



NIECE

Network for Ireland's
Environmental Compliance
& Enforcement

**THE NIECE
NETWORK
STRATEGIC
PLAN
2018-2022**

**WORKING
TOGETHER
TO MAKE A
DIFFERENCE**



Introduction

This document sets out the Strategic Plan for the Network for Ireland's Environmental Compliance and Enforcement (NIECE) for the period 2018 - 2022. It defines the Vision for the Network, its objectives, the management and organisational structure, membership and governance.

This plan has been prepared following extensive engagement and consultation with all members of the Network including Local Authorities (LAs), the County and City Managers Association (CCMA), the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCA), the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG), Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Board of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).



Defining the Vision for the NIECE Network.

Background

The Network was originally established in 2004 and was known as the “Environmental Enforcement Network” with activities mainly being focused on illegal waste, enforcement planning and environmental complaints. It was subsequently expanded to include other emerging areas including wastewater, drinking water and air.

A detailed review of the Network commenced in early 2017 in response to the changing environment that local authorities are currently working in. Such changes included the introduction of the Waste Enforcement Regional Lead Authorities (WERLAs) and the Local Authority Waters and Communities Offices (LAWCOs) and the changing responsibilities with the establishment of Irish Water. In 2018, the Local Authority Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) were also established. The outcome of this most recent review, is the preparation of this Strategy. This Strategy will remain in place until 2022. The activities to be taken to implement this Strategy are included in the annual work programme for the Network.



Established in 2004 focusing on illegal waste, enforcement planning and environmental complaints.

Vision & Objectives

VISION

THE VISION OF THE NIECE NETWORK IS

The improved implementation of environmental protection legislation through enhanced promotion, engagement and collaboration amongst public authorities

OBJECTIVES

THIS SHALL BE DELIVERED BY THE THREE OBJECTIVES FOR NIECE

Linking People and
their Work Areas

Sharing Expertise and
Creating Learning
Opportunities

Enhancing
Consistency

IN ORDER TO

DELIVER IMPROVEMENTS IN PRIORITY ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS

Improved
implementation through
collaboration amongst
public authorities

1 ROLE OF THE NIECE NETWORK

The role of the Network is to provide a forum which encourages individuals and organisations to work together to deliver improvements in priority environmental areas. It also acts as a space where individuals share experiences, seek help from each other and learn from their peers.



2 STRUCTURE OF THE NIECE NETWORK AND MEMBERSHIP

The Network is structured around key thematic areas “Waste”, “Water” and “Air/Climate”. These are managed by a “Planning and Governance” group and additional “Communications and General Supports” are also provided. (See diagram at the end of this section).

Membership of the Network includes, for the most part, local authority staff, state agencies and government departments involved in the enforcement of environmental legislation, environmental engagement and promotion. In addition, representatives from other sectors including non-government organisations, businesses and producer responsibility schemes are invited to participate, where relevant.

The key thematic areas are:
Waste,
Water,
Air/Climate.

2.1 Thematic Areas

Each of the thematic areas have a defined network membership which is composed of all members involved or interested in that particular work area, including LAs, EPA and other relevant organisations.

A “Lead Thematic Co-Ordinator” heads up each of the thematic areas and is responsible for reporting on progress, liaising with the EPA, Local Authorities and other bodies and engaging with the Steering Committee, where relevant. A Director of Service, appointed by the CCMA, fulfils this role.

Each thematic area encompasses working groups associated with that specific theme. Working groups are/will be established where working collaboratively to address a specific issue or deliver a particular outcome is considered beneficial to the work of network members. These are small focus groups with specific Terms of Reference. Each working group shall be managed by a Working Group Co-Ordinator.

Each thematic area may also encompass network groups which are/will be established to coordinate specific ongoing activities, to share information and to learn from each other. Such networks will have specific Terms of Reference and shall be managed by a Network Co-Ordinator.

The priorities of the Network as defined by the Steering Committee (SC) and as specified in the annual work programmes, are key in determining the activities of such groups.

2.2 Planning and Governance

The planning and governance of the Network is carried out by the appointed Steering Committee (SC). The SC is composed of the following key partners: EPA, DCCAE (Waste and Environment), DHPLG, DAFM, CCMA - Environment, CCMA - Water, HSE, IFI, National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and the Lead Thematic Co-Ordinators. The SC is chaired by the EPA.

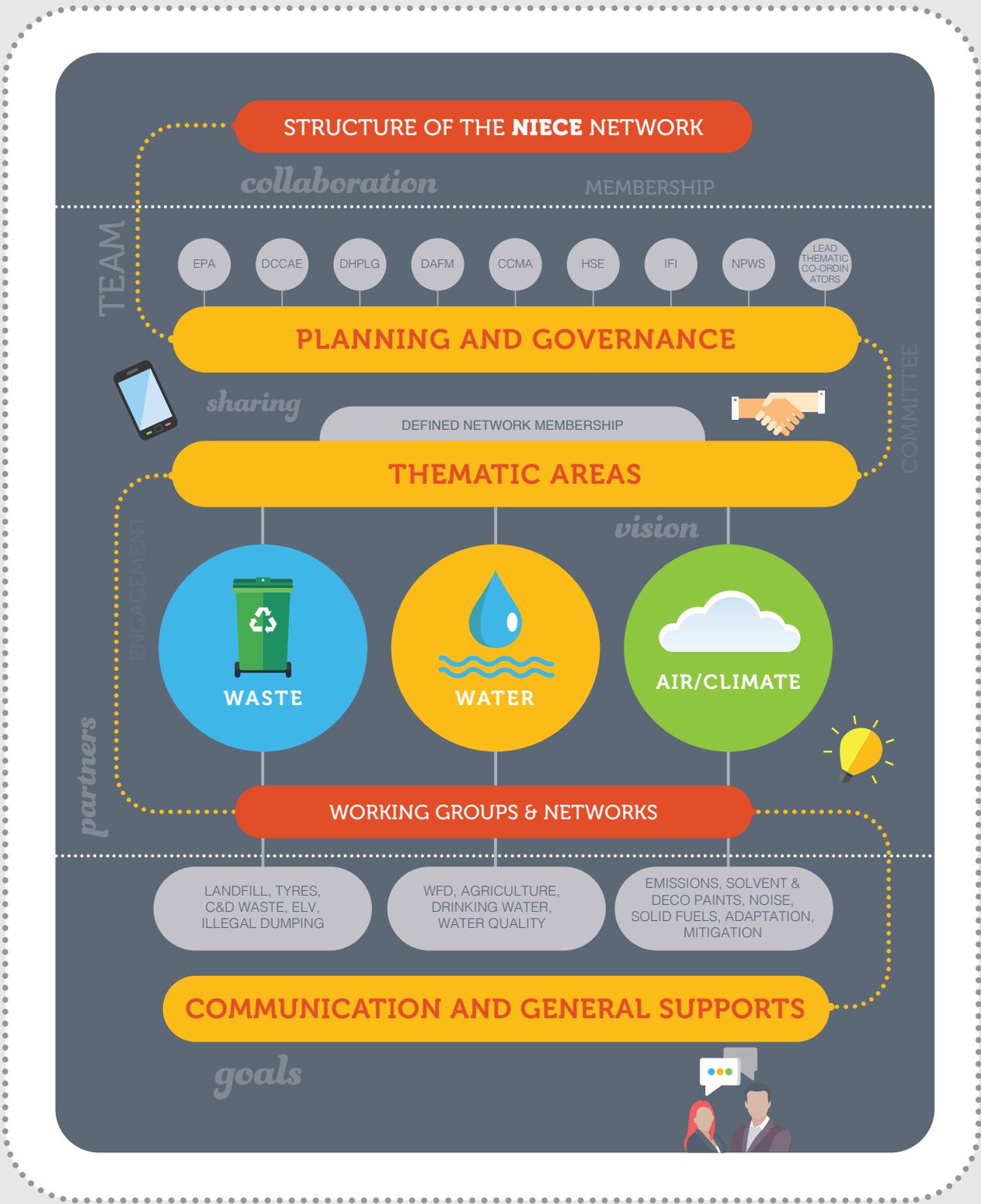
The functions of the SC include setting the priorities for the Network, monitoring delivery and ongoing evaluation of the work of the Network (see section 3.1 for further details).

2.3 Communication and General Supports

Communicating and co-ordinating the activities and outputs from the Network is undertaken by the “Communications and General Supports” team. The EPA plays a central role in this team which is supported by key partners mainly from within the local authority system.

Working together is beneficial to the work of network members





Working together to
make a difference

3 MANAGEMENT OF THE NIECE NETWORK

The Steering Committee is responsible for the overall management of the Network with the Networks Team within the EPA providing a secretariat role. In addition, there are several other key roles for EPA and Local Authority staff including Lead Thematic Co-ordinators and Working Group Co-Ordinators as described below.

3.1 Role of the Steering Committee

The role of the Steering Committee is as follows:

- Agree and sign-off on the NIECE Network Strategic Plan 2018-2022;
- Agree Network priority areas ensuring necessary links to national priorities for waste, water and air/climate, where relevant;
- Agree the annual work programme which implements the Strategy;
- Monitor delivery of the work programme;
- Liaise with their parent organisation regarding support and resources for the activities of the Network;
- Highlight emerging issues that may impact on the members of the Network;
- Attend three Steering Group meetings per year;
- Approve the establishment of new working groups and their participants; and
- Assist in the circulation of information to members.

3.2 Role of the EPA

The EPA has numerous roles within the Network as follows:

- Acts as chair for the Steering Committee and participates as an active member of the SC;
- Acts as secretariat to the SC;
- Co-ordinates the activities of the Network including:
 - a. Acts as the focal point for the Network;
 - b. Organises four annual events (water, air, waste and RMCEI);
 - c. Provides support to the working groups and networks;
 - d. Develops the draft work programme for review and agreement with the Steering Committee and monitors and reports on its implementation;
 - e. Review and seek feedback from members regarding Network activities to ensure that the work programme and strategy is delivering on their needs;
 - f. Co-ordinates the activities of the Steering Committee;
 - g. Liaises with other bodies and Networks e.g. European Commission and the European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL);
 - h. Provides technical support and expertise to the various working groups, where required; and
 - i. Design and manage functionality and content of the portal.



3.3 Role of the Lead Thematic Co-ordinator

Each Thematic Area will have an appointed Lead Thematic Co-Ordinator whose role is as follows:

- Co-ordinate and monitor the activities of the working groups established under their specific thematic area;
- Ensure effective communication between the activities and outputs from working group and the wider Network Members;
- Liaise and work with the EPA with regard to the organization of relevant events and preparation of material relevant to their network members e.g. conferences and case studies;
- Act as a link between their thematic area and the SC; and
- Update the SC of the activities within their thematic area.

3.4 Role of the Working Group Co-ordinator

Each working group will have an appointed Working Group Co-ordinator whose role is as follows:

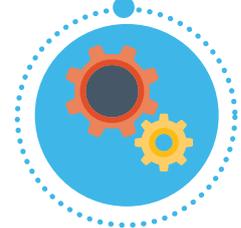
- Preparation of the terms of reference for the working group and liaising with the EPA regarding its approval by the SC;
- Preparation of a work plan for the working group along with assigned responsibilities and timeframes for delivery;
- Organising working group meetings including venue, agenda and minutes;
- Ensuring timely delivery of the outputs from the working group; and
- Communications with the EPA regarding the dissemination of the outputs from the working group and progress regarding achievement of their targets.

The success of the Network is dependent on the engagement of its members

3.5 Role of the general NIECE Member

The success of the Network is dependent on the level of interest and engagement of its members. In this regard, each NIECE member has a role to play in the key activities of the Network. These include:

- Ensuring that their own member profile is kept up to date;
- Willingness to actively participate in working groups and contribute to network activities;
- Willingness to sharing information and expertise with Network members;
- Encourage new staff to join and engage with the Network and ensure that work planning supports this;
- Actively participate in providing feedback and suggestions regarding potential areas for improvement within the Network; and
- Ensuring effective communications within their organisation regarding activities/outputs of the Network that may be of interest to their colleagues.



4 COMMUNICATIONS

Effective communication is key to the success of any network and should constitute one of its primary activities. Appropriate channels of communications between individual and groups, enhance the development of relationships, upon which Networks develop, grow and expand.

It is important that in order to meet the varying needs of the members of NIECE, that a range of both formal and informal methods of communications are used. These include the following:

- Dedicated Team within the EPA to assist in communications co-ordination;
- Review of the NIECE Extranet to ensure that it meets the needs of its members;
- Preparation of Announcements and Newsletters;
- Preparation and sharing of local authority case studies;
- Active use of discussion boards for specific thematic areas;
- Active calendar available to all;
- Introductory pack for new members;
- Novel use of IT including webinars, video clips etc;
- Document sharing and repository; and
- Four main annual events.



Effective communication is key to make any network develop, expand and succeed



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