

EEA – NFP/EIONET COOPERATION GUIDELINES

Final Version

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Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
EEA – NFP/EIONET COOPERATION GUIDELINES	4
Meetings	4
<i>Arrangements</i>	4
<i>Invitation</i>	5
<i>NFP Meetings</i>	5
<i>Registration</i>	6
<i>Travel arrangements</i>	6
<i>Meeting documents</i>	6
<i>Reimbursement</i>	7
<i>Non-physical meetings</i>	7
Others assignments and activities	7
<i>Commenting on drafts</i>	7
<i>Data reporting / Priority data flows</i>	8
<i>Quality-checking of translations</i>	8
<i>Processes to identify volunteers</i>	9
<i>Vacancies at the EEA/ETCs</i>	9
Information supply and dissemination	9
<i>Information to NFPS</i>	9
<i>Publications</i>	10
<i>National activities</i>	10
<i>Tools Training and development</i>	10

Annex I : [NFP role](#)

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INTRODUCTION¹

Effective cooperation between Eionet and EEA is central to the success of our shared network. To allow all parties to make best use of their experience, skills and capabilities the cooperation must be open, transparent, and efficient. In the Eionet – EEA context, the focus of our cooperation is on the sharing of information and tasks between the different parties.

This document is an initiative by the NFPs that is intended to be applied to everyday work and strengthen the EEA – NFP/Eionet cooperation. The “EEA – NFP/Eionet Cooperation Guidelines” are a collection of guidelines, recommendations, and instructions that do not see to be exhaustive, due to the multifaceted nature of the cooperation. However, they aim to serve as a basis for decisions, also those which are to be taken in situations that might not be described in this document, as well as to serve as an example for the cooperation among the different Eionet parties. At the same time, it should be possible to apply a reasonable amount of flexibility on a case-by-case basis. The Cooperation Guidelines should be regularly reviewed and updated, in order to incorporate new needs, and adjust accordingly, based on the experience we gain in managing our shared network.

The different parties have their own power of decision, which must be respected. The Cooperation Guidelines do not include, for example, how the national networks are organised nor how the duties are shared within the network. The document describing the NFP role (Annex I) is complementary to this document concerning the operation of the National Networks and the role of the NFP both in their respective network and in the Eionet as a whole.

¹ In the text “NFP” means all the persons nominated by the countries and included in the NFP list (e.g. eionet-nfp@roles.eea.eionet.europa.eu) if not stated otherwise. A similar interpretation has been used for “NRC”. NFPs and NRCs always act on behalf of an organisation. The “national network” does not include MB members or experts working for an ETC except in cases where they are nominated as NRC or NFP.

EEA – NFP/EIONET COOPERATION GUIDELINES

Meetings

Eionet members and EEA staff participate in a number of meetings of different nature. The EEA organises the NFP/Eionet group meetings, NRC workshops/meetings, meetings of evaluation committees & other ad hoc assemblies, and meetings with non-Eionet partners. The ETCs are also involved in the organising of NRC workshops.

Meetings of NFP Working Groups² (WGs) and NRC WGs are organised jointly by the EEA and the Eionet partners. The NFPs organise the NFP pre-meetings and the NFP Troika³ meetings. The cooperation guidelines are preferably implemented to ensure smooth cooperation of all partners, keeping this diversity in mind as far as possible.

1. The organiser provides an agenda for the meeting, including the purpose, significance, relevance, status, and aims/targets of the meeting as well as the main connections to other events and processes. The meeting agenda is sent at least one month before the scheduled meeting.
2. The contents and agenda of the NFP/Eionet group meetings are discussed with the NFP Troika in due time, to allow the NFPs to comment. For other meetings the organisers open the discussion on the agenda with the participants, where relevant, and in due time. All parties are entitled to send proposals and suggestions for the agenda. Moreover, parties are invited to provide suggestions unsolicited.
3. The participants are prepared for the meeting and take necessary action before the meeting (registration, travel arrangements, questions and questionnaires sent by the organisers etc.) in the given time frame.

Arrangements

4. Meeting arrangements
 - a. A meeting schedule of the regular NFP/Eionet meetings and workshops, as well as NRC meetings, is available preferably one year, but at least half a year in advance, as a standard and to the extent possible. The meeting schedule is available, and kept up to date, on the Eionet website.
 - b. Back-to-back or joint meetings can be used whenever feasible, after being discussed/agreed with the participants in good time. The length of meetings does not exceed three working days, except in special cases and in agreement with the participants.
 - c. The primary location of meetings is EEA headquarters in Copenhagen, however, NFPs are invited to propose their country to host a meeting. When

² Working groups are established to address specific issue related to the network. The groups consist of volunteers from NFPs and relevant EEA staff

³ The NFPs choose amongst themselves a "Troika" to secure the preparation and chairing of the pre-meetings; the troika rotates after each NFP/Eionet meeting of the basis of a schedule agreed amongst the NFPs

meetings are not in Copenhagen the EEA considers the start and end times of the meeting with the aim of minimising the extra overnight stays and additional costs.

- d. Appropriate facilities for meetings include secretarial support, suitable meeting rooms, appropriate space for coffee breaks, presentation facilities, electricity, Wi-Fi and printing facilities.
- e. The timing of meetings in relation to other relevant meetings is considered. The time interval between, for example, the NFP/Eionet group meeting and the subsequent Management Board or Bureau meeting should allow time for coordination at a national level, while NRC meetings cannot clash with the NFP/Eionet meeting so that the NFP can participate if the relevant expert is unavailable.

Invitation

5. Invitation

- a. Invitations to meetings are sent well in advance and at least two weeks before the deadline of registration.
- b. Invitations to the NRCs are always copied to the NFPs.
- c. The invitation includes the meeting description and the (draft) agenda. Each main agenda point comes with info on whether it is for discussion, information etc. and what the expected outcome is.
- d. The invitation includes sufficient information on registration and travel arrangements. Detailed instructions on navigation, especially when the meeting place is not the EEA headquarters, is shared in due time, preferably together with the invitation.
- e. Information on the reimbursement and possible specific factors affecting the reimbursement (meals to be offered by organisers etc.) is included so that the participants can have a reliable estimate of the amount of reimbursement before the registration. ([Reimbursement Rules](#))
- f. The invitation clearly states that the NFP nominates the country's participant(s) entitled to the reimbursement.
- g. The NFP tries to ensure that all relevant parties are aware of the invitation.
- h. Where relevant, the NFP facilitates the national process to find the most suitable participant(s) in the light of the scope and contents of the meeting.

NFP Meetings

6. Involvement of the EEA staff in the NFP meetings

- a. The NFP pre-meetings, NFP Troika meetings and similar meetings and groups are intended only for the NFPs.
- b. In agreement with relevant EEA managerial staff EEA staff can be invited to such NFP-only meetings to clarify or elaborate on agreed topics or issues.

- c. For the NFP-only meetings and working groups, the EEA provides the NFPs with a dedicated NFP mailing list containing all NFPs and only those members of the EEA staff the NFPs have accepted to be included in the mailing list. All correspondence using this NFP mailing list is confidential and meant to be used only by the NFPs.

Registration

7. Registration

- a. The Eionet website, or Eionet Forum is used for the registration to all meetings organised by the EEA.
- b. The NRCs inform and consult the NFP before registering for the meeting.
- c. Regarding NRC and similar meetings, the NFPs decide on:
 - i. registration of the participant(s)
 - ii. control (incl. deletion) of the nomination(s)
 - iii. identification of the participant(s) representing the country
 - iv. identification of the participant(s) entitled to the reimbursement.
- d. The NFP informs, when possible, the organisers before the end of the registration period when:
 - i. the country will not be represented, or
 - ii. the nomination will be delayed.

Travel arrangements

8. Travel arrangements

- a. The participants nominated by the NFP as eligible for reimbursement have the option to order the flight tickets and the accommodation using a travel agency that invoices the EEA directly.
- b. The NFPs remind participants that the orders are to be sent to the travel agency as early as possible, preferably immediately after the registration.
- c. EEA checks that the eligibility for reimbursement of the participant is confirmed by the NFP before the travel agency processes the orders.
- d. The travel agency will make an offer with a suggested itinerary according to the meeting times and the EEA travel guidance. The participants can propose a different alternative without exceeding the cost of the original proposal.

Meeting documents

9. Meeting documents

- a. All necessary documents are available, when possible, at least two weeks prior to the meeting. Where this is not possible, the participants are notified of the delay and, where possible, the date when the document will be available (at least 2 working days in advance of the start of the meeting).

- b. Documents published later (e.g. presentations held during the meeting and possible post-meeting documents) are made available as soon as possible.
- c. All documents (or links to documents) related to the meeting are made accessible to all meeting participants. They are made available from relevant Eionet fora, including the Interest Group and the Planner (or a similar tool) as soon as it is possible. An adequate link is also sent within the invitation.
- d. All documents, including the documents related to travel arrangements and reimbursement, are accessible by the NFPs.

10. Action list / Minutes

- a. The meeting organisers deliver a list of main decisions/conclusions and actions soon after the meeting. The minutes of the meeting are also provided, unless the parties agree that only the action list is needed. The style and level of detail of the minutes depend on the nature of the meeting.

Reimbursement

11. Reimbursement

- a. The rules on reimbursement are always updated and available to Eionet members.
- b. Meeting organisers are aware of and follow the latest version of the rules, especially in regard of the required administrative documents (Legal entity form, Bank identification form etc.)

Non-physical meetings

12. Role of webinars, video/audio conferences, collaboration software etc.

- a. For meetings of a more informative nature, a webinar may be an effective and efficient alternative. An invitation to the Webinar is sent at least a month in advance. The meetings are recorded, unless otherwise specified, and uploaded into the meeting folder on the Eionet forum.

Others assignments and activities

Commenting on drafts

13. Commenting on drafts of the EEA/ETC reports and similar products

- a. Drafts of reports and similar products which will be made public are sent for comments to the countries.
- b. A schedule of the requests for comments should be available. The Eionet Planner or a similar tool could be used to publish the schedule and to keep the document available.
- c. The time allowed for commenting depends on the extent and nature of the draft. A minimum of one month is allowed for commenting. When the

consultation is expected to take place during holiday periods or when they involve the network widely, e.g. in case of the work programmes, longer time is preferred.

- d. The receivers of the request are chosen so that all relevant NRC themes are included.
- e. Experts outside the national networks could be consulted unless when the request explicitly states that this is not allowed.
- f. The NFP tries – when applicable - to make sure that a response to the request is sent, even if the country has no comments.
- g. The NFPs supports the NRCs, when necessary, in delivering the responses to the requests, therefore, project managers avoid setting deadlines during the 3 NFP meeting weeks.
- h. The authors of each document evaluates all comments and brings adequate answers in the next version. As far as possible, the most fundamental comments are given a specific written response. In this case the NFP gets a copy.
- i. Where material is distributed under embargo, the embargo is respected at all times. However, the material could be distributed internally when appropriate, with reference to the embargo.

14. Other requests for comments or data/information

- a. Points c-h of item 13 are applied also in this case.

Data reporting / Priority data flows

15. Data reporting/Core data flows

- a. Information on the core data flows including deadlines, formats and information on delivery address(es) is sent to NFPs and involved NRCs at least 6 months in advance of the reporting deadline. In case of substantial changes in the reporting requirements, longer periods up to 18 months could be applied depending on the nature and extent of the change.
- b. All data requests and their deadlines are published in the Eionet Planner, or a similar tool, that is made available for NFPs, Reporters and NRCs from their usual fora/interest groups.

Quality-checking of translations

16. Quality checking of translations (including web pages and web tools etc.)

- a. The countries have the opportunity to check the quality of translations of publications, web pages and similar products.
- b. The time allowed for checking depends on the extent of the text. A minimum of one month is allowed for checking of reports and similar products. For other types of texts and web pages, a shorter time could be agreed.

- c. A notice of a request for quality checking is available preferably three months in advance. One month in advance is sufficient for shorter texts and web pages.
- d. The notice explains how the quality checking would be done if a country is not able to do it.
- e. EEA should be informed if a country is not able to do the quality checking.

17. Reminders of deadlines

- a. A reminder of approaching deadlines is sent to the NFPs and involved NRCs.

Processes to identify Eionet volunteers

18. Processes to identify Eionet volunteers for specific (one-off) tasks

- a. An advance notice of a need to nominate volunteers is sent by the EEA to all NFPs as early as possible.
- b. The request to nominate volunteers contains a clear description of the duties of the volunteers as well as estimates for timetable and work contribution.
- c. The request also contains information on situations where a conflict of interest may exist and suggests possible solutions.
- d. The NFP Troika (or similar groups of NFPs) can act as an intermediary.

Vacancies at the EEA/ETCs

19. Vacancies at the EEA/ETCs

- a. Information on vacancies within the EEA is shared with the NFPs.

Information supply and dissemination

Information to NFPs

20. All written communications to the NRCs are also sent (copied) to the NFPs. This applies as well to the communications sent to a restricted set of NRCs, for example to NRCs participating in an Eionet meeting or to NRC working groups.

21. The EEA informs the NFPs

- a. on the support from the EEA by keeping the list of the Country Desk Officers and the description of their role updated
- b. on issues relevant to the Eionet:
 - i. main discussions and decisions in the Senior Management Team
 - ii. role and main activities of the CAS programme
 - iii. role and main activities of the EPA network
 - iv. main activities of the non-Eionet (working) groups established by the EEA
 - v. main activities of the international organisations related to EEA work.

22. The EEA and the ETCs inform the Eionet on major events and changes (e.g. changes in organisation, new members of staff, new roles/duties of staff members etc.).
23. The EEA and the ETCs inform the NFPs and involved NRCs on the mailing list used to send information to outside the Eionet, to the extent possible, for example, on major reports or events. This is especially important when it is obvious that the Eionet members will benefit of this information when contacting the national non- Eionet parties.

Publications

24. Publications by the EEA and ETCs
 - a. The NFPs are encouraged to subscribe to the notifications of new publications and products.
 - b. A separate message about new publications and products is sent to the NFPs. The ETCs also inform if the publications and products are outside the scope of the notification service.
 - c. A request asking to indicate the desired number of printed copies (and other material when relevant) for the upcoming year is sent to the NFPs.
 - d. The NFPs help in the dissemination process of information on the publications and other relevant material within their respective country.
 - e. The NFP informs the publisher if specific promotion is planned, for example an event for launching the product.

National activities

25. The NFPs keep the EEA and the ETCs informed on relevant national or regional documents, products, processes and events.
26. EEA keeps the NFP informed of EEAs activities with other groups in the country.

Tools, training and development

27. The EEA develops and maintains the necessary tools for storing and dissemination of data, documents and information. Such tools are, for example, Eionet Forum, Eionet Projects, Eionet Planner and Reportnet.
 - a. The NFPs and relevant NRCs have the opportunity to participate in the planning and development of the tools through adequate Working Groups or User Groups, e.g. the ICT User Working Group.
28. The EEA organises training on tools, routine processes and procedures developed for use in the Eionet, where and when appropriate.
29. Eionet members have a voice in the development and implementation of training and tutoring activities for the Eionet organised by the EEA.

- a. The own activities of the NFPs for training and tutoring/mentoring are ideally compatible with the activities of the EEA and vice versa.
30. When assignments or other requests are communicated to the national networks, it is preferable to include only one assignment in a message i.e. to facilitate and clarify the process when the assignments are passed on within the network. This does not apply to action lists or other collections of assignments.
31. The Eionet account grants the NFPs access to all web pages the NRCs have access to with an Eionet account, as well as to the pages of the MB and the Bureau. When the EEA uses the on-line forms to collect responses, the NFPs have access during the consultation process as well as to the answers afterwards, also in case of consultation targeted to restricted group of NRCs.

Annex I : [NFP role](#)