

Public consultation on the European Environment Agency

Response prepared by Transport & Environment (T&E)

[EU Transparency Register](#): 58744833263-19

October 2017

Summary

The following document accompanies T&E's response to the European Commission public consultation to support the evaluation of the European Environment Agency (EEA) and its European Environment Information and Observation Network (EIONET).

This short response is to be read alongside our response to the multiple choice consultation question.

1. Current reforms

Proposed reforms EEA could easily be undertaken to improve current services, without any changes to the current agency mandate established in 1993.¹

Data Modeling & Methodology

Many of the databases in the EEA website consist of data compilation submitted by Member States either to Eurostat, the European Commission or directly to the EEA. In some cases, the methodology that Member States follow is not transparent. For example, in the greenhouse gas (GHG) data viewer² transport emissions are split between different transport modes. The road transport is split into different categories, such as cars, trucks, motorbikes, etc. However, the methodology used by the Member States to gather and process this information is not clear. As such the reliability of the data is questionable. The EEA database should include the methodology used for each data point included in the databases.

Another example of faulty reporting and evaluating progress CO₂ emissions from light duty vehicles (passenger cars in particular) has been acknowledged by the EEA. There is an ever growing gap between type approval/laboratory values declared and the real-world CO₂ emissions performance of vehicles in Europe. The modelling and assessment of reductions to date fails to take the gap into account. This results in less accurate, less credible relevant data being reported in its annual reports on the matter.

We recommend a much needed revision and updating of data modeling and methodology. Such a revision should be undertaken in a transparent and close to real-world manner, with, where possible stakeholder consultation and expert input.

European Environment Information and Observation Network (EIONET)

The way in which EIONET is organised is extremely difficult to use. In short it is not 'user friendly'. It is unclear what information can be found on which database, leading to huge time wasting as one has to hunt around for information in multiple locations. In many cases, a database is simply an Excel spreadsheet submitted

by a Member State, but the data is not compiled in a single file, in a homogenous way. The Central Data Repository is a good example of data being difficult to find and compare within the same database.

Assessment of EEA communications

The EEA is the most authoritative source of environmental data in Europe. In the past few years, the EEA has strengthened its communications outreach considerably but more impact and reach to EU citizens is desirable. A glance to the International Energy Agency (IEA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) websites and social media channels show that the EEA communications platforms lag behind in terms of reach and impact. We understand that devoting more resources to communicate better the environmental problems and improvements achieved by EU policies will show EU citizens the value of the Union and therefore strengthen the European project.

2. Future reforms

Proposed reforms EEA could undertake to improve current services, which would require a revision of the 1993 mandate.

The EEA is currently only a monitoring rather than a regulating agency. Although the EEA already provides key knowledge on environmental protection for the Commission to draft legislation,³ it lacks strong recommendation powers such as European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) or European Medicines Agency (EMA). Both agencies are quasi-regulatory, with EASA certifying aircrafts according to their own set of safety rulemaking.

One way recommendation to increase its power, would be to improve its networking capacities with other regulatory agencies. This would make the EEA more independent and help gain a reputation. Ultimately, the EEA could then have increased dialogues with other regulatory agencies around the world, such as the US Environmental Protection Agency. Another idea would be to give it amending and approval powers as regards environmental plans (e.g. Air Quality Plans) developed by member states pursuant to the EU acquis to ensure adequate level of ambition and consistency.

A second way forward to raise its portfolio is to go down the same route as European Chemicals Agency (ECHA), EASA and EMA and make EEA more financially independent. These are partially self-funded, which ultimately provides more autonomy, but also financial capacity for research projects.

Finally, the EEA should expand its work for the European Parliament and Council to increase environmental legislation but providing bi-partisan and technical information into political debates. The input may help to provide more data and facts into politically contentious debates.

Further information

Cécile Toubeau
Director Better Trade and Regulation
Transport & Environment
cecile.toubeau@transportenvironment.org
Tel: +32 (0)2 851 02 23

Endnotes

1. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32009R0401>
2. <http://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/data-viewers/greenhouse-gases-viewer>
3. For example: panels of experts producing rigorous data and research, attends and organizes international conferences and has gained an international reputation