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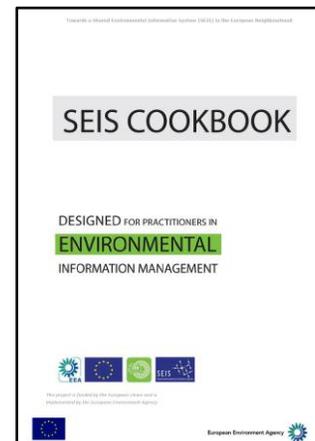
'SEIS cookbook' – a tool for sharing environmental data and information

To better illustrate the principles of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) and their applicability in practice, under the ENPI-SEIS project the "SEIS cookbook" was published, full with necessary ingredients and concrete examples to guide the understanding of the SEIS concept.

The "SEIS cookbook" is meant to be a living document, which will be continuously updated with new examples as technology develops and new systems to support sharing of environmental information are introduced.

The bulk of the cookbook is devoted to case studies from the EEA member, cooperating and neighborhood countries which show national and international implementation of SEIS elements. These examples are collectively used to identify an emerging set of common trends, methods, tools and lessons learnt which have been integrated into the "SEIS checklist" that can be used as a self-assessment tool to measure progress and identify areas that need further development.

The "Cookbook" is a guide to understanding but not a rigid template for implementation.



The "SEIS cookbook" is available in English, French and Russian

It can be downloaded from the project's website:

<http://enpi-seis.eea.europa.eu/enpi-seis-revision/seis-infrastructure/seis-cookbook>



The project is funded by the European Union

"The partnership with the European Union is of big importance for Georgia, I endorse the existing cooperation in the framework of the ENPI-SEIS project and would like to express hope for the further support", said Mrs. Khatuna Gogaladze, Minister of Environment protection and Natural Resources of Georgia.

Georgia is willing to seal the partnership with the EEA

In cooperation with the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources and National Statistics Office of Georgia, the European Environment Agency organized a two-day workshop on 2-3 December 2013 in Tbilisi, Georgia. The objective was to take stock of the progress in managing and sharing environmental data at national level since the previous country visit to Georgia held within the framework of the project in June 2011. Another objective was to discuss way forward in relation to the implementation of SEIS principles at national level, in particular the practical sharing of available data and information on the agreed environmental indicators. Only two days before the national workshop, during the Vilnius Summit on 29 November 2013, Georgia initialed the EU Association Agreement. In the upcoming period and until the formal signature of the Association Agreement, Georgia has to conduct an important work on aligning national legislation with the European normative acts, which also largely applies to the environmental policy.

As regards the collection and sharing of environmental data and information, Georgia is committed to continue the work on improving the compliance with existing requirements of the ENPI-SEIS project. This was confirmed and endorsed by the Minister of Environment protection and Natural Resources of Georgia, Mrs. Gogaladze at the bilateral meeting before the national workshop.

As the result of the workshop, the Ministry agreed to sign a Letter of Intent to formalize the commitment for the provision of environmental data and information in the three thematic areas: air, water and waste.

For more information on the agenda, participants and report of the meeting, please consult the ENPI-SEIS website.



Ukraine focusing on coordination to allow open access and sharing of environmental data

A two-day national workshop was organised in Kyiv, 13-14 November 2013, to discuss organisational, administrative and technical aspects around open access and sharing of environmental data. The event, hosted by the Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources at its Aarhus Centre, gathered almost 50 participants from various Ministries and Agencies and focused on datasets underpinning a selected set of environmental indicators associated to the project priority areas of air, water and waste.



It was recognised that the lack of internal coordination, with a clear distribution of roles and mandates among key partners, remains a challenge in Ukraine. Steps needed and taken to improve the mechanism for coordinating the implementation of a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) in Ukraine were discussed.

A major development is the drafting of an Ordinance to establish a multi-agency working group to deal with SEIS implementation at national level. It is anticipated that the process for formalising this working group will be finalised in early 2014, and will provide the forum for the practical implementation of the discussed actions.

Towards a common approach for sharing water quality data in the East region

A regional training on water quality reporting for the ENPI East region was held in Tbilisi, Georgia on 4-5 December 2013 - to help advance the production of common environmental indicators across the region. The event was hosted by the Ministry of Environment Protection of Georgia, and organised in collaboration with the European Topic Centre on Inland, Coastal and Marine waters (ETC/ICM).

For the area of water, the priority indicators relate to water quality in rivers and lakes (BOD and concentration of ammonium in rivers, nutrients in freshwater). The mechanism and tools applied in Europe for sharing water quality data were explored (i.e. the Water Information System for Europe (WISE) "State of the Environment" (SoE) reporting procedure). Efforts will continue in 2014 to assist and enable partner countries to share data based on methodology reviewed, working closely with partners such as the Environmental Protection of International River Basins Project and the UNECE Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators (JTF).



The 4th ENPI-SEIS Steering Committee meeting

The 4th annual ENPI-SEIS Steering Committee meeting took place the 17-18 September 2013 at the EEA, Copenhagen. The meeting aimed at taking stock of the activities undertaken in 2013 and contributing to the work plan of the final stage of the project in 2014. In addition to the regular steering committee meeting, participants reflected and discussed openly overarching, long-term goals associated with the implementation of SEIS during a half-day seminar.



In the key concluding points for the ENPI-East region, it was recognized that the establishment of data flows is a core driver to advance the SEIS mandate and activities, as the process of sharing and making available commonly agreed data sets helps trigger dialogue and focus actions on the coordination needs and mechanisms, cooperation across topics and networks, and infrastructure developments. The countries agreed that a round a national SEIS workshops/country visits would be beneficial to reinforce the political commitment and take steps towards establishing actual data sharing. Capacity building support in the work plan is primarily thematic and technical/IT oriented.

For the ENPI-South region, despite some delays in the work plan, important progress was achieved with the development of the 6 Horizon 2020 indicators, the setting-up of the reporting tool and the preparation of the 1st draft H2020 report, including country level contributions. As the 2013 activities focused on the H2020 reporting process, a slow implementation of the PRTR, together with the postponement of the activities on waste statistics and accounting to 2014, as well as lack of national support to infrastructure development have been acknowledged during discussions.



Horizon 2020 – Towards the mid-term review of the Horizon 2020 initiative of depolluting the Mediterranean Sea

The first phase of the Horizon 2020 initiative (2007-2013) is now coming to an end and a mid-term review of the initiative is under preparation. The current H2020 regional assessment report called for by the Cairo road -map and under finalization by the EEA with the ENP-SEIS South partner countries will, together with the results to date of three other complementary and coordinated technical assessments (conducted by the European Investment Bank, UNEP/MAP, the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat) and evaluations of specific project implementation (H2020 Capacity Building Mediterranean Environment Programme) feed-in the mid-term review of the Horizon 2020 initiative. At the 6th meeting of the Horizon 2020 Steering Group held on 19 -20 November 2013, the progress of all this reports and studies have been presented and discussed, leading to the agreement that a synthesis effort will be required to develop a coherent message and a set of recommendations. This midterm review synthesis will then provide a summary description of all the achievements and remaining challenges, and propose technical, institutional and strategic recommendations for the next phase (2014-2020). The draft midterm review synthesis is to be presented at the ad hoc H2020 Steering Group Meeting foreseen in March 2014, and the final version as background document to the announced Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Change to be held in May 2014.

Important technical decisions have been agreed by this 18th COP, including the decision on the Ecosystem Approach, which in its annex has an explicit reference to the SEIS principles, and the adoption of a Regional Action Plan on marine litter. The Istanbul Declaration also specifically refers to an enhanced coordination with Horizon 2020.



With the close involvement of the Mediterranean partner countries, the EEA is actively supporting the European Commission in preparing this synthesis document. To further promote the H2020 reporting and assessment activities and the work on SEIS, the EEA organized a side event “Sharing information and building partnerships – key for successful Horizon 2020” at the 18th Conference of the Parties of the Barcelona Convention held on 3-5 December 2013 in Istanbul. This event allowed presentations of practical country experiences on implementing SEIS as an enabler in achieving the objective of Horizon 2020. The aim of discussions was also to investigate how to link these efforts in building shared Environmental Information elements with ongoing UNEP/MAP activities and more specifically with the implementation of the National Action Plans.

Countries contributions – furthering H2020 Initiative

The production of the 1st H2020 assessment report, as called for by the H2020 Cairo road-map is based on data and informations reported by the ENP South partner countries. The data flows for the key H2020 indicators are progressively in place, with seven out of nine partner countries who nominated data reporters for this reporting flow. Based on the data reported by the countries (see Mediterranean Data Repository at <http://mdr.eionet.europa.eu>, with national folders linked to relevant reporting obligations) and using the selected H2020 indicators, a “Regional thematic assessment” has been prepared and shared with the ENP South partner countries for review and comments. Data are progressively reported and shared on Reportnet.

To complement the regional thematic assessment partner countries prepared national assessments of the three H2020 priority areas following common guidelines. This country level assessment is a new exercise for the countries and revealed to be very challenging, both in terms of method (use of the DPSIR analytical framework, limited length of the narrative contribution), and in terms of the production (sharing of responsibility for writing the different chapters). Five countries already provided their contributions that are under processing and editing.

The overall H2020 assessment report will be used as input for the mid-term review of the H2020 initiative (see above). This first reporting exercise confirmed that the setting-up of a regular reporting mechanism remains a long term process, with important challenges in terms of division of responsibilities of national authorities managing environmental data, needs for further institutional arrangements to support data flows and preparation of thematic assessments as well as human and financial constraints to support the process.

3rd ENPI South IT Working Group Meeting



The 3rd meeting of ENPI-SEIS South Working Group on Information Technologies took place the 2-3 September 2013 at the EEA in Copenhagen. The aim of the meeting was to take stock of the progress in data flows relevant for 1st H2020 progress report and discuss further activities of the group. On the first day the participants shared national experiences and reflected on the structure of deliveries. Following update on EEA activities on data sharing, discussions focused on putting the EEA activities in the context of ENP countries. The second day was devoted to discuss the responsibilities of IT WG and reflect on how to organize data flows using already existing tools at national level.

Animated discussions unfolded around two major subjects, the structure of the datasets delivered and the responsibilities of the IT WG. The meeting was summarized with a list of action points from which the most important were:

- to update and simplify the structure of data tables,
- to adjust the mandate of the IT WG,
- to update the list of country specific capacity building needs,
- to collect national coding systems and propose H2020 code lists,
- to produce systems analyses, data flow diagram including meta data catalogue

For more information on the agenda and report of the meeting, please consult the ENPI-SEIS website.

Five countries declared strong interest in an increased collaboration with EEA

Jordan, Israel, Republic of Moldova, Morocco and Palestine have expressed interest in fostering the existing cooperation with the EEA and have agreed on the objectives for the enhanced cooperation and further implementation of SEIS.

The so called "InSEIS" project (increased collaboration for SEIS), which will allow deepening the present cooperation, and will provide further country-oriented support in line with specific agreed priorities not covered in the present collaboration. The agreement was signed by the European Commission and the EEA in December 2013.



The enhanced cooperation, designed to start in June 2014, will primarily focus on: provision of Technical Assistance in the priority areas identified on the basis of the requests put forward by the countries earlier in 2013; organization of thematic workshops at national and/or regional level; provision of expertise and training opportunities via participation at dedicated seminars; and gradual involvement in the Eionet activities.

During the first semester of 2014, the EEA will organize a series of bilateral discussions with the five countries to fine-tune their demands, agree on the next steps and the implementation roadmap.

There is a possibility to enlarge the scope of activities to other ENP countries subject to their interest and availability of resources.

Cooperation with



Follow-up UNECE/Eurostat/EEA Waste workshop, 4 November 2013

The Joint UNECE/Eurostat/EEA waste workshop held on 4 November 2013 was building on the outcome of the previous workshop from 2012 and gathered participants from the statistical offices and Ministries of the Environment from the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA and West Balkan countries, as well as representatives of international organizations, among which UNSD, Basel Convention secretariat and RECs from the region.

The current workshop was an opportunity to take stock of the developments on waste data in the last year and a half, to exchange experiences and good practices and to make recommendations for further work.

Nevertheless, some issues remain, related mainly to data sources and data availability, as well as with differences in methodologies and measurements units, which make the comparison across countries difficult. Country representatives also pointed out to the existing problems with data collection from enterprises (irregular and not complete reporting) and stressed the need to introduce additional legislation in some of the countries to enable the collection of data. The problems of coverage, in particular for rural areas and gaps in time series were further mentioned by participants.

A desk study on "Assessment of the capacity of countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia to produce statistics on sustainable development and environmental sustainability" was prepared in advance of the workshop and had as objective to assess the capacity of target countries to produce data on waste statistics for identifying environmental vulnerabilities and measuring sustainable development. The recommendations proposed in the study will be used in planning further work in the area.

7th session of UNECE Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators, 5-7 November 2013

During the seventh session of the UNECE Joint Task Force (JTF) on Environmental Indicators, the participants reviewed selected water and waste indicators and looked at the available data on some additional indicators on transport and environment not covered by the Guidelines. Moreover, the JTF revised the text of the UNECE Guidelines by introducing previously agreed amendments to the description and calculation of the individual indicators.

The JTF Secretariat invited the countries to reflect on the required institutional, legislative and technical arrangements necessary for establishing regular data collection flows on the agreed 8 indicators / 11 data sets, as well as for making these data sets publically available and easily accessible in harmonized formats (in line with SEIS principles).

The tour-de-table identified that the information was to great extent in place in most of the countries. The proposal for the next JTF session (scheduled for mid-May 2014) was to have a pilot production of the agreed 8 indicators by making an analysis of the available online information in each country and discussing further the needs for harmonization. The relevance of this exercise, as confirmed at the recent CEP meeting and in preparation of the next possible regional assessment for the "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference scheduled for 2016, was also underlined.

UNECE Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (WGEMA), 7-8 November 2013

The 14th session of the UNECE WGEMA was held on 7-8 November in Geneva, having on the agenda topics related to the follow up of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) meeting held in October 2013, the role of WGEMA in the development of SEIS and support to the proposed 'Friends of SEIS' group. Issues discussed covered the follow-up from the assessment workshop held in April 2013 dedicated to the indicator-based SOE reporting in the countries and to the plans for streamlining existing data and environmental information to fulfil national and other reporting obligations. The Working Group exchanged ideas and good practices on the use of modern technologies and tools for dissemination and promotion of environmental information.

Dedicated presentations were made on the key findings of the new Assessment of Assessments (AoAs) produced for Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and for Republic of Moldova in the areas of biodiversity, climate change, air and waste.

During the discussions, countries touched upon issues around the three SEIS pillars in terms of:

- Content: development and regularity of production of indicators and their use in recent SOERs.
- Infrastructure: different formats used for data storage making sharing very difficult; different databases are using various software developed mainly on a project basis; as well as development of e-government platforms supporting the access and sharing of environmental information.
- Networking & cooperation: high turn-over of staff in administrations, need for formalising the cooperation on data exchange between the different institutions at national level in support of better sharing of environmental information.

Documents, presentation and report of the meeting are available at the following link:

<http://www.unece.org/wgema-14.html>

Upcoming Events

Below is an overview of the workshops and meetings that will be held until May 2014 with relevance to the ENPI-SEIS project implementation (exact dates and venues for some of them are still to be confirmed):

ENPI- SEIS National Workshop in Belarus	19-20 February, Minsk
ENPI- SEIS National Workshop in Republic of Moldova	March, Chisinau
ENPI- SEIS National Workshop in Azerbaijan	April, Baku
ENPI-SEIS South Technical Assistance missions on Infrastructure development	Tbc
UfM Stakeholder Consultation meeting in view of the UfM Ministerial Conference	10-11 March, Amman
Horizon 2020 Steering Group meeting	12 March, Amman
MEDPOL focal points meeting	27-28 March , Athens
ENPI-SEIS South Regional workshop on Water (in cooperation with UNSD)	1-3 April, Vienna
ENPI-SEIS South Regional Workshop on PRTR (organized by MEDPOL)	8-9 April, Ankara
UNEP/MAP Ecosystems Approach (EcAp) meeting	10 April, Ankara
UfM Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Change	13 May ,Athens
ENPI-SEIS South Regional training on solid waste	12-13 May, Amman
4th SWEEP-Net Regional Forum on Integrated Solid Waste Management	13-15 May, Amman
Joint EEA-UNECE Regional workshop on water indicators	13 May, Geneva
8th session of UNECE Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators	14-15 May, Geneva

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