

Innovation

When was the last time you did something for the first time?

Introductory Paper -
Call for contributions

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1. Introduction

The Netherlands Court of Audit is proud to be organising the IXth Congress for the EUROSAI community on the pivotal topic of innovation.

Day in, day out, the staff of supreme audit institutions do their jobs as well as they can and in doing so increase the public value of government organisations. Apart from the vast differences in the settings in which the EUROSAI members operate, there are also wide disparities in their duties, powers, missions and working methods. Despite these differences, we are all involved in a constant quest for ways of improving ourselves and for the most effective working methods and audit techniques. Constant improvement is not an aim in itself, though. Rather, it is a means of ensuring that we maintain our added value in the long term: that of ensuring and increasing the accountability of government and its affiliated institutions.

Our common vision and values are set out in the EUROSAI strategic plan for 2011-2017.

EUROSAI vision and values

Vision

EUROSAI promotes good governance, including accountability, transparency and integrity. It provides a dynamic framework for cooperation and assists its members in fulfilling their mandates in the best possible manner.

Values underlying our work



It is on the basis of these values and this vision that the EUROSAI community wishes to make an effective contribution to raising the standard of public governance. Sustainable innovation is crucial if we wish to continue to do so in the future. As the Dutch artist, Willem de Kooning, once put it:

“I have to change to stay the same”

Innovation as a theme

The EUROSAI members have so many good ideas about new ways of performing even better as government auditors now and in the future that it is clearly worth sharing them in an accessible and practical way so that we can learn from each other. This is the goal we are seeking to achieve at the IXth EUROSAI CONGRESS in The Hague in June 2014.

A number of EUROSAI Working Groups, a series of joint audits and a recent analysis performed by EUROSAI's Goal Team 1 (Capacity-building) have shown that many EUROSAI members are working tremendously hard to raise their standards and to adopt new ideas, new technologies and new working methods, both in their organisations and in their audit work.

In fact, there is nothing new about innovation, at least not as a topic of discussion. Indeed, during the VIIIth EUROSAI Congress in Lisbon in 2011 we all debated the significance of the rapid and massive changes taking place in society and the public sector. Accordingly, the first recommendation of the Lisbon Congress was that *SAIs are recommended to adapt to the innovation and changes in society*. We are now following up on this recommendation by asking how SAIs can best respond to these changes and indeed can lead by example. Apart from looking at the issue from a theoretical perspective, we will focus as much as possible on practical examples from the day-to-day work of European SAIs and governments.

In this paper we will be explaining what you can expect from us in the coming months and what you can do to make the congress in The Hague in June 2014 a success for our SAI community and for yourself and your own institution, too.

2. An expedition

We will rightly be able to claim that the congress has been a success if you have been able to share good ideas, practical experiences, successes and failures and all your questions with other colleagues attending, and also if you embark on your homeward journey full of inspiration and new ideas. As a secondary aim, we want the congress to help forge closer ties between the SAIs in Europe.

Share your best ideas for better public auditing!

Which specific issues and topics the congress will address remains to be seen. From our viewpoint, the route to June 2014 is an expedition into unknown territory. Although we may have identified our destination, we are not quite sure yet how exactly we are going to get there. Together, we are going to search and find the topics we are going to debate and decide how they should best be presented. In other words, the nature of the congress topics and the way we choose to address them will depend in part on your own needs and wishes. We hope that, in this way, the congress will prove to be a source of inspiration and enlightenment for all members of the EUROSAI community and its observers and guests.



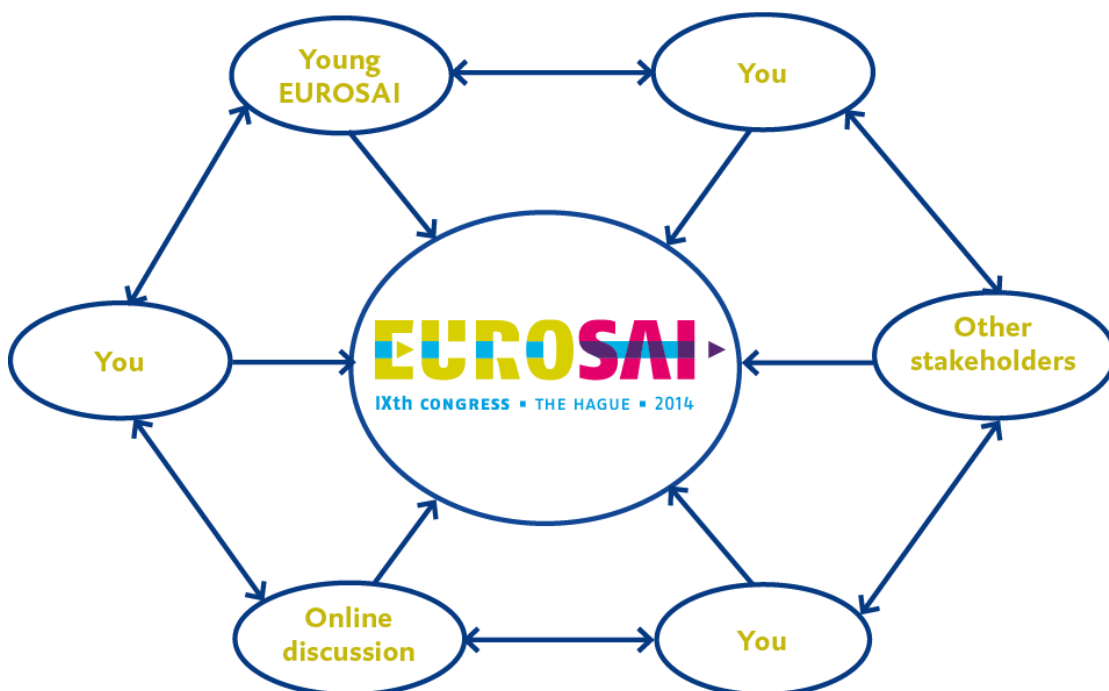
In the run-up to the 2014 EUROSAI congress in The Hague, we will be holding a **Young EUROSAI** Conference in Rotterdam in November 2013. The title of the conference is: **YES**

We are confident that a new generation of government auditors will be able to add their own – and highly relevant – agenda to the proceedings at EUROSAI 2014. The idea is for young SAI professionals to work together during the **YES** conference, so that they inspire each other and all go home with a new network of invaluable contacts.

We expect the results of the **YES** conference to provide useful inputs for the main EUROSAI congress in June 2014. Therefore, we would very much appreciate it if you could send a delegation to the Young EUROSAI conference in November. Detailed information on the conference has already been distributed (see the announcement circulated at the end of February 2013).

We look forward to a lively exchange of ideas, information and experiences, not just between SAI delegates themselves, but also with stakeholders and representatives of universities and government bodies. We welcome all topics and a wide range of methods of presentation and discussion for both **YES** and the IXth EUROSAI Congress.

How can you help make both EUROSAI 2014 and YOUNG EUROSAI a success?



This time we are not asking you to prepare a country paper but to contribute your ideas and experiences in another way:

- Please let us know, by **Friday 7 June 2013** at the latest, what issues and topics linked to the theme of innovation you would like to see addressed during the YES conference in November 2013 and the IXth EUROSAI congress in June 2014. What topics do you feel are absolute musts? Please send your contribution in English.
- Also, as we would like the EUROSAI congress to be very much a congress for and by European government auditors, please let us know whether you would be prepared to make a contribution yourself and what method you would like to use? What topic do you have that we need to get enthusiastic about? A contribution could be leading a workshop, giving a presentation or organising a brainstorming exercise or any other good activity.
- Lastly, we would also be very interested to hear your thoughts on how you believe the discussions at the congress could best be organised. How should we structure the theme sessions for maximum efficiency and effectiveness?

Please think about the topics you would like to see the congress address, either because you feel that your own experiences are worth sharing with other SAIs or because you would like to hear from other SAIs how they have tackled certain problems. If all the SAIs have something to offer each other – and there must be something you can offer your peers! – every SAI stands to gain from the congress.

So, what sort of topics do we have in mind? Well, these could include, for example:

- innovations that help your SAI to perform effectively;
- innovations in terms of your relations with ministries and the national parliament;
- innovations in the way in which you perform your audits;
- new forms of collaboration with other institutions;
- innovations in terms of your relations with citizens and the media;
- innovations in your government's policies;
- new developments in the organisation of your SAI;
- the use of new technologies;
- and so forth.

The ideas do not necessarily have to originate from your own organisation. New applications and ideas practised by other organisations whose activities impact on your work may also be a rich source of innovation. Obviously, we will need to make choices in the subject matter of the congress in due course. Again, we will be basing our short list on the ideas we receive from you. For the time being, the sky's the limit!

Methods of presentation and debate

Just as the delegates themselves will have a big say in the choice of topics, so the methods of presentation will reflect your preferences. There are all sorts of options, including:

- plenary sessions with stimulating keynote speakers;
- smaller scale workshops;
- brainstorming sessions;
- exercises using practical solutions.

However, you are free to choose a different form for your own contribution, such as:

- a poster presentation;
- a group debate during a **walk on the beach**;
- an 'ideas market';
- to name just a few.

There are no restrictions or conditions. It's no holds barred!

Please note that we are not expecting you to have a finished product by the end of May 2013. During the period June 2013 to April 2014, using the legacy of Young EUROSAI, we intend to produce a short list of topics and methods of presentation and discussion. We may find that one of your ideas is shared by another SAI, in which case we may ask you to join forces in order to put together an exciting package for both the YES conference and the IXth EUROSAI congress.

Ambassadors

We have designated a member of staff from the Netherlands Court of Audit here in The Hague to act as an 'ambassador' for each SAI. We are only too happy to copy the idea already used during the 2005 EUROSAI congress in Bonn, only with a slight twist this time: the ambassadors will be taking up their posts at a relatively early stage.

This means that he or she will soon be introducing himself or herself to you and discussing a possible choice of topics with you. Contact details of your ambassador are in the annex. We hope that this direct contact between your SAI and our ambassador will help the YES conference and the IXth EUROSAI congress come to life and will inspire you to contribute to both events – in whatever way you wish. Naturally, you are more than welcome to organise the practicalities of your contribution yourself, but we would also be more than pleased to assist or take the initiative if you would prefer us to do so.

Your ambassador is your congress contact: s/he will be pleased to field any questions, whether about the preparations or about the proceedings at the congress itself. The ambassadors are also in contact with each other, so your ambassador can easily put you in touch with colleagues from other SAIs who come up with similar ideas or are faced with similar questions.

Could you please designate a member of staff at your SAI to act as the contact person for your Dutch ambassador in the run-up to the congress? Obviously, it would help enormously if the staff member liaising with the Dutch ambassador were fully up to speed with all relevant organisational and technical matters relating to the congress. The ambassador will be in regular contact with you to discuss certain practical aspects, and also to get to know your SAI and to obtain information on your organisation and the work you do.

Digital platform

EXPEDITION 2014



We are designing a digital platform for Young EUROSAI and EUROSAI 2014 that will act as the main information hub for the two events. In other words, the Great Innovation Debate is set to kick off this year with a virtual conference. You will be given access to the

platform and are cordially invited to join in with all the discussions hosted on it. Your ambassador will let you know as soon as the platform is ready and will explain in detail how it works. We will be publishing all the relevant congress documents on the platform, as well as all comments and suggestions we receive on them. There will be a forum that subscribers can use to contact and speak with other members of the EUROSAI community.

The following diagram summarises the various stages leading up to the congress in June 2014:



3. In conclusion

We hope that we have aroused your enthusiasm and that you will join us in our quest for topics and activities that we can use during the forthcoming EUROSAI congress!

If you would like to talk to us about the possibilities, or if you have any queries in connection with this introductory paper, please contact your ambassador. And if you already have certain ideas or suggestions, you are of course more than welcome to pass them on to your ambassador.

Please visit www.eurosai2014.nl for all information currently available on the congress, including a copy of this introductory paper.

We look forward to meeting you in The Hague in June 2014. Or even earlier – in Rotterdam in November 2013 – if you are a young professional!

Practical matters:

Deadline, Friday 7 June 2013:

- What topics do you feel are absolute musts in relation to innovation?
- What will your contribution be and with what type of activity?
- How should we structure the theme sessions for maximum efficiency and effectiveness?

Please send your contribution in English to your ambassador!