



# 2021 - 2027 STRATEGY FOR THE EU AGENCIES NETWORK

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BRUSSELS

9 NOVEMBER 2020



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# INTRODUCTION

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The focus of the EU decentralised Agencies and Joint Undertakings (JUs) is on meeting citizens' and policy makers' expectations by providing added value in the most efficient manner. Since the setting up of the EU Agencies Network (EUAN) in 2012, this informal Network has grown in size, now comprising 48 decentralised EU Agencies and JUs, providing a platform for exchange and cooperation for the Network members on areas of common interest.

The adoption of the first multiannual strategy in 2015, the so-called "Dublin Agenda", was a significant step towards a more in-depth and strategy-oriented cooperation between EU Agencies/JUs, designed to respond to the needs of the Network and the expectations of EU institutions regarding a common approach for EU decentralised Agencies and Joint Undertakings.

It was recognised that efficiency gains could be realised thanks to impactful initiatives. A mutually beneficial relationship and cooperation between the Network and EU institutions was progressively established. The European Commission, European Parliament, European Council and European Court of Auditors are now key, and regular, interlocutors of the EUAN within the remit of the mandate provided by Heads of Agencies.

The reinforcement of a Brussels-based Shared Support Office (SSO) of the Network, was a positive development towards the achievement of all strategic objectives, including a more efficient internal governance and a more visible and credible outward communication with EU stakeholders and citizens.

As the Dublin agenda was approaching its chronological end, Heads of Agencies reflected on the Network's "raison d'être" and assessed the needs of EU Agencies/JUs in the future, as well as the challenges that lie ahead, including those deriving from the multi-dimensional crisis following the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The demonstrated ability of EU Agencies/JUs to join forces and cooperate effectively and efficiently in a timely manner during this crisis reinforced Heads of Agencies' determination to further strengthen the Network.

These reflections have served as a basis for the new strategy laid down in this document. As a result, a new mission and vision statement of the Network has been developed, followed by updated priorities articulated around two main strategic pillars: the EUAN as a role model for "administrative excellence" (1) and the EUAN as a well-established "institutional partner" (2).

This strategic document should be read in combination with the implementation roadmap which lists concrete actions to achieve the strategic objectives and proposes performance indicators to assess progress along the way. For the sake of coherence, the duration of the Network's strategy was extended from 5 to 7 years to align it with the cycle of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027. The multiannual strategy, as well as its roadmap, will be subject to a mid-term review by Heads of Agencies.

# OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

The time-period covered by the new EUAN strategy, 2021-2027, is marked by a distinct set of EU political priorities, where the focus is on transitioning to a green and sustainable economy and a new digital world, while increasing the EU's unity and resilience in the context of the recovery programme from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Network sets its strategic priorities against this background and concentrates its efforts on how it can best, via coordinated action of its members, contribute to meeting these challenges.

## Evolving EU political priorities

The political priorities of the Green Deal and Digital Transition respond to EU citizens' expectations for change and reflect the ambitions of the Sustainable Development Goals. The transition is designed to lay the foundations for a modern, sustainable and fair Europe, which is able to boost jobs and growth, the resilience of European societies and the health of the citizens and the environment. The EU aspires to be a decisive player in addressing future crises and to lead a recovery effort, which helps repair the economic and social damage brought by the coronavirus pandemic, and prepare for a better future for the next generation, in line with the aspirations of the European Green Deal.

*“The EU aspires to be a decisive player in addressing future crises and to lead a recovery effort, which helps repair the economic and social damage brought by the coronavirus pandemic ...”*

The extent to which the EU can live up to these expectations will go a long way in maintaining and increasing public trust in the EU, in the effectiveness of its policies as well as the efficiency of its operations, and demonstrating its relevance for citizens. The EUAN expects that, in the coming years, it will be necessary to translate the research and cooperation potential and power of the EU into innovation and the development of new axes of prosperity, in particular focusing on sustainability and digitalisation, while taking into account the gender and human rights dimensions of those portfolios. On a global scale, it will be equally necessary to balance the EU's autonomy with positioning it as a reliable trade partner and nexus of social and economic stability in a context of a global power shift to emerging economies.

It has become increasingly clear that EUAN members' contribution to these priority areas and to the recovery efforts has the potential of determining the success of EU action. The challenge for the Network will be to define the best modus operandi to contribute to these objectives in a coordinated manner, providing impact, adding value and having the necessary resources to do this.

The EUAN will need to respond to this challenge by developing further its internal governance and working methods to maximise and demonstrate its impact via the work of the individual member Agencies/JUs and respond efficiently and effectively to the needs of EU citizens, institutions and Member States.

Network members and stakeholders expect the Network to further enhance its work, which can be achieved by a better coordination of its strategic planning cycles and the work of its sub-Networks while undertaking common initiatives. While the flexibility and agility of the individual Network members is well recognised and has provided tangible benefits in the implementation of EU policies, the Network, platform for coordination and support, has further potential to develop its responsiveness to evolving EU priorities. EU citizens expect tangible results, in a timely manner, and the aggregated expertise, experience and human capital of EUAN members, in organic and dynamic clusters, if appropriate, has to be made accessible in an efficient manner.

### The evolution of the EU Agencies Network (EUAN)

The EUAN will also be expected to become greener and more digital and to support its members embracing innovation and new ways of working. The necessary foundations for this transition are available at the level of individual Agencies/JUs to a large extent. The Network will need to find the best way to reduce its carbon footprint and make better use of the new technologies and digital solutions. Furthermore, the Network will have an important role to play in supporting all its members to make this transition, notably by facilitating common initiatives in these areas.

*“The Network will need to find the best way to reduce its carbon footprint and make better use of the new technologies and digital solutions.”*

The SSO will play a key role in responding to these challenges. Apart from its established services in providing crucial support to the Coordinating Agency, serving as the institutional memory and focal point of the Network and its stakeholders, disseminating relevant and timely information, supporting the liaisons with EU institutions, the challenge for the Network will be to explore its further potential in support of the two main strategic priorities mentioned below regarding administrative excellence and partnership with EU institutions.

Agencies and JUs need to be sufficiently resourced to fulfil their mandates and achieve their ambitions. In a context of scarce resources, Network members are asked by the budgetary authorities to continue to seek efficiency gains, including by deepening interinstitutional cooperation in the area of, for example, IT, HR, data and expertise, procurement and buildings. The EUAN is challenged to establish itself as the most effective and efficient platform for this effort and the role of the EUAN Coordination, SSO and Sub-Networks will be crucial in meeting expectations. This will directly demonstrate its added value to its members and contribute to achieving a reputation of ‘value for money’ for Agencies and JUs.

# VISION AND MISSION

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Against the background and the challenges described in the previous section above the Network's vision and mission statements have been reviewed and read as follows:

## Vision

Through our combined knowledge and actions, we contribute to the implementation of EU policies and strive for the development of a more sustainable, inclusive and competitive Europe for the benefit of all EU citizens.

## Mission

We enhance the value of individual EU Agencies and Joint Undertakings by deepening their collaboration, with the objective of providing EU citizens, businesses and institutions the right foundation to achieve their priorities. In so doing, we represent a cost-efficient, agile and impactful administrative backbone for the implementation of Union policies.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND KEY OBJECTIVES

Heads of Agencies aim to ensure continuity in the strategic approach and further build on the “acquis” of the Network. It was deemed crucial to ascertain that this new multiannual strategy was, and would remain, fit for purpose up to 2027, despite an increasingly dynamic political and institutional setting. It was equally important to ensure that the EUAN strategy would also translate into tangible benefits for EU citizens. Hence, the strategic priorities were developed as to respond to the difficult economic and financial context and to embrace the challenges inherent to the green and digital transitions.

The new multiannual strategy is built around two main pillars where EU Agencies and JUs are committed to join forces and mutualise efforts: “EUAN as a role model for administrative excellence” and “EUAN as a valued institutional partner”.

The first pillar presents an ambitious overarching strategic priority, embracing the challenges inherent to the green and digital transitions and positions EU Agencies and JUs as pioneers in new management and working methods under the “new normal”. Incorporated in this pillar are, notably, the initiatives on “Shared services and capabilities”, which have been confirmed as a key element of the new strategy.

The second pillar emphasises the ambition of the Network to enhance the visibility and level of interaction with EU stakeholders to become an indispensable interlocutor in the political debate on matters of relevance for EU Agencies and Joint Undertakings, when explicitly mandated to do so by the Heads of Agencies.

These two pillars are further described below under sections 4.1 and 4.2 where over-arching expected results and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are defined. A more detailed action plan to achieve these priorities is laid down in the implementation roadmap attached to the strategy.

## Strategic Priority 1 – EU Agencies and Joint Undertakings as a role model for administrative excellence

### Key objective 1.1: Increase the efficiency of Agencies and JUs through sharing of services, best practices and pooling of tasks and capabilities

#### EXPECTED RESULTS

EUAN is recognised as a repository of knowledge and expertise hub and as a promoter of efficiency gains through sharing services and capabilities

The repository and knowledge expertise hub allows EUAN members to swiftly access vast amount of relevant information and services

EUAN's knowledge hub enables an effective knowledge transfer point for newly established Agencies/JUs

The sharing of services, best practices and pooling of tasks and capabilities enhances the efficient use of resources by exploiting synergy effects in all areas (administrative, financial, IT, operations) by its members

## KPIs

Increased usage of shared services among the EUAN members to share expertise, knowledge and capabilities

Number/size (budgetary impact) of shared services projects/initiatives involving EUAN members (with focus on green, digital and resilience areas)

Increased efficiency (savings) and effectiveness (productivity) of EUAN members assessed against pre-defined and measurable criteria.

### **Key objective 1.2: Define the role and capacity of the Network to further develop expertise in sharing services, in particular in view of EU green, digital and resilience priorities**

#### EXPECTED RESULTS

EU Agencies' capacities and capabilities are strengthened to mutualise/share part of their resources, expertise, and practices

Innovative ways and methods are developed for sharing knowledge and practices and measuring their impact.

## KPIs

Formalised and shared lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic response shared within the EUAN

Methodology in place to calculate efficiency gains and (re)use saved resources

Proposal on 'Shared Services and Capabilities 2.0' implemented and its effectiveness assessed on the occasion of the mid-term strategy review.

### **Key objective 1.3.: Implement under the “new normal” modern and sustainable management methods and governance for the EUAN and for Agencies/JUs**

#### EXPECTED RESULTS

The EUAN's governance and way of working is reviewed in order to achieve operational fitness to efficiently and effectively deliver on this strategy

Performance management methods and resource management methods are regularly revisited and adapted to meet the most up-to-date standards (Performance based management; Activity based management)

## KPIs

Reformed governance of the EUAN, including a long-term solution of EUAN Coordination rotation

Mid-term review and update of the strategy by 2024, including a system for monitoring the level of achievements and the progress in its implementation.



## Strategic Priority 2 – EU Agencies Network as a valued institutional partner

### Key objective 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

#### EXPECTED RESULTS

The Network defined themes and priority areas (including by organic/ad-hoc clusters of Agencies/JUs) and developed communication messaging and tools to position itself as a key interlocutor with the EU institutions, when explicitly mandated to do so by the Heads of Agencies

Initiatives with direct relevance and impact on the EU Agencies/JUs are launched

The interactions between EUAN and SSO is strengthened to best utilize the synergies in increasing EUAN's visibility towards the EU institutions in joint events and initiatives.

#### KPIs

Updated methodology for EUAN-EU institutional cooperation

Strategic priority areas and goals for cooperation (including within organic/ad-hoc clusters of Agencies/JUs) endorsed by Heads of Agencies

Development of clear criteria and processes enabling a timely decision on the EUAN intervention on behalf of EU Agencies/JUs.

### Key objective 2.2: Develop the Network to be a trusted partner of the EU institutions

#### EXPECTED RESULTS

EUAN is recognised as the first point of contact in approaching the Network members on horizontal matters

Common interests of the EUAN members are raised with relevant EU institutions in a timely manner to identify viable approaches and solutions

#### KPIs

Consultations launched on behalf of the EU institutions with the EUAN members;

Number of strategic papers/position papers/issues raised with EU institutions on behalf of EUAN

## **Key objective 2.3: Effectively provide EU Agencies'/JUs' specialised contribution to key policy priorities of the EU**

### **EXPECTED RESULTS**

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The EU Agencies/JUs work together in relevant organic/ad-hoc clusters to bring together their specific expertise to support the implementation of the key policy priorities of the EU institutions (for example, on Sustainable Development Goals, Green New Deal, Digital Initiatives).

### **KPIs**

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Joint strategies and projects developed by clusters of Agencies/JUs, in cooperation/under the guidance of EU institutions, in support of EU policy priorities

Early and regular reporting of joint initiatives with EU institutions on priority areas

Amplified communication towards stakeholders and the large public with the support of the Network.

# CLOSING STATEMENT

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The achievements of the EU Agencies Network over the past years is clear evidence that, in undertaking joint efforts, the members are stronger and more effective together than on their own. To continue fulfilling its role, the Network will need to enhance its activities and adapt to a more complex, risky and interdependent operating environment.

The underlying principles and the strategic objectives presented in this document serve as a foundation for a more a proactive, efficient and strengthened collaboration between Network members and stakeholders. They provide the necessary tools to pave the ground for a smooth transition towards a more innovative, sustainable and resilient governance, in line with EU priorities and policies.

Through endorsement of this strategic document, the EU Agencies Network commits itself to strive for the realisation of these strategic priorities, thus responding to the expectations of the EU institutions and citizens. It will be accompanied by an implementation roadmap listing concrete actions and tasks designed to accomplish the strategic goals as well as measurable performance criteria to assess progress made. This multiannual strategy 2021-2027, and the roadmap, will be subject to a mid-term review by Heads of Agencies.

