

DRAFT DOCUMENT ON CO-CREATION PRINCIPLES AND PROCESS FOR EIONET

BACKGROUND

The EEA-Eionet Strategy 2021-2030 vision calls for enabling a sustainable Europe through trusted and actionable knowledge for informed decision-making on environment and climate priorities and solutions, in line with Europe's policy ambitions. Given the scale, urgency, and multitude of environmental challenges we are facing, the new vision brings the new priority of increasing capacities on solutions towards sustainability which requires new ways of working through encouraging flexibility, responsiveness, joint learning, innovation, and co-creation.

Solutions and innovations lay not in one institution or one viewpoint, but in the bigger picture of collective intelligence. Therefore, we are moving in the direction of more co-creation to realise the high potential of our network and to bring even bigger value added to our Member and cooperating countries.

In this framework, during the 94th meeting on 9 December 2021, the MB considered and welcome the idea of organizing a co-creation workshop across the Eionet to improve the uptake of national ideas into the EEA-Eionet work plan and suggested the EEA to organise discussion on co-creation with the network and to come up with a proposal.

Taking the suggestion of MB forward, the EEA further discussed the idea with the MB Advisor Committee (MBAC) earlier this year and organized an interactive workshop on "Activating collective wisdom for knowledge co-creation" during the last NPF/Eionet Meeting (1-3 March 2022).

With the decisions of its 95th meeting on 24 March 2022, as a follow up of NFP/Eionet discussions, the MB provided further guidance for the work of the MBAC for the near future to keep co-design and cross-fertilisation high on the MB agenda.

The draft document on "**Principles of Co-Creation Across Eionet**" is based on the guidance of the recent MB meetings, reflections of the NFPs, ETC members and EEA Eionet Group Leads on various questions addressed to them on different aspects of cocreation during the cocreation workshop and internal consultation process with the EEA Eionet Group Leads.

WHAT IS CO-CREATION?

The word co-creation is being used in different contexts to signify different things. Therefore, it is appropriate to clarify what we mean by it in an EEA-Eionet context.

A common and useful definition of co-creation is collaborative development of new value. "*Collaborative*" here means collaboration across more than one organisation or group of people, typically collaboration between experts, stakeholders, citizens etc. The new value can be *new concepts, solutions, products, or services*.

In the context of Eionet, cocreation indicates a form of collaborative innovation, a process in which ideas are shared and improved together, and input of all Eionet partners has an equally important value. It is a way of tapping into, and empowering, collective wisdom of the network. That the result of co-creation could be a report, but it could also be a workshop, a meeting or simply a new idea.

Results of this process not only offers space for innovative solutions and opportunities to address complex challenges; but also ensures that the ownership is shared among all those who had been involved.

Another common understanding of co-creation is that it is a way of *innovating*. Innovation is an inherently iterative process but can nevertheless be described as having certain distinct steps including defining the problem you are trying to solve, idea generation, experimenting with different possible solutions and implementing and evaluating the chosen solution. When we co-create in Eionet, the countries involved might sometimes contribute to only one of these steps (e.g., problem definition) and at other times they might be actively involved in all steps. This will depend on the level of interest, resources, and expertise available etc.

The above means that co-creation can be thought of on a spectrum ranging from involvement only at the beginning, middle or end of a process to being an active contributor the whole way through. Consequently, both big and small contributions and levels of engagement are welcome and encouraged. Regardless of the level of engagement, it is a key characteristic that everyone involved provides input to the co-creation process and should be able to get some form of value out of it.

Co-creation takes time, dedication, and space for trial and error. Therefore, Eionet agrees to adopt certain foundational principles and processes to kick-start the new era of its work. These principles are the output of a consultation process within the network and can be tested and amended according to the experiences.

THE DRAFT PRINCIPLES

The draft principles provided here are based on the reflections of the NFPs, ETC members and EEA Eionet Group Leads during the cocreation workshop that took place within the framework of NFP/Eionet meeting (1-3 March 2022)

Commitment: EEA & Management Board ensure required resourcing and backing for the co-creation projects and provide strategic direction, policy guidance and support.

Shared Ownership: EEA and countries play shared and equal role and responsibility in designing, implementing, and promoting the co-creation projects.

Co-leadership: EEA and the countries co-lead the Eionet Groups and co-chair the cocreation projects.

Inclusiveness: EEA and countries include all relevant partners and stakeholders into the process of co-creation to ensure an inclusive process with diversified participation.

Safe space for working together: Both EEA and the countries ensure a safe space for working together which requires openness, transparency, tolerance, flexibility, patience, trust, room for failure and experimentation.

GUIDANCE FOR ENGAGEMENT:

- Ensure a **common understanding of the concept and process** for each Eionet Group
- Set a **shared and clear scope, purpose and a realistic workplan and timeline** at the very beginning of the co-creation process.
- Identify the **time and human resource commitment** needed
- Create an **inclusive process** from the beginning of the planning phase, give Eionet experts a seat at the design table.
- Understand and ensure mechanisms for **involvement of silent voices** (consider working with smaller groups, regular quick sessions)
- **Don't leave anyone behind:** Provide tools to bring all participants to a closer level of knowledge and understanding
- Work on **real and relevant topics and questions** to ensure interest (ask the question of why instead of what)
- Keep the process **simple**, disentangle the complexity
- Ensure **transparent, regular, and quality communication** and dialogue and update the network on existing and upcoming work/priorities
- **Promote co-creation products**, and their contributors, as key Eionet products, each year
- Make the **added value of co-creation process visible** at EEA and country level to justify the resources
- Ensure a **transparent governance process** (for resource considerations)
- Be **open-minded** and flexible
- Create a **sense of ownership** of the process from all sides by highlighting the mutual benefits

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

EEA, Country and shared roles and responsibilities provided here reflects the summary of NFP answers to the following questions directed to them during the co-creation workshop:

- *What should be the roles / responsibilities of each level when it comes to supporting co-creation (at the national level)?*
 - *EEA*
 - *National networks*
- *What (1-3) concrete steps can be taken **by EEA** to support co-creation of actionable knowledge?*
- *What (1-3) concrete steps can be taken **at the National level** to support co-creation of actionable knowledge?*

| EEA Roles and Responsibilities | Country Roles and Responsibilities | Shared Roles and Responsibilities |
|---|---|--|
| Set guidance and principles for co-creation | NFPs to discuss and identify national priorities with the Eionet Groups, share/discuss the priorities with the MB member | Initiation of co-creation |
| Provide strategic direction: Identify policy-relevant co-creation topics and suggest priorities, provide strategic and core information on direction in line with EEA/Eionet Strategy | Identify the national partners and stakeholders based on guidance from EEA. | Identify and prioritize the topics of co-creation, in line with strategic direction of EEA/Eionet. |
| Provide policy-relevant co-creation topics and priorities this seems to be a duplication of the one above | Provide/mobilize national experts and ensure their engagement in the co-creation process. | Co-lead Eionet Groups and co-creation projects |
| Facilitate the co-creation process (also through IT tools) | Ensure required resourcing and backing for the engaged staff though prior discussion with the MB member on national priorities. | Co-chair co-creation events to ensure shared ownership |
| Identify the resource needs for each co-creation process | Proactively show interest for co-creation | Identify possible outcomes expected from a specific co-creation process. |
| Inform the MB on the co-creation topics/priorities/ workplan and resources needed. Mobilize the MB for spreading the idea of co-creation across the network. | Link ongoing national projects to Eionet where relevant | Share good examples of co-creation and lessons learnt |
| Ensure appropriate communication with the people serving for Eionet Do we mean Eionet experts here? | Align policy level vision with expert level of understanding | Promote the final output at national /EU/ international level, ensure visibility. |
| List good examples of co-creation products and ensure sharing of experience on cocreation. | Identify good examples at country level and ensure platforms for sharing good examples | |
| Ensure link with SPD and 8 th Environment Program | Delivering data and insights - and expertise | |

THE PROCESS OF COCREATION:

- Eionet Groups to prepare annual EEA/Eionet workplan through co-creation workshop to discuss joint topics and actions
- Co-create and provide work plans for Eionet Groups (where relevant).
- Identify priority projects
- Set a shared and clear scope, purpose and a realistic workplan and timeline for the project
- Identify national Eionet Group Leads and allocate the tasks among them
- Identify the relevant Eionet experts
- Identify the tools that should be in place
- Call for interest for co-leading a co-creation project
- Design interactive co-creation workshops for the identified priority topics
- Design the products with final working meetings/exchanges
- Promote the final output, which could be a report, a workshop, a meeting or a new idea
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of co-creation activities
- Identify best practices and tools to mainstream them across the network

Suggested Timeline:

Years 2022 and 2023

Several Eionet Groups have been working in the past following co-creation principles. The previous and ongoing co-creation activities in the area of foresight, state of environment, integrated environmental assessment of building systems and climate change adaptation could be considered as pilot projects for experimenting with co-creation processes across the Eionet. **In remaining of 2022 and 2023** we will be experimenting/testing, collecting feedback from pilots, and scaling up co-creation approach with additional Eionet Groups.

In future co-creation project could become part of SPD planning.

2024 onwards

To draft 2024 co-creation workplan in line with the SPD calendar, the EEA/Eionet should follow the steps provided below:

- **Starting from June 2022:** Discuss the EEA and Eionet priorities for co-creation with the NFPs/Eionet Groups and ask for the national inputs
- **Autumn 2022:** Identify possible priority projects for the years 2023-2024 and submit them for the first draft of the SPD 2024-2026
- **Autumn 2022/Spring 2023:** Call for interest of the national Eionet Groups to work on the priority topics
- **1st January 2024:** Start applying the process provided above across Eionet Groups