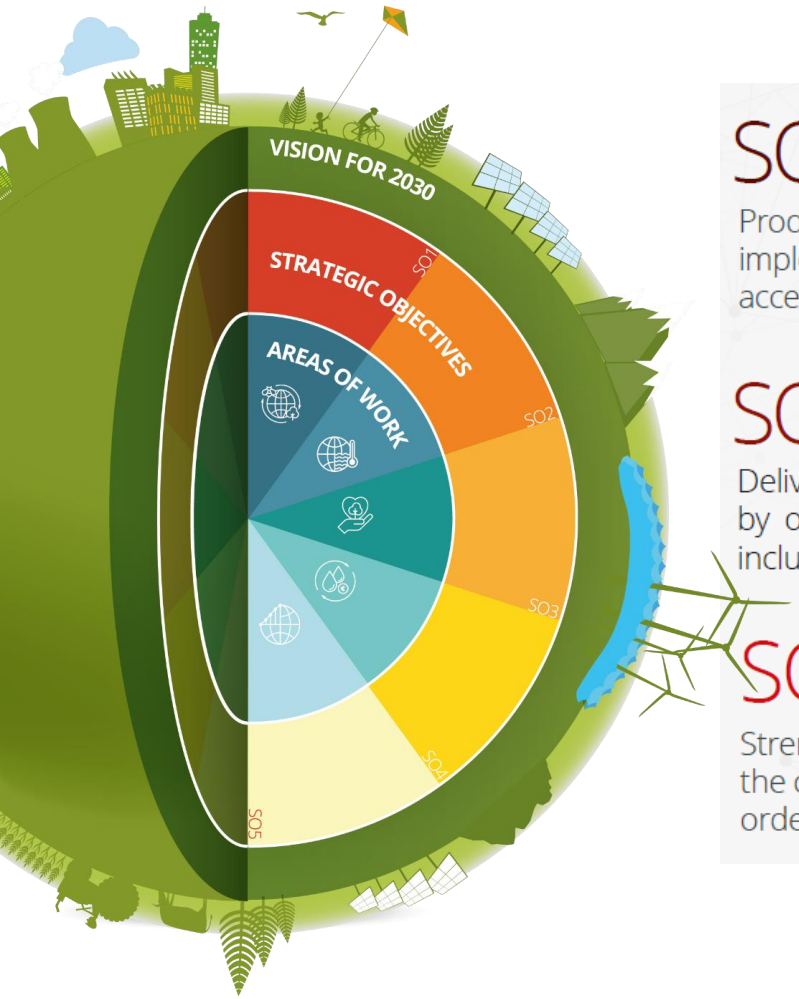
Localising the EEA Strategy: Key outcomes from the Breakout Groups

EEA Strategy 2021-2030: Strategic objectives for a new policy context



SO1 Supporting policy implementation and sustainability transitions

Produce evidence-based knowledge to support policy implementation and development of new initiatives to accelerate and scale up the transition to sustainability.

SO2 Providing timely input to solutions for sustainability challenges

Deliver targeted inputs to inform policy and public discussions, by organising and communicating knowledge on responses, including innovative solutions to societal challenges.

SO3 Building stronger networks and partnerships

Strengthen our network through more active engagement at the country level and work with other leading organisations in order to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and expertise.

SO4 Making full use of the potential of data, technology and digitalisation

Embrace digitalisation, including new technologies, big data, artificial intelligence and earth observation that will complement and potentially replace established information sources to better support decision making.

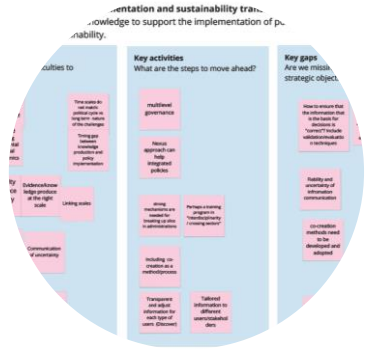
SO5 Resourcing our shared ambitions

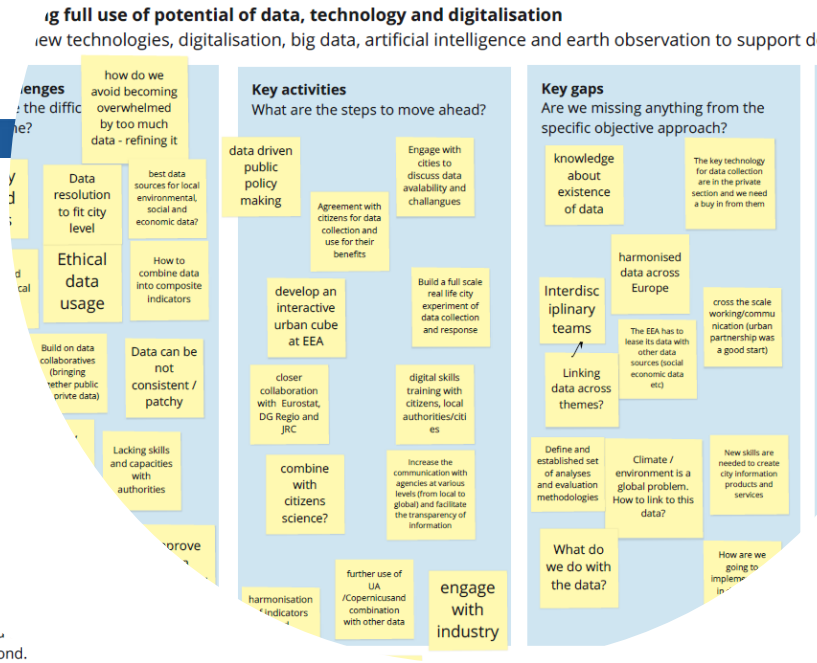
Develop structures, expertise and capacity across our network to meet evolving knowledge needs, securing and diversifying the resources needed to achieve our joint vision.

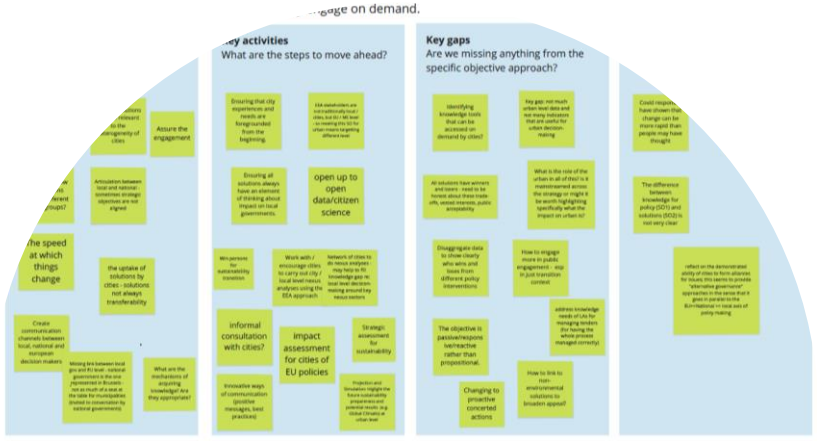
Localising the EEA strategy to an urban level

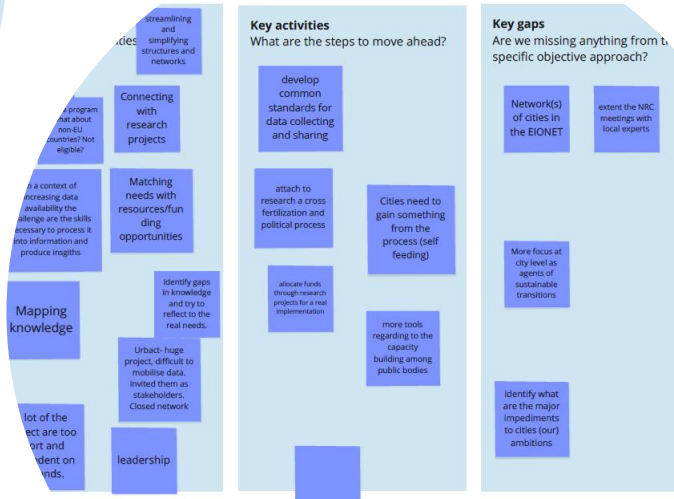
For each Strategic Objectives,
from an urban perspective, consider:

- **Key challenges** - What are the difficulties to overcome?
- **Key activities** - What are the steps to move ahead?
- **Key gaps** - Are we missing anything from the strategic objective approach?









STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: Supporting policy implementation and sustainability transitions

KEY CHALLENGES

- There is a **timing gap** between knowledge production and policy implementation
- The science-policy interface needs to find common languages, in particular for communicating and integrating **uncertainty** in policy implementation
- Delivering knowledge at the **right scale and tailored to different stakeholders** in order to have a real impact (not one size fit all)

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Use the **nexus approach** to facilitate the integration across policy areas from the assessment perspective and communication as well
- **Co-creation** methods need to be integrated into regular assessment. Go beyond consultation process at late stage of the production process
- Facilitate the discovery of **information tailored** at different stakeholders and, in particular, to different governance levels

KEY GAPS

- **Validation** of new data used for policy support (e.g. big data, sensors,..).
- Need for a culture of **policy evaluation** at local level

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: Providing timely input to solutions for sustainability challenges

KEY CHALLENGES

- Ensuring that solutions are relevant to **diverse local contexts** and thereby increase uptake of these ideas
- Ensuring local governments have a **seat at the table** given that National governments are still dominant in conversations with the EU
- Solutions not tailored to **urban context** or lack of alignment of priorities of **different tiers** of government

KEY ACTIVITIES

- As cities are not the 'traditional' stakeholders the EEA engages with, think about how any outputs produced **impact on cities** and **scaling solutions** so they work at the urban level
- To increase knowledge about cities and better meet their needs, consider **working directly with a sub-set of cities** on solutions (e.g. deepen the work on drivers, select cities to test out nexus approach)

KEY GAPS

- We have enough good solutions out there already, but the problem is their **implementation** on the ground (vested interest, behaviour change, lack of capacity, etc)
- Being clearer that all solutions have **winners and losers** and that the trade-offs will impact different groups disproportionately (encourage the collection of disaggregated data)
- The SO seems fairly **passive/reactive** – also highlight need for proactive and propositional work that shapes the debate around the role of cities in driving environmental transitions

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: Building stronger networks and partnerships

KEY CHALLENGES

- Urban governance and policy competences are **fragmented** across the EEA – how can it reach out to cities with one voice?
- The community of urban actors, networks and initiatives is already quite complex across Europe – how can the EEA find its **unique role** and position?
- What is its **offer** to local governments?

KEY ACTIVITIES

- **Mapping** of the existing urban stakeholders landscape and building up of strategic partnerships with key actors – show how EEA can **complement** existing activities
- Develop an **urban sustainability accelerator award** together with the EC
- Engage with cities directly on a set of **explorative/pilot** activities

KEY GAPS

- Need to **link** the EEA‘s environmental data and mission to economic and social policy arenas in order to contribute to **integrated** urban development
- Need to **align** EEA‘s key messages to international and European key policy frameworks, e.g. SDGs, New Leipzig Charter, EU Green Deal policy areas

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: Making full use of the potential of data, technology and digitalisation

KEY CHALLENGES

- **Privacy** concerns and ethical data usage
- Technical **data specifications/characteristics** (spatial and temporal resolution, consistency, harmonisation)
- Making the link other **initiatives and research programs**, but also to **industry** that does possess huge amounts of data
- Capacity building of citizens and public authorities to deal with large amounts of data

KEY ACTIVITIES

- **Harmonisation** of indicators and monitoring methods/approaches
- Engage and try to **collaborate** with industrial data providers, other European public bodies and the research community
- Further **uptake of Copernicus** products, development of an interactive EEA urban data cube

KEY GAPS

- **Awareness** about existence of data
- **Interdisciplinary collaboration** (across data themes), linking environmental with socio-economic data
- Established and harmonised **data analysis approaches**

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5: Resourcing our shared ambitions

KEY CHALLENGES

- Connecting with (and accessing funds from) **programmes / research projects / networks** (e.g. URBACT, LIFE)
- **Skills** needed to process, present, use increasing amount of available data and transform it into useful information / insights
- Identifying **knowledge gaps** and needs (on urban scale)
- **Simplifying** networks and other structures

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Develop **common standards** for data collection and sharing
- Create better links between **research and policy-making**
- Allocate funds for / within research projects that result in actual **implementation**
- Develop **tools for capacity building** within public bodies
- Make the **benefits of capacity building** for cities more obvious

KEY GAPS

- Include **networks of cities** within Eionet and extent the NRC meetings with local experts
- More focus on **cities as agents** of sustainable transitions
- Identification of the key **obstacles** to the implementations of cities' sustainability ambitions

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

The process...

- The virtual event worked well as a practical session
- It generated very rich contributions from a range of stakeholders

Localising the EEA strategic objectives...

- Useful exercise in validating the EEA‘s Strategic Objectives at a more local level and in a more specific context (i.e. urban)
- EEA should consider testing the Strategic Objectives in other more specific contexts
- A few specific reflections on the Strategic Objectives were raised (e.g. links between SOs, particularly 1 and 4; and clarity of the distinction betwen 1 and 2)

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

Take-away messages from the discussion ... it is all about the 'CITIES'

- **C**o-creation: Work together with cities and their networks and initiatives – **co-create** activities, solutions and data, **consult**, involve cities in **Eionet**
- **I**ntegration: Engage and connect with different **levels** of decision making (vertical) and with **non-environmental** policy arenas (horizontal)
- **T**imeliness: Progressive change is not enough, **accelerate** transitions (see Covid response) – find a language to feed science and data into policy-making and become more proactive in making **bold policy proposals**
- **I**nnovation: Connect with **industry-owned** data pools, include **EO data**, involve **citizen data** – but integrate them in formats **digestible and usable** for cities
- **E**quality: Understand who wins and who loses, focus on reducing inequalities – further develop the **Nexus** approach as a methodology to **integrate** policy-making and uncover both synergies and conflicts of interests
- **S**kills: Equip and support cities on their transition journey, **build capacity** and develop **skills** for working with data