

Guidelines for EIR dialogues

The [Environmental Implementation Review](#) (EIR) gives a comprehensive picture for the state of environmental implementation at Member States level and aims to foster cooperation among public authorities and stakeholders to find tailor-made solutions to address implementation gaps more effectively. Environmental implementation cuts across and depends on the active engagement of a wide spectrum of stakeholders, public and private, from decision makers to citizens, businesses and industries. To identify and design the most suitable policies and measures to enhance environmental implementation all involved stakeholders need to meet and share information. Environmental Implementation Review dialogues should provide such opportunities.

Successful country dialogues require active engagement of regional and local authorities and of other stakeholders. In its Communication "*Environmental Implementation Review 2019: A Europe that protects its citizens and enhances their quality of life*", the Commission encouraged Member States to act on the Environmental Implementation Review findings and to use the country reports as a basis for further discussion.

It is essential that EIR dialogues are not seen as a mere tick-off exercise, but serve a practical purpose: **make use the different viewpoints and experience of all relevant stakeholders to forge sound solutions to problems pointed out by the EIR.**

What should an EIR dialogue look like?

An EIR dialogue is a means of mutual communication between governments and administrations and other stakeholders, including the civil society, based on the Environmental Implementation Review reports findings. These dialogues usually consist of thematic debates at and between all levels of administration (national, regional and local government and agencies). The debate should be open, supportive and operated on a voluntary basis, with ownership from both authorities (not only the environmental ones) and stakeholders. The focus of the EIR dialogues should be on how the future situation can be improved and result in operational conclusions followed by actions. These debates should take into consideration possible further environmental integration in other policy areas and cross border issues.

Are the EIR dialogues mandatory?

It is up to the authorities to make use of this instrument. The Commission strongly encourages such debates as a means to engage broadly and timely, to find solutions to the challenges identified in the EIR reports.

Where do the EIR dialogues take place?

So far and to ensure full attendance of the relevant interlocutors, the EIR dialogues have been organised in the capital of the Member State concerned, be it in the premises of the Environment ministries or elsewhere.

Who organises the EIR dialogue?

Usually, the environment ministry sets up EIR dialogues, but regions and local authorities could take the lead.

At what level should an EIR dialogue be organised?

The level of participation of an EIR dialogue is very much at the discretion of the Member State and depends on its objectives. The minister for the Environment could launch the event; the EIR also aims to bring key implementation issues to the political level. In this case, it would be wise to organise a press conference or newspaper interviews in advance. There could be a political plenary, followed by a press conference, and then a more technical session after a break. If the choice made is for a more technical EIR, then a press conference would normally not be necessary.

Whom to invite?

The invitees would be representatives of environmental and other ministries working on environmental issues (e.g. health, transport, energy, agriculture, climate change). In addition, ministries of finance and economic affairs could be invited, when root causes of implementation gaps seem related to lack of financial resources of implementing authorities, for example. If a country is regionalised then the regions would be invited, as well as local authorities. Technical environmental institutes and the academic sector should be present, along with non-governmental organisations and other civil society organisations. Representatives from neighbouring countries or regions can also be invited, if the topic or their experience are relevant.

If useful, the European Commission is in principle available to participate in national implementation dialogues at the appropriate level, .

How should the EIR dialogues be structured?

Common practice is to have a plenary session with or followed by technical sessions.

Technical sessions after a plenary could be organised on the main themes of the EIR country reports (such as air quality, water, nature or environmental governance). A nexus approach could also be applied to the sessions (such as air/transport/health, water/nature/agriculture, energy/climate/nature). In addition, environmental governance challenges could be addressed (see for country assessments a study on an [environmental governance framework](#)).

Specific dialogue meetings could be organised on 'root causes' of environmental implementation gaps. For example, on improving *horizontal* coherence, a round table discussion with all relevant ministries could be organised. To improve the effectiveness and pace of *vertical* collaboration between national, regional and local authorities, dialogues could be set up to engage in a 'real time' multilevel governance on a specific challenge, such as the sufficiency of capacity, skills and resources at each level.

Should and EIR dialogue be a one-off or repeated?

So far, there have been two EIRs published by the Commission, so in theory there could be two rounds of dialogues if a Member State felt so inclined. However, whether to repeat a dialogue or to have a series of dialogues on specific themes after a general first EIR dialogue is entirely a matter for Member States to decide.

Can the EIR dialogues be part of a cycle of training?

One possibility is to combine the EIR dialogues within normal training activities organised for environmental officials in Member States. This approach could work well in regionalised countries.

Can the EIR dialogues be linked to Peer 2 Peer support?

As follow-up to a country EIR dialogue, the organising ministry could apply for a [Peer 2 Peer](#) support project (expert missions, study visits, or small workshops) with one or more other Member States (or subnational authorities). The opposite could also happen by having an EIR dialogue involving several Member States that collaborated in the framework of the TAEIX EIR PEER to PEER and would wish to work further on identifying solutions to identified implementation gaps in a given sector.