)
	Council for Sustainable Development, RNE (Germany)
working on	Sustainable Development (<i>Enhancing multilateralism for the 2030 Agenda, special attention for the HLPF and its functioning</i>)
working on	Education for Sustainable Development (<i>specific focus on (UNESCO's Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development)</i>)
interested in	Digitalization (<i>topical focus to be further developed</i>)
interested in	Sustainable Finance
interested in	Sustainable Development (<i>What do we see as Europe's role in implementing the SDGs?</i>)
	Advisory Council on the Environment, SRU (Germany)
working on	Fresh Water Affairs (<i>Fitness-check of the Water Framework Directive</i>)
working on	Urban planning and urban mobility (<i>including - among others - a digitalization angle</i>)
working on	Energy Transition (<i>With a focus on how climate budgets can influence the bio-sphere</i>)
working on	Circular Economy (<i>With a focus on plastics</i>)
interested in	Environmental issues (<i>With a focus on the impact of noise on health</i>)
interested in	Environmental issues (<i>The role of European environmental policies at national level</i>)
	Advisory Council on Global Change, WBGU (Germany)
working on	Digitalization (<i>shaping digitalization with a view to the necessary transformation towards sustainability, global and overarching perspective</i>)
just finished	Energy Transition (<i>Fair transition, just and in time transition towards GHG emission reduction, in prelude to COP24</i>)
Interested in	Land use (<i>In relation to food production, a global perspective</i>)
	Council for Sustainable Development, NFFT (Hungary)
working on	Mobility and Transport (<i>Making both sectors more sustainable</i>)
working on	The built environment and its relation to sustainable development (<i>With a special focus on the concept of shifting land use, demography and livability</i>)
interested in	Sustainable Finance
interested in	Circular economy (<i>The general concept and the implementation at national level</i>)
	National Economic and Social Council, NESCC (Ireland)
working on	Welfare and employment (<i>challenges in Ireland</i>)
working on	Energy Transition (<i>Governing Climate Change and peer-learning in the framework of the Energy Union, especially among countries that are expected not to meet the 2020 targets</i>)
just finished	Jobless households (<i>Social Economic Focus</i>)
interested in	Agriculture and rural development (<i>Reducing the related impact of GHG emissions and water pollution of agricultural activity</i>)
	Council for Sustainable Development, CSDD (Luxembourg)
working on	Sustainable Finance
working on	Sustainable Development (<i>Study into cases and good practices implementing sustainable development goals</i>)
working on	Food Systems (<i>Sustainability challenges of agricultural systems, including health, environmental, soil climate degradation, vulnerability of small farms, external food footprint</i>)
	Council for the Environment and Infrastructure, Rli (Netherlands)
working on	Energy transition (<i>What policy and governance instruments do governments have to steer the transition of energy intensive industries</i>)
working on	Energy transition: (<i>What governance tools are there to enable the energy transition to happen in the built environment, scope 2030 until 2050</i>)
working on	Tourism (<i>In relation to the human environment</i>)
interested in	Digitalization (<i>Digitisation of policies on the human environment</i>)
working on	Aviation (<i>What governance tools governments have to intervene on the tense interface between economy and environment</i>)
working on	Circular Economy (<i>New toxics and hazardous substances</i>)
working on	Convergence of transitions within regions, with the South-Western Delta as a case in point
working on	Common Agricultural Policy (<i>Upcoming refit</i>)
working on	Land Use (<i>How to maintain quality soil for nature and agriculture in the light of climate change</i>)
	National Council on Environment and for Sustainable Development, CNADS (Portugal)
working on	Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals
working on	Water / Water Resources
working on	Climate change
working on	Nature Conservation and Biodiversity
working on	Environmental Education for Sustainability
working on	Energy
working on	Strategy Portugal 2030
working on	Circular Economy
working on	Forestry and Rural Development
working on	Sustainable Mobility and Transport
working on	Ocean and Coastal zone
working on	Territorial Planning / Territorial Enhancement / Demography / Cohesion Territorial
working on	Land Use

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