



Gent, Belgium
7-9 October 2024

OCTOBER ASSEMBLY



The Hague, 12th of July 2024

Dear EEAC Members

It is with great pleasure that I write to you to invite you to the long-announced October Assembly.

This year is a year full of elections, change and new beginnings. That is why the EEAC Network is hosting a strategic in-person meeting to discuss what this all means for us as advisory councils.

From the 7th to the 9th of October we look forward to receiving all of you in Gent, Belgium, just a 30 min trainride from Brussels. Here we want to use the time together to think about the following questions.

What can we learn from each other in terms of creating lasting impact? What can we expect from the coming 5 years of EU policy-making (with experts from Brussels!)? How will this affect our work as councils? And what can we do to stay on top of the game and exercise timely influence?

We look forward to gathering with council members and secretariat members for just over 36 hours to critically reflect on our work and that of European governments. The latter, without question, is rapidly increasing in importance for our councils.

In the below pages you will find all information related to the logistics, the programme, and the covered costs of the assembly.

On behalf of all the board members, we cannot wait to see you after the summer. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Fee Kirsch for further information.

Sign up for the October Assembly is [here](#).



Arnau Queralt-Bassa
Chairman EEAC Network



EEAC

What can you find in this booklet?

1. Why this assembly?
2. What will the assembly be focused on?
3. What to bring to the assembly
4. Programme and time table
5. Logistics and accommodation

Our venue :

Sint Baafshuis Bisschoppelijk
Seminarie
Biezekapelstraat 2, 9000 Gent





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Why this assembly?

We are organising this assembly to...

... **take stock together of what is happening in Brussels and in the member states.** This year marks a new legislative period at EU level plus a number of national elections. We want to shed light on what we can expect to see in the field of climate, sustainable development and environment in Europe.

... **facilitate undisturbed and structured exchanges.** The success of our network depends on the quality of our exchanges and the strength of our relationships. This requires dedicated time. Seeing each other in a relaxed and private setting will hopefully help us understand our own councils better.

... **map out what the next year(s) will bring for us as a network.** We want to plan together for becoming better at following and reacting to policy shifts. Coming together will help us focus and prioritise our shared needs. Specifically when it comes to EU policy developments.

What will the assembly be focused on?

The assembly will take place over the course of one full day and one half day. We have divided the time into **four thematic sessions.**

Impact

We will start with new perspectives on our own value as councils. How do we measure impact? What should we monitor after we publish? When are we successful? And most importantly what other ways of advice-giving, that are not advice publications, are councils using to help their governments and parliaments?

Insight

From here we will make a sharp turn to listen to external experts who will give insights on the current European policy landscape and what this means for sustainable development and climate policies.

Identity

After that we will have a closed session on how these developments affect our work and what possible challenges we foresee in the near future. We will speak about the structure of public governance, both at EU and national level.

Influence

We will finish with a practical lookout on how we can use our collective work. This session is meant to spark and deepen ideas on how we can work together in the new year.



The four parts of the Tuesday



Impact

How do we measure, improve and innovate the ways our councils are making a difference?

Insight

What will happen in the next years in the EU policymaking arena?

Identity

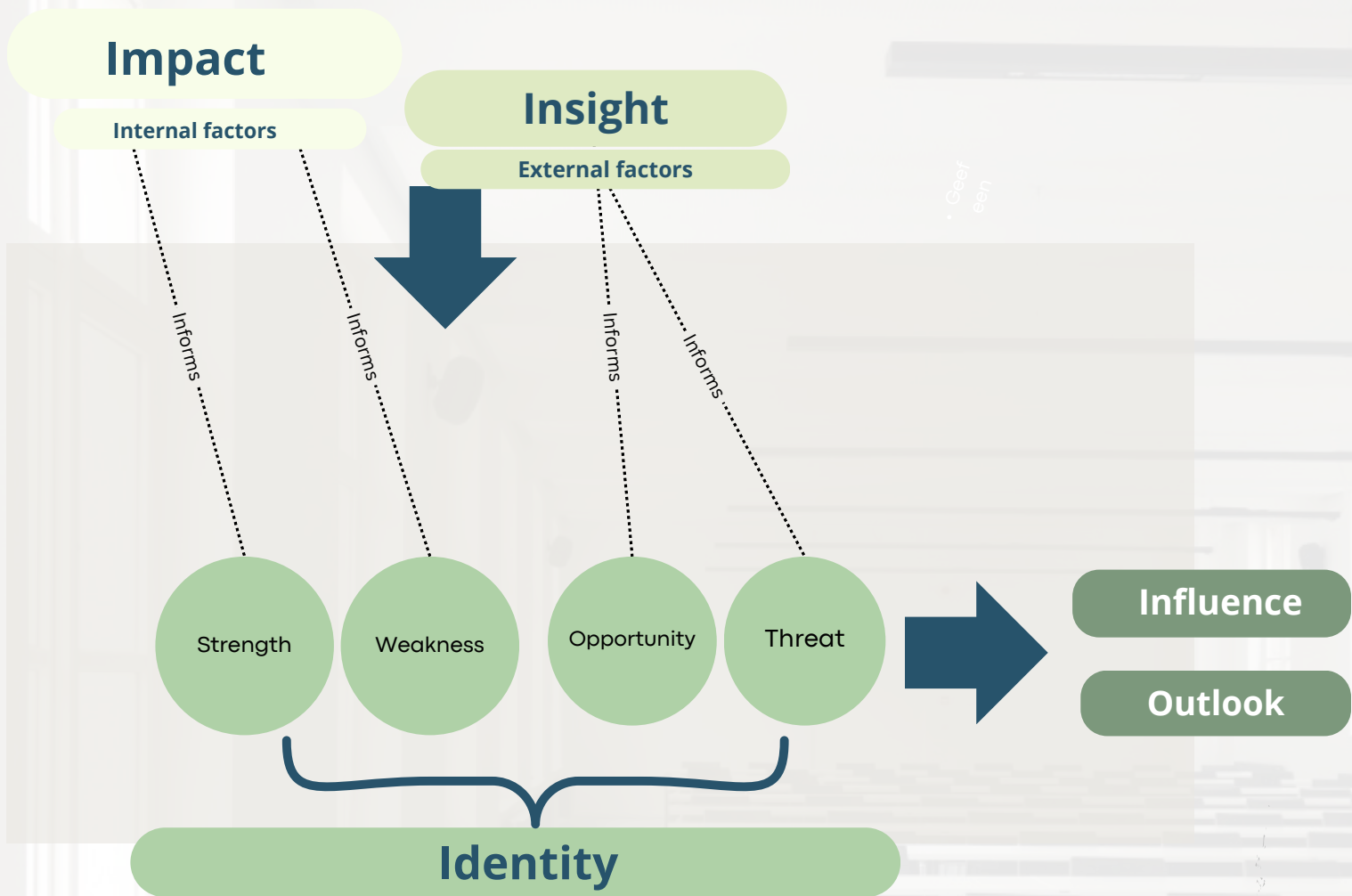
How do these developments affect us as councils?

Influence

How can we work together to keep track of developments and ensure influence?

(1) Overview of the flow of the sessions

SWOT analysis



(2) EEAC Strategic Priorities and Actions

Strategies for Threats: through the lens of strengths and weaknesses

Strategies for Opportunities: through the lens of strengths and weaknesses

What to bring to the assembly?

Everybody from your council is welcome, whether that be council members, secretary generals or staff members. There are no formal preparations necessary for joining the assembly. The idea is that we use this time to reflect together. In the meantime, we hope the questions below inspire you to start thinking about our discussions.

Guiding questions to prepare for the assembly

1. What ways of working this past year have made a difference in your council? What activities have led to impact and why?
2. What questions regarding EU policy making post 2024 do you have for the speakers? What themes do you want to dive deeper into?
3. What questions around identity and societal standing of your council keep coming up in the past year? How has the political situation in your region affected your council?
4. What do you need from the network? What policy updates would you prioritise and like to receive? What topics inside our field interest you most?

Other helpful actions: bringing your council's working plan of this year and the[draft] year plan for next year, reaching out with materials to share as readings for other participants, thinking about the EEAC year plan of 2025 and bringing ideas for webinar formats, working group themes or project-based activities for the EEAC next year.

All materials related to the assembly can be found in the shared folder. Follow the link [here](#) or reach out to the secretariat.

Programme



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7th of October

- 13:30-14:30 **WG chair presentations: outlining relevant developments**
- **Ecosystem services:** Nature restoration law, Agriculture Dialogues, Water and Soil policy
 - **Sustainable development:** Links with competitiveness, polarisation, long term planning
 - **Climate and energy:** NECPs, Green Deal/Industrial plan, cross-border infrastructure
 - **Health:** updates from EU, UN and member state implementation
- 14:30-15:30 **Discussion on topics of relevance**
What other topics should be considered a relevant development?
Cross-links between the topics
- 16:00-17:00 **What to do with these topics?**
What topics lend themselves for external visibility projects of the EEAC?
What topics are councils planning on working on at national and regional level?
What work forms should we consider for the new year?
- 17:00-17:30 **Recap and what we take with us to the next day**
- 19:00- 21:00 Opening Dinner



Programme

8th of October

08:30-9:30 Impact

Session on our role in policymaking: new ways of assessing our impact

Structure of the session

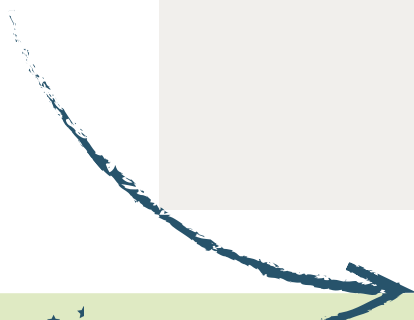
Councils are invited to present their reflections and possible monitoring of their impact. We will use concrete examples to share and map ways of working. What is it about our work that shapes our impact?

We will look at the following three categories for impact:

1. Measuring policy output: when were publications a success?
2. Follow-up after advice: e.g. the ways of keeping in touch with relevant stakeholders
3. Beyond publications: Alternative impact-making e.g. a deep dive into what it means to become active participants in policy making

We will start collecting first examples from this session for our SWOT analysis. In the Impact Session we focus on 'Strengths'.

09:30-10:00 Coffee Break



Programme

8th of October

10:00-12:00

Insight

Session with expert input on EU election, state of affairs, future developments

Structure of the session

Speeches about post-election EU and the future of climate, environment and sustainable development policymaking by invited speakers and a subsequent panel debate among them.

Speakers:

Hans Bruyninckx

Professor of Environmental Governance at University of Antwerp, Belgium. He is the Former Executive Director of the European Environment Agency.

Patrizia Heidegger

Deputy Secretary General of the European Environmental Bureau and Director for European Governance, Sustainability and Global Policies. Elected Regional Facilitator for Europe for stakeholder engagement for UN Environment.

Hèctor Sánchez-Margalef

Researcher at the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) specializing on European politics and integration dynamics, new political movements, democracy and participation.

Guiding Questions: What are the macro trends of the coming months and years? What will this Commission do differently? How will geopolitics play a role here? What are the implications for organizations like our councils?

After one hour, we will open the floor for questions from the room and facilitate a conversation following Chatham house rules among all participants and the panelists

Programme

8th of October

12:00-13:00 **Identity: Part I**

Session will focus on what **threats** and **opportunities** these trends will create for the councils and this affect their work.

Structure of the Identity sessions

Discussion under Chatham house rules. We will facilitate a discussion on the role of our councils (individually, not as a network) using a SWOT analysis (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat). The first part will focus on trends mentioned in the previous session and other changing political composition trends of 2024

13:00-14:00 Lunch

14:00-15:30 **Identity: Part II**

This second session continues the discussion around the SWOT analysis, focusing on **strengths** and **weaknesses** for the upcoming year.

15:30-16:00 Coffee Break

16:00-17:00 **Influence**

Session on how we can work together to keep track of developments and ensure influence? What can the network do to support these opportunities identified in the last session and help mitigate threats?

Structure of the session

Discussing the strategic direction of the EEAC Network by formulating our priorities of the next year(s) using the SWOT result.

18:00-19:30 Free time or sightseeing or Gent walk

19:30-22:00 Dinner

Programme

9th of October

9:00-10:30

Outlook

A session on how the outcomes of the discussions of yesterday can be used by our councils

Structure of the session

Mentimeter and open plenary with the following guiding questions

- What follow up project should we do next year?
- What can we do at EU Level?
- What support can and do we want to give each other in the new year?

10:30-11:00

Coffee Break

11:00-12:30

Procedural preparations

A session on upcoming APS and the drafting of the Year Plan 2025

Structure of the session

Open Plenary with preagreed agenda points (tbd)

- Discussion on the EEAC strategy and Working Plan for 2025 (WG projects / interWG projects)
- Preparation for the Annual Planning Session. This is scheduled to be on the 27th of November 11-12:30 CET 2024 (online)

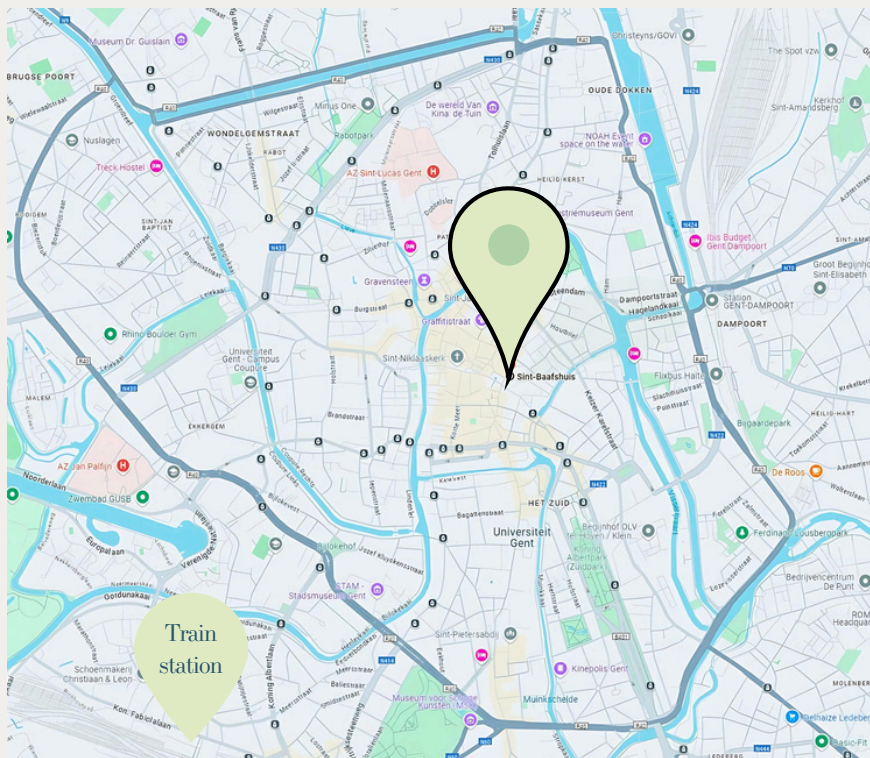
12:30-14:00

Lunch and Departure

Logistics and Accommodation

Location

The October assembly will be hosted at the **St Baafshuis** in Gent, Belgium. The address is Biezekapelstraat 2, which is in the center of the historic town. The city is a short 30 min train ride from Brussels. We will have lunch at the St Baafshuis and visit two restaurants in the city during our stay.



Up-to-date
information about
hotels is available.
Please ask the
secretariat

Accommodation

To ensure that every council can be represented during these two days, we are able to cover accommodation and travel costs for 1 representative from each council with EEAC funds. Please let us know if you would like to make use of this offer. However, we encourage you to self-finance the trip if you are able to do so. If your council would like to send more than one person with EEAC funds, please also get in touch, and we can see what we can do.

Please register for the October Assembly [here](#).



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