

2021-2022 Work Programme of the EU Agencies Network

Under the chairing role of the European Environment Agency



Background

According to the Terms of Reference of the Network of EU Agencies (EUAN), the coordinating Agency shall submit, at the meeting preceding the commencement of its chairmanship, a Network Working Programme for the endorsement by the Assembly of the Heads of Agencies. The Network Working Programme shall include the Sub-networks work programmes, defining the planned tasks and deliverables, their added value and the corresponding timelines.

In line with this, the European Environment Agency (EEA) prepared the present draft Working Programme for its chairmanship from March 2021 – February 2022.

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Summary

The European Environment Agency (EEA) takes over the Coordination of the Network of EU Agencies (EUAN) in March 2021.

It has become clear during 2020 that the way we work, both as individual Agencies and Joint Undertakings (JUs) and as a Network, has undergone some radical changes due to the corona pandemic. In some ways, this has accelerated a development that otherwise may have taken several years to undergo, but as fortune would have it, most of the changes we have seen are in line with the newly adopted multiannual strategy for the EUAN and its two main pillars: i. EU Agencies and Joint Undertakings as a role model for administrative excellence and ii. EU Agencies Network as a valued institutional partner.

EEA intends to further strengthen and develop some of the developments seen in 2020 ensuring that the strategy gets a good start; bearing in mind that the strategy is valid for the coming seven years and it will require a long-term commitment from the Network, as well as the future chairmanships to deliver the strategy in its entirety.

With a newly developed strategy setting the direction for the development of the EUAN, the proof will be in the pudding. In many ways it will be up to the Sub-networks to deliver on the specific objectives that in time will realise the strategy. Consequently, we will as a Network have to rely on the good work that is taking place in Sub-networks, and all Agencies/JUs are encouraged to support and take an active part in these Sub-networks. The EEA will, with the support of the Shared Support Office (SSO), continue the day-to-day activities of the Network, for example, related to the preparation and follow-up of the budget and discharge procedures. EEA and the SSO will strive to further streamline these procedures for EUAN members and the Institutions.

The monitoring and implementation of the priorities laid down in this Work Programme will be traced by using the Implementation Roadmap (IR) which was created as a tool to support the implementation of the new EUAN 2021-2027 strategy. Throughout the year, the roadmap will be reviewed following an assessment of the relevance, efficiency, consistency and level of urgency of the actions carried out by the different EUAN bodies.

Strategic priorities and key objectives of the EEA Coordination

With the new EUAN strategy for 2021-2027, the Network aims at ensuring continuity in its strategic approach and further build on the “acquis” of the Network. The successive annual Work Programmes, together with the Implementation Roadmap will steer the activities of the Network with the view to translate the vision and the mission of the EUAN into tangible benefits for EU citizens.

The EEA has focused its attention on five priorities that have been developed to respond to the current challenging internal and external context and to embrace the challenges inherent to the green and digital transitions. Each priority is linked to a key objective of the EUAN strategy and presents the main lines of action to be developed under the EEA coordination, together with the support of the Troika, the SSO and the Heads of Agencies.

1. A greener, more digital and resilient Administration of Excellence

Derived from the first priority of the EUAN strategy, “EU Agencies and Joint Undertakings as a role model for administrative excellence”, EEA finds it natural to align with the priorities of the current Commission and put emphasis on a green agenda. Not only is the European Green Deal setting a new direction for Europe but for how many Agencies’/JUs’ work can become even more relevant to both citizens and key stakeholders in both EU institutions and Member States. The proposed actions will allow to increase the efficiency of Agencies and JUs through sharing of services in view of EU green, digital and resilience priorities while implementing modern governance and sustainable management methods for the EUAN under the “new normal”.

Two main strands of action will be pursued in this regard:

1.1 Increased use of digital means and meetings

It has been demonstrated already during 2020 that this is both a feasible and effective way of conducting meetings. EEA will try together with the SSO to further develop formats in how the Network organises its meetings and attempt to continue with the good initiatives taken by ECHA to share learning and knowledge in the case clinics. Digitalisation and new ways of working will continue to be at the centre of the Advisory Group on return to office, ICTAC and PDN Sub-networks. This offers the opportunity to build on synergies within different horizontal areas of the Network and contributing to a strategic alignment internally as well as externally.

1.2 Sustainability

Climate neutrality: The EEA itself has set an ambition to become carbon neutral and would like to invite other Agencies/JUs along this journey. We will share our experience and what pitfalls we encounter to enable others to learn from our experience and the difficulties that we experience. Sustainability and specifically sustainability reporting are on the radar of the EU institutions who encourage and expect the Agencies/JUs to step up their contribution.

Sustainability transitions: Achieving a sustainable Europe will require far-reaching societal change, engaging all sectors of the economy and society. This is relevant for all Agencies/JUs and through a series of discussions amongst Head of Agencies, we will try to develop a narrative that the EUAN can use in its interactions with various stakeholders. In the absence of specific guidance, the Network has the opportunity to drive its strategic priority of administrative excellence, in setting a good example how it plans to approach sustainability with its common actions.

By engaging in a more operational way in the green and digital transitions, EEA intends to stimulate a reflection on how Agencies/JUs can support the European Commission in its efforts to enhance EU resilience. The newly set up Executive Directors (ED) Group on Administrative Excellence for a modern and agile EUAN governance will have a role to play in this regard. Their vision and forward-looking insights will certainly guide the EUAN reflection. A kick-off meeting of this informal group of volunteering ED will be organised by EEA in spring 2021, in coordination with the Troika.

2. Sharpen the focus of the Network on thematic clusters of Agencies/JUs

Under the second main priority of the strategy, EEA wants to act on the two main objectives: 2.1 “Strengthen the strategic image, reputation, and level of intervention of the Network and the EU Agencies/JUs vis-à-vis the EU institutions” and 2.2. “Develop the Network to be a trusted partner of the EU institutions”.

In line with the first key objective, some clusters have successfully started cooperation and have periodical interactions with stakeholders. This includes cooperation within policy clusters such as the JHA Agencies or Agencies falling within the remit of the ENVI Committee.

The important role that the Agencies/JUs play in the implementation of EU policies has been recently strongly reiterated by the European Court of Auditors in the Special Report on Agencies in 2019. In the report, the Court is highlighting the value Agencies can bring by working closely within the Network, within their policy areas but increasingly also in cross-policy areas.

Two high level consultations launched within the Network in 2020 (Foresight Report, Commissions Work Programme 2021) have shown the interest in the Institutions to receive the Network’s input to political and strategic discussions. The consultations have also shown the need for a well-organised approach for similar requests in the future, by having a cluster approach at hand which will enable the Network to respond in a timely manner with vital and relevant contribution.

In 2021, two pilot exercises will be launched to test the ability of the Network to organise in a smaller setting with a narrow focus on thematic cooperation. One pilot will cluster the Network around EU policy objectives under the current European Commission. The topic will be decided by the Heads of Agencies e.g. A European Green Deal, A Europe Fit for the Digital Age, An Economy that works for people, A stronger Europe in the world, Promoting our European Way of Life, A new push for European democracy.

In parallel, another pilot exercise will be launched where Agencies/JUs will be clustered around the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) headings e.g. Single market, innovation and digital, Cohesion, resilience and values, Natural resources and environment, Migration and border management, Security and defence, Neighbourhood and the world. The Heads of Agencies will select the heading of interest.

Finally, a more organic and tailor-made cooperation will be encouraged among Agencies/JUs on specific projects or topics that are not in the usual array of contacts. To do so, interactive workshops or any other form of collaborative sessions stimulating exchange and cooperation will be organised, thus building on the positive outcome of the case clinics held in October 2020.

3. Foresight: Strategic contribution and alignment to position the Network as a trusted partner of EU institutions

It is expected by the Network members that common interests of the EUAN members are raised with relevant EU institutions in a timely manner to identify viable approaches and solutions. With the aim of aligning the priorities of external stakeholders with internal contributions, the EEA Work Programme will engage with the Commission services to follow-up on the initiative stricken with Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič in 2020 on providing input to the foresight report and to the Commission Annual Work programme. Similar contributions, as launched in 2020, will be anticipated also in 2021 (e.g., the Commission’s Work Programme 2022).

In addition, since the MFF negotiation was finalised end of 2020, the focus is increasingly shifting towards the next strategically important milestone set by the European Commission, the “Conference on the Future of Europe”. It will be crucial for the Network to be ready to contribute to the Conference in a meaningful way. A cluster approach as mentioned under the previous point could be one way to outline the Networks participation and help to strengthen its position as a valued institutional partner.

4. Sub-networks

In addition to chairing the Heads of Agencies and Heads of Resources Networks, EEA appreciates that the sharing of knowledge and best practice is an important element of collaboration within the EUAN as reflected under one of the key objectives of the Strategy “1.1: Increase the efficiency of Agencies and JUs through sharing of services, best practices and pooling of tasks and capabilities”.

Therefore, knowledge sharing will continue to form an important element of the Sub-networks' work programmes for 2021-2022 (see highlights in Annex 2). The list of networks and chairs is provided in Annex 1 and the indicative timelines for meetings of the Network is provided in Annex 3.

As mentioned above, the contribution of the Sub-networks will be put at the centre of the EUAN's strategy implementation. With the support of the SSO, the EEA intends to build a stronger connection between the Sub-networks by organising regular meetings of the Sub-networks' Chairs to facilitate a stronger tie and alliance within this vital part of the Network's governance structure.

Moreover, the Sub-networks will be aiming at becoming the main driving actors in fostering the shared services. The aim could be targeted by following steps:

1. Each Sub-network identifying potential Shared Services related to its field and defining the ways for these services to be developed.
2. Defining Agencies/JUs which would take the lead in providing each of the identified services.
3. Raising the awareness of the Sub-network's Shared Services among its members and facilitating the members in joining these services.
4. The Shared Services and capabilities results will be presented in the Annual Report as proposed in the new 2021 reporting template.

5. Internal Governance

In line with the strategic objective 1.3, the EEA will contribute to the EUAN governance by building on the work done by previous Coordinating Agencies in supporting the stability and sustainable management of the Shared Support Office.

In line with the decisions taken by the Heads of Agencies, the EEA will aim at achieving operational fitness of the Office based in Brussels to set up the necessary conditions for the Office to become a solid service that would allow small Coordinating Agencies to efficiently and effectively deliver their Work Programmes.

Once this stability is achieved and proven functional, the Network will assess whether the governance structures are performing successfully or whether the EUAN Coordination rotation system should be revised.

Finally, in the context of the "new normal" and after having updated the EUAN governance model, the EUAN Terms of Reference may need to be adapted to reflect the developments occurred since the last revision in 2018.

Annex 1 – EU Agencies Network (2021 – 2022)

EUAN Networks

Heads of Agencies Network (HoAG): addresses actions concerning the functioning of the EU Agencies Network (e.g., Work Programme of the Network, budget of the Shared Support Office etc.) and agrees on positions of shared interest.

Heads of Resources Network (HoR): addresses common administrative actions, endorses issues for decision by the Heads of Agencies and promotes knowledge-sharing on common administrative related issues.

EUAN Sub-networks

Inter-Agency Legal Network (IALN): promotes the cooperation, coordination, knowledge-sharing and best practice on common legal issues concerning the functioning of the Agencies, as well as to provide legal support to the Heads of EU Agencies.

Heads of Communication and Information Network (HCIN): provides a forum for coordination and cooperation of communication activities to strengthen the visibility of the Network, and exchanges knowledge and share examples of good communication practices.

Performance Development Network (PDN): promotes collaboration and knowledge-sharing and best practices on methodologies and governance and management systems, and builds blocks of assurance (e.g., risk management, auditing, quality etc.).

EU Agencies Network on Scientific Advice (EU-ANSA): set up in 2013, the network brings together the chief scientists and/or other senior scientists from 13 EU agencies, two observer members, plus a range of additional EU bodies, for the exchange of good scientific practice, mutual advice and sharing of information. The network seeks synergies between members' work and explores ways to enhance the quality of the scientific advice provided.

ICT Advisory Committee (ICTAC): promotes inter-Agency co-operation on issues of common interest in the area of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to find viable and economical solutions to common ICT related problems, to exchange know-how and to adopt common positions, where appropriate.

Inter-Agency Accountants' Network (IAAN): promotes cooperation, coordination, knowledge-sharing and best practice on common accounting related issues concerning the functioning of EU Agencies.

Network for Agencies Procurement Officers (NAPO): promotes cooperation, coordination and knowledge-sharing on procurement related issues.

Annex 2 - Highlights of planned activities and deliverables (2021-2022)

	Activities	Deliverables	Leaders	Strategy Objective ¹
Inter-Agency Legal Network (IALN)	2021 IALN Training	Training in the Autumn 2021 on legal aspects of EU public procurement and contract management, including data protection issues.	EEA	S.P.1
	Standing working groups	Civil service case law, coordinated by EUIPO. EU public procurement case law coordinated by F4E. The ad hoc working group on anti-fraud coordinated by EMA will complete its work in the course of 2021.	EUIPO, F4E, EMA	S.P.1
	Support to the Heads of Administration and Heads of Agencies	Upon request, IALN will advise the Heads of Administration or the Head of Agencies on any new developments requiring legal analysis and keep them informed on any case law relevant to the operations of the Agencies.	EEA	S.P.1
Heads of Communication and Information Network (HCIN)	Strengthening the strategic image and reputation of the EUAN	Develop key messages and launch joint communication outreach across HCIN on key events, using the clusters and/or thematic approach.	EEA	S.P.2
	Continue creating positive societal impact through our common narratives	Align the Network's narrative with the new EUAN Strategy and develop relevant themes (where relevant), with a focus on EUAN's messaging on key priorities.	EEA, SSO	S.P.2
	Knowledge sharing and capacity development of the HCIN members	Increase capacity to mobilise knowledge and share best practice and/or innovative solutions and new ways of working. Regular interactions within the HCIN Network and creation of ad-hoc working groups and/or sessions, when topics of common interest arise.	EEA	S.P.1

¹ Strategic objectives of the EUAN Strategy à S.P.1: Strategic Priority 1 - EU Agencies and Joint Undertakings as a role model for administrative excellence; S.P.2: Strategic Priority 2 – EU Agencies Network as a valued institutional partner.

	Activities	Deliverables	Leaders	Strategy Objective ¹
Performance Development Network (PDN)	Coordination and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plenary sessions for planning and coordination of PDN work (led by EEA). - Establish a more structured approach for PDN members to send Q&A surveys to the Network, to allow quick and efficient responses to requests for support (led by ECHA, SSO). 	EEA, ECHA, SSO	S.P.1
	Support the EUAN Strategy implementation, with a focus on advancing the relevance of performance management in Agencies/JUs and the EUAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support the SSO in conducting the yearly review of the EUAN Strategy implementation (lead SSO, with volunteering Agencies/JUs <i>tbc</i>). - Identify relevant templates and checklists to assess supply and demand, and next steps (e.g., evaluations, audits and assessment of the performance management systems), led by SSO, ECHA, EEA and F4E). 	SSO, ECHA, EEA, F4E (*other Agencies/JUs involvement <i>tbc</i>)	S.P.1
	Raise the effectiveness of the PDN as a knowledge sharing service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large working group sharing knowledge on Internal Controls, divided into five themes and sub-groups, led by ECDC. - Collecting information on current user/stakeholder feedback mechanisms and evaluation approaches, led by EU-OSHA. - Knowledge sharing on ABB/ABM, as well as cost allocation (led by ECHA) and time recording (led by EEA). 	EEA, ECDC, EU-OSHA, ECHA, SSO (*other Agencies/JUs involvement <i>tbc</i>)	S.P.1, S.P.2
EU Agencies Network on Scientific Advice (EU-ANSA)	Learning from the response to COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of what has been learnt (challenges and opportunities) regarding the application of science and use of evidence in policy making in the face of uncertainty. - How can inter-agency scientific collaboration be strengthened in crisis situations? 	ECDC, EMA, EEA	S.P.1, S.P.2
	Impact of Agency-led Science	Ongoing work developing indicators to assess scientific quality and impact of Agencies' scientific and technical advice (in support of PDN network activities on indicators).	Eurofound, ECDC, EMCDDA	S.P.1
	Review of cluster activities	Identification of lessons learned during the first years of activities undertaken by the EU-ANSA cluster collaborations. Review of whether the principles of cluster formation, operation and closure should be updated. Currently, three thematic clusters are in place: quantitative surveys; foresight and futures; socio-economic analysis.	Eurofound, EMCDDA	S.P.1, S.P.2
	Continuing professional development	Joint action to understand, carry out and enhance inter-agency scientific learning opportunities for agency staff to maximise human resource capital.	ECDC, EFSA	S.P.1
	Research engagement	Stocktake/audit to understand if the concerns and issues raised previously remain relevant. Review of how Agencies can continue to support research moving forward.	EMCDDA, FRA, ECDC, Eurofound, EFSA	S.P.2
	Futures/Foresight	Ongoing work on a framework for Foresight activities within ANSA Agencies as a basis to enhance quality and consistency, and promote further knowledge exchange on methodologies and approaches.	EMCDDA, JRC, ECDC, EEA, EU-OSHA	S.P.2

	Activities	Deliverables	Leaders	Strategy Objective ¹
ICT Advisory Committee (ICTAC)	Digital Shared Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring progress of adopting Commission core digital services by Agencies (led by EFCA, CPVO, CEPOL, SSO, FRONTEX, CdT). - Evaluate synergies and opportunities in the creation of new digital shared services, led by EMA. 	EFCA, CPVO, CEPOL, SSO, FRONTEX, CdT	S.P.1
	Digital Workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring of the Microsoft 365 implementation by the Agencies/JUs with specific focus on data protection and security. - Modernising workplace architecture. 	Troika	S.P.1
	Emerging Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report on artificial intelligence (AI) at EU Agencies/JUs (led by EFSA, EMA) and share information on AI developments in thematic clusters. 	EFSA, EMA, Troika	S.P.2
	Better IT Governance and Cybersecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue the monitoring on the usage of Big Data solution in the Agencies/JUs (led by Troika). - Recommendations on the implications of the Data Protection Regulation 2018/1725 EUDPR (led by DPO-ICTAC joint working group, DIGIT, EDPS). - Cybersecurity exercise in coordination with ENISA and CERT-EU (led by Troika, ENISA). - Knowledge sharing on how to implement Green IT, EMAS (led by Troika, EEA) 	DPO-ICTAC joint working group, DIGIT, EDPS, Troika, ENISA, EEA	S.P.1, S.P.2
Inter-Agency Accountants' Network (IAAN)	Continue SUMMA development	Update, state of play, experience from pilot, look and feel demo.	EEA	S.P.1
	COVID-19 – Accounting and Budgetary impact.			S.P.1, S.P.2
	Inventory management, physical stock taking and assets disposal	Legal base, physical stock taking and assets disposal	EFSA, ACER	S.P.1

	Activities	Deliverables	Leaders	Strategy Objective ¹
Network of Agencies Procurement Officers (NAPO)	Implementation of the methodology for estimating savings generated by inter-Agency procurement calls		EEA	S.P.1
	Digitalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaboration with the European Commission to onboard its initiatives and evaluate how the Network can join (e.g., tools relevant for Agencies/JUs) - Discussion on other opportunities for digitalisation of procurement and contract management tools - Knowledge sharing of implementing tools for electronic signatures among Agencies 	EEA	S.P.1, S.P.2
	Market analysis	Survey to analyse the access and use of templates and guidelines developed during 2021	EEA, EFSA	S.P.1
	Collaboration with IALN on procurement related matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organisation of joint training between NAPO and IALN on procurement and contract management - Workshop to define areas of collaboration between both sub-networks 	EEA	S.P.1

Annex 3 – Indicative timelines of network meetings (2021-2022)

