<u>Public document (Feb. 2016)</u>

<u>DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION</u>

Implementation of the Shared Environmental Information System principles and practices in the Eastern Partnership countries

ENI SEIS II East project

1. Context

The project builds on the regional EU-funded project 'Towards a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) in the European Neighbourhood' (ENPI-SEIS, €5.7 mil., 2009.12- 2015.03), implemented by the European Environment Agency (EEA). The ENPI-SEIS project supported the environmental and statistical authorities in 16 partner countries both in the East and South European Neighbourhood regions in promoting the SEIS principles[1]. During the implementation of the ENPI-SEIS project, a regional set of eight (8) pilot environmental indicators was developed, produced and shared across the six partner countries in the East region[2,3]. In 2014, general modalities of cooperation around SEIS and the political commitment to share environmental data was re-confirmed in joint statements (i.e. Letters of Intent, statements resulting from national workshops) between the Governments of Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Armenia and the EEA (similar agreements with Ukraine and Azerbaijan are envisioned during the next phase of cooperation). At a higher political level, the Heads of State and Government confirmed their commitment to SEIS in the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit declaration signed in November 2013.

1.1. Regional context

The Eastern Partnership[4] sets out a path for EU to deepen its relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine through bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The Eastern Partnership is based on mutual commitments to the rule of law, good governance, respect for human rights and respect for the rights of minorities, the principles of market economy and sustainable development. Under the Eastern Partnership, four thematic platforms have been established. An environment and climate change panel, under Platform 2 on Economic Integration and Convergence with EU Policies, covers the promotion of environment protection and strengthening of environmental governance in these countries.

The multilateral track of the Eastern Partnership is advanced through a number of flagship initiatives, where SEIS underpins the Good Environmental Governance Flagship Initiative. The goal of further promoting and strengthening the flagship initiatives was set at the Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius in November 2013. In particular, the Heads of State and Government highlighted the need to continue the process of regulatory approximation and policy convergence in the field of environment

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[1] http://www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/what/shared-environmental-information-system-1

[2] ENPI-SEIS East Region Synthesis Report: http://enpi-seis.pbe.eea.europa.eu/east/final-synthesis-report-enpi-east-march-2015

[3] Progress in the production and sharing of core environmental indicators in countries of South-Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia: http://enpi-seis.pbe.eea.europa.eu/data-and-indicators/enpi-east-production-and-sharing-core-set-indicators

[4] http://eeas.europa.eu/eastern/index_en.htm (launched by the EU at a Summit with the Eastern European partners, May 2009 in Prague)

and climate change and specifically mentioned SEIS as one of the areas to further develop. In the declaration, the Heads of State and Government also stressed the need to continue EU assistance in view of establishing a fully operational SEIS. From 2014, the EU cooperates with the Eastern Partnership countries through projects financed under the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)[5], formally replacing the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI).

In the pan-European region, environmental monitoring and information management was recognised at the 5th and 6th 'Environment for Europe' Ministerial Conferences in Kiev (2003) and Belgrade (2007) as a key objective and area for action in the further development of environmental strategies. The 7th 'Environment for Europe' Ministerial held in Astana in 2011 agreed to encourage countries in the pan-European region to further continue the implementation of SEIS. The 8th Ministerial is scheduled to take place in Batumi, Georgia, in June 2016 for which reporting on progress for SEIS implementation is one of the themes of the conference along the two key topics of green economy and air quality.

The protection of the environment was explicitly addressed during the informal ministerial dialogue meeting of environmental ministers and the EU held under the Eastern Partnership on 29 June 2015 in Minsk, Belarus. The ministers underlined the need for further cooperation in areas of common interest and concern, namely biodiversity (in particular to meet Aichi targets), water management (including marine environment- the Black Sea), air quality, green and circular economy (with particular emphasis on waste management its use as a secondary raw material and integration of environmental concerns into energy), climate change and stakeholder involvement. The importance of knowledge and information on the state of the environment to support informed decision-making and taking preventive action, as well as role of the SEIS Initiative in this process, was particularly mentioned.

For the upcoming 4-year period (2015-2019), SEIS and its impact on better environmental governance continues to be among the priority supported initiatives. The Regional Programmes on Environmental Governance and Climate Change[6] in the East region will specifically focus on the following four elements: support to further development of Shared Environmental Information Systems (SEIS East); Water management (underpinned by the EU Water Initiative + in 2016- 2020); Greening the economy and Climate change (with specific actions for the last two still to be decided in 2016-2017).

1.2. Sectoral context

The EEA has a central role in collecting and providing environmental information in Europe. With the help of its European environment information and observation network (Eionet), it has been a leading proponent of SEIS from the start of the initiative.

In 2008, the European Commission confirmed its commitment to the implementation of SEIS and extending the application of SEIS principles to the neighbouring countries, where the EEA was entrusted to carry the process forward. The further implementation of the SEIS principles in the East region is expected to result in openly shared environmental information, available for decision-makers, civil society, and other national and international stakeholders.

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[5] http://www.enpi-info.eu/ENI
[6] The project is financed under this framework.

For the countries in the Eastern Neighbourhood, the gradual implementation of SEIS principles and use of Eionet's common infrastructure and tools, such as 'Reportnet'[7] could provide an effective solution to decrease what can appear to be a heavy and ever-growing reporting burden – from national demands to international obligations (such as conventions). For example, Ukraine has to respond to approximately 100 reporting obligations under various international and regional legal obligations (e.g. to the UNFCCC, UNESCO/Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, International Maritime Organisation agreements[8], UNECE regional conventions, Basel Convention, Bern Convention, Black Sea Convention). Reportnet has gradually evolved over the past 15 years, at the request of Eionet member countries, to facilitate the reporting processes and provide open access to national data, where countries are continuously discussing possible improvements to the reporting tools and methodologies to make use of latest technologies. The system as such is already freely available for use to the countries in the European Neighbourhood and beyond, and no additional information technology development would be needed to rationalise the delivery to regional and international bodies, although the key challenge remains the organisational and administrative aspects to allow open access and sharing of common national datasets. The ENP partner countries could in principle use and have been encouraged to use of the system in the same way as the EU Member States.

Recent developments towards implementation of e-governance in some countries (Georgia, Moldova) have improved online availability and public accessibility of environmental information. In some countries (Ukraine, Moldova), good progress was made for the setting-up of National Spatial Data Infrastructure that will facilitate access to, and use of, some of the data required for SEIS implementation. The signing of Association Agreements between the European Union and three Eastern Partnership countries (Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) in June 2014 serves as catalyst for further advancing EU standards and principles. Further efforts in the European Union cooperation will aim to contribute to the implementation of Association Agreements in certain areas of the environmental domain, while for the other three countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus,) it would offer further possibilities for technical cooperation and exchange of experience on relevant EU practices.

The selection of a core set of eight (8) indicators under the ENPI-SEIS project was done in accordance with the UNECE core set of environmental indicators and the EEA core set, and may be re-used and further enlarged/extended in order to respond to new policy needs as, for example, the ongoing debate on Green economy/Green Growth indicators or the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) process expected to be endorsed by the UN in September 2015. Logically, in this cross-cutting endeavour, the environmental aspects assessed through indicators are further complemented by economic and social aspects provided by other initiatives and projects such OECD EaP Green and UNEP Green economy initiative.

The development of common data structures and indicators for the Eastern Partnership countries during the implementation of the ENPI-SEIS project was done in close partnership with various UNECE structures and entities such as the UNECE Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators (JTFEI) and the UNECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (WGEMA). All ENP East countries have been part of these structures for more than 10 years and the joint efforts with EEA through the

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[7] EEA 'Reportnet' infrastructure is aimed at supporting and improving data and information flows as it integrates different web services in all aspects of the data flows: www.eionet.europa.eu/reportnet

[8] http://uk.mfa.gov.ua/en/ukraine-imo/legal-acts

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above project in establishing a regular process of environmental assessment and the development of SEIS across the region facilitated a gradual progress in comparable data delivery, and improved quality of the indicators. Strongly related to this work and through participation of the specifically established working group ('Friends of SEIS'), the EEA has been providing input into developing a SEIS monitoring mechanism based on targets and indicators in order to assess SEIS implementation and progress across the region. The work on data, indicators and assessments has also been considered as investment feeding into global processes, in particular the preparation of the upcoming UNEP Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) assessment. To support this development, UNEP has advanced its knowledge management platform 'UNEPLive', which aims at facilitating public access to environmental information[9], as well as helping authorities responsible for managing environmental data, indicators and assessments share such information online and thus facilitate reporting to MEAs. To this effect and based on the work done, UNECE alongside EEA are strong contributors to the process of preparing the European assessment to feed into the global UNEP GEO-6 report. The Eionet members and ENP East countries are preparing their input on the basis of the existing assessment results, data and indicators reported following international commitments and with SEIS as a key framing structure.

The work in the proposed action will build upon the activities undertaken within the previous ENPI-SEIS project and the thematic priorities identified by the countries in the framework of this cooperation – namely **air, water** and **waste**. Countries are gradually advancing the production and sharing of environmental indicators, and the project will continue to address organisational, administrative and technical aspects related to the production of the agreed set of environmental indicators, based on the Methodological Guide adopted at the Belgrade 'Environment for Europe' (EfE) Ministerial Conference in 2007. In order to make it operational, the core set was further developed under the ENPI-SEIS project by the environmental and statistical networks in the countries. Overall the shared set of indicators should grow from the 8 produced in the ENPI-SEIS project towards a full set of the agreed 36 indicators[10], however, conditioned by data availability which vary significantly across the region. The full indicator set was defined as part of the work in the ENPI-SEIS to the UNECE Joint Task Force and what remains now is to bring national monitoring data into formats that allows for a smooth and sustainable production of indicators on an annual basis, and to connect this with the assessment process.

1.3. Lessons learnt

Achievements and remaining challenges: The overall achievements of the ENPI-SEIS cooperation at regional and national level are reflected in the 'ENP East Synthesis report – Building a shared environmental information system with the Eastern Partnership countries', where country examples can also be found[11].

The implementation of the ENPI-SEIS project (Q4/2009 – Q1/2015) has shown that while the SEIS concept is generally well-accepted by relevant stakeholders in the six targeted Eastern Partnership countries, there are still inadequate exchange mechanisms for environmental information, inconsistencies of environmental data and information with international standards, as well as gaps

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[9] In June 2015, some data and information for 184 countries could be found in UNEPLive, although several sources are from regional and international organisations, not necessarily directly uploaded by the countries themselves.

[10] http://www.unece.org/env/indicators.html

[11] http://enpi-seis.pbe.eea.europa.eu/east/final-synthesis-report-enpi-east-march-2015

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in administrative and technical capacities for maintaining monitoring and information systems. The previous cooperation has contributed to streamlining the information requirements linked to the production and sharing of some environmental data in the six countries and identified the need for further capacities and measures to be implemented in the years to come. The complex and multidisciplinary nature of the SEIS concept call for mobilisation of a wide network of national experts across a number of environmental thematic areas. Dialogue and cooperation between the national authorities collecting and managing different types of environmental information has to be further improved (statistical data is normally easier to report and share due to its routine production and longer history as compared to environmental data) and impact tested across a range of areas including management of water resources, waste management, air quality improvement, protection of biodiversity, sustainable production and consumption, prevention and management of environmental hazards such as floods and forest fires.

A practical way to achieve this will be to continue embedding or linking strategies for achieving SEIS objectives at national level with existing frameworks such as the implementation plans for the Aarhus Convention[12]. Demonstrating benefits of SEIS principles at national and local levels through pilot projects (such an example is the Armenian development of SEIS for Lake Sevan) has proven to be an efficient way forward.

The key lessons learned from the ENPI-SEIS project (listed below) have been integrated in the design of the proposed action and will be given thorough consideration in the further implementation. These lessons learned are related to both the overall approach as well as to the practical operation of activities linked to the three SEIS pillars (i.e. content, cooperation and infrastructure). Some of them have also been reflected in the 2013 ROM report (Results Oriented Monitoring) conducted on ENPI-SEIS project.

➢ There is value added in a regional approach, however specific focus has to be put on national priorities (linked to activities under 2.4).

➢ For better buy-in into the process with national partners, and to have a clear indication of the activities to be supported under the project, development of national work plans should be used as an instrument of project implementation (included in the inception phase activities).

➢ Support further work on sustainable production of the regional set of environmental indicators, and keep focus on the sustainability of data flows in support of regular reporting as basis for preparation of environmental assessments at different geographical scales (strong focus maintained across the first three areas of work).

➢ Additional efforts are required for harmonisation of data formats and interoperability of methodologies as prerequisites for better comparison and sharing (to be addressed under infrastructure support – 2.1 – at national level).

➢ Stronger linkages could be made with the networks developing multi-purpose spatial data infrastructures (addressed under the proposed activity 2.3).

➢ Need to develop, adopt and implement a legislative and regulatory framework for establishment of data-sharing and information-exchange mechanisms (addressed through activities under 2.5).

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[12] UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, Aarhus, Denmark, 25 June 1998.

> Linked to this there is a need for <u>more dedicated support by the project at national level</u>, to more actively engage stakeholders, better operationalise daily work, coordinate planned events, and follow-up on the implementation of the agreed activities (reflected in the proposal to introduce national assistants to the NFPs).

> Additional support is needed for <u>establishing inter-institutional entities</u> with clear mandates and responsibilities to oversee and coordinate national SEIS development (proposal for National Implementation Teams in the partner countries).

> Further support to <u>capacities of national administrations</u> to produce regular, policy-relevant and <u>indicator-based SOERs</u>, in line with internationally agreed guidelines building on EEA and Eionet expertise could be strengthened (in focus of activities in area 3, linked to the SOER2015 experience and Eionet assistance at national level).

> More efforts would need to be put in increasing <u>SEIS visibility</u> at national level and widely communicate its principles and benefits, also engaging more actively civil society (integrated in area 5 on communication and visibility).

Considering all this, the new project will look into ensuring the following:

- <u>Greater commitment and ownership</u> with Memoranda of Understanding/Letters of Intent between the European Environment Agency and the Governments;
- More emphasis on <u>practical</u> implementation, hands-on training, and demonstrating with examples how improved environmental data can be used in policy-making;
- Better <u>inter-institutional coordination</u> with formal SEIS working group at national level or a dedicated coordinating institution;
- Better alignment to <u>country needs</u> through the national work plans, more regular expert visits, and dedicated national coordinators in each of the beneficiary countries;
- Active engagement of <u>stakeholders</u>, including civil society.

1.4. Complementary actions

The ENP East project serves to help the countries aggregate data and indicators from a range of different sources and other initiatives. Outputs of ongoing regional and bilateral projects should be used as input for enhancing data availability on the topics covered.

As mentioned in the ***Regional context*** under section 1.1, the focus of the EU-funded regional cooperation in the 2015-2019 perspective will, apart from SEIS, be clustered around the following priorities: water management, green economy and climate action, and regular dialogue will be ensured with the partners implementing these actions. The data and information generated by the currently ongoing thematic regional projects[13] will be considered in the implementation of the proposed activities. Training and capacity building activities in the priority areas would be implemented jointly with these projects to the extent possible.

Dialogue with the currently ongoing projects in ***the Black Sea region*** (in particular, EMBLAS 2) and the Black Sea Commission Secretariat will be also ensured as appropriate, targeting specifically

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[13] See landscape of projects under the Eastern Partnership Environmental Governance and Climate Change Prevention Flagship at:
http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/pdf/riga/20150518_flagship_env.pdf
http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/env-east/dashboard

Georgia and Ukraine. Given that these two countries have AAs, including the MSFD implementation, the development of marine indicators in support of preparation of Black Sea regional assessment will have to be in coherence and consistent with corresponding process in the other Black Sea region countries not covered by the ENI instrument and in particular with the MSFD.

Links will also be maintained with **the EU Delegations** in the beneficiary countries to act as focal points for communicating and ensuring coordination with other relevant – particularly bilateral – initiatives implemented in the countries.

The **Eionet** support and expertise will play a key role in the implementation of the proposed activities, in particular in capacity building and transfer of experience in application of relevant practices, tool and systems used in EU/EEA context, where the EEA will ensure regular dialogue on the execution of ENP East project activities with its 39 member and cooperating countries during regular Eionet National Focal Points meetings taking place three times a year. Eionet expertise and knowledge is particularly central to the 2014-2015 project 'Increased collaboration with the EEA and further implementation of SEIS' in five ENP countries (InSEIS), which targets Moldova from the Eastern Partnership countries. The good practice examples of this cooperation with Eionet will be further continued with all six Eastern partnership countries in a structured and coordinated manner.

2. Objectives and expected results

The overarching objective of the project is to support the further implementation of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) principles and practices in the six Eastern Partnership countries.

The specific objective is to strengthen the regular production of environmental indicators and assessment as a contribution towards knowledge-based policy-making and good governance in the field of the environment. This will result in improved national capacity related to the provision of environmental data and information in line with national and EU environmental legislation and practices.

The main project **results** will be:

I. Improved implementation of regional/international commitments related to environmental reporting in line with EU/EEA best practices;

II. Improved capacities in the national administrations to manage and use environmental statistics, data and information in support to decision-making in line with EU/EEA best practices;

III. Preparation of regular State and Outlook on the Environment reports (SOER) and indicator-based assessments in line with EU/EEA best practices.

3. Countries covered by the action

The countries covered by this activity are the six Eastern Partnership's countries, namely: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

4. Specific activities

The specific activities of the project aim to support the implementation of SEIS principles and practices in the above countries across **five areas of work** – three linked directly to delivering the results as outlined in section 2 and two of horizontal nature to address project

communication/visibility and management/coordination. The work implementation will be prepared and discussed with the partner countries over the inception phase of not more than the first 6 months of the project implementation.

Outline of the specific activities is provided below:

➢ **Inception phase activities**

- Activity 0.1: Stocktaking, gap identification and analysis;
- Activity 0.2: Development of four-year SEIS national work plans.

➢ **Area 1. Activities supporting result 1**: Improved implementation of regional/international commitments related to environmental reporting in line with EU/EEA best practices:

- Activity 1.1: Support to national capacities to respond to international commitments in priority areas;
- Activity 1.2: Harmonisation of methodologies for production of comparable environmental indicators across the region.

➢ **Area 2. Activities supporting result 2**: Improved capacities in the national administrations to manage and use environmental statistics, data and information in support to decision-making process in line with EU/EEA best practices:

- Activity 2.1: Expert assistance and capacity building in development of national environmental information system(s) and supporting infrastructure;
- Activity 2.2: Support the development of inter-institutional dialogue and public participation in the environmental decision-making process;
- Activity 2.3: Pilot on extending CORINE Land Cover (CLC) methodology to capital areas of the partner countries;
- Activity 2.4: Implementation of national pilot projects demonstrating data sharing and integration;
- Activity 2.5: Expert assistance to solidify legislative and regulatory frameworks around data management, access and use.

➢ **Area 3. Activities supporting result 3**: Preparation of regular State and Outlook on the Environment Report (SOER) and indicator-based assessments in line with EU/EEA best practices:

- Activity 3.1: National training and expert assistance on SOER production, based on SEIS-compliant data;
- Activity 3.2: Methodological support for production of indicator-based assessments.

➢ **Area 4: Communication and visibility**

- Activity 4.1: Development and implementation of project communication and visibility plan at regional and national levels;
- Activity 4.2. Regular dialogue with Eionet and synergy activities.

➢ **Area 5: Management and coordination**

- Activity 5.1: Project management and coordination of cross-cutting issues with relevant partners;
- Activity 5.2: Overview and reporting of the project administrative and financial execution;
- Activity 5.3: Interaction(s) with relevant regional experts and initiatives.

4.1 Group by component

<u>**Inception phase activities**</u>

The project aims to expand on the activities carried out during the previous phase/project and will both solidify the process for existing indicator production and expand into the remaining areas of the core set of environmental indicators. The focus will be to link the work on indicators to the policy needs. One example is the effort through the ENPI-SEIS project to demonstrate the value of SEIS in advancing towards green growth and green economy, by linking the work on environmental indicators to the work in other sectors such as economy. This demonstrated that data and information already collected could be reused for multiple purposes, could be packaged in various ways to respond to different policy questions, and could be shared between national bodies and international organisations if cooperation and regular exchange would be in place.

The inception phase will include two activities. One will be the stocktaking, gathering of data/information and analysis (the input), and the other will be to turn these findings into concrete work plans (the output), including agreements with each country on organisational and administrative aspects such as the nomination/re-confirmation of the national counterparts/implementation teams and National Focal Points (NFPs) for the project.

<u>**Activity 0.1**</u>: **Stocktaking**, **gap identification and analysis**

At the start of the project, a gap analysis will be undertaken to complement information from the first phase (ENPI-SEIS project) to identify data availability at national level for streamlining data to international commitments, MEAs and standards, and using as reference the regional set of environmental indicators as a basis for regular assessment and reporting. Related organisational aspects covering inter-institutional coordination/cooperation and the infrastructure in place for data management and sharing will also be analysed. The aim is to identify the concrete areas of work and thematic areas to develop country specific work plans towards the production, sharing and use of the pan-European set of environmental indicators for policy making.

Activities:

- Gap analysis on data availability in each partner country as a basis for the full delivery of the agreed set of environmental indicators, and taking into consideration compliance status towards environmental reporting obligations in each country;
- Stocktaking in each partner country on organisational, administrative and technological aspects related to environmental data management and sharing;
- Identification of proposed pilot projects – one in each country (linked to activity 2.4);
- Working meetings/workshop(s) with relevant stakeholders at national level to discuss and present the gap analysis developed (1-2 meetings/workshops per country during the first six months of implementation).

Deliverables:

- Inception report produced by the project team, including the overview of data availability per country as input for the production and sharing of the full set of regional environmental indicators with identification of proposed solutions to address the compliance gaps through project activities.

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Activity 0.2: **Development of four-year SEIS national work plans**

The first step would be to reconfirm in each country the national counterparts (NFPs) as main contacts points and to lead the project activities, in particular between the Ministries of Environment and National Statistical Services based on the experience through the ENPI-SEIS project. The findings from activity 0.1 will serve to develop for each country national work plans for the implementation of the SEIS principles for the period 2016-2019, in the three main areas described below. The country workplans will be updated on an annual basis. This activity also includes procedural agreements for regular monitoring and assessing progress in SEIS implementation using the agreed targets and performance indicators[14] developed jointly by UNECE and EEA and the regular/annual country reporting on performance based on these agreed indicators. For countries who have signed Association Agreements with the EU, the SEIS road maps will address issues included in the (AA) road maps in the priority areas identified (particularly related to environmental data access).

Activities:
- Organise high-level consultation with each country in order to establish the SEIS National Implementation Teams (see section 5.1), and agree on the national counterparts involved in project activities (including the confirmation of the project National Focal Points);
- Integrating the analysis (activity 0.1) into national work plans and consultation with relevant stakeholders on the identified needs;
- Development of national work plan of activities, including the communication and visibility plan, to be endorsed by relevant country stakeholders.

Deliverables:
- Agreed regional and national work plans (with clear targets identified) covering the period 2016-2019. A benchmark for a concrete number of indicators (full core set as far as availability of data allows) to produce during the project should be included as part of the national work plans;
- An agreed template/structure for national annual assessment/evaluation report (produced by the countries) on SEIS implementation against agreed SEIS targets and performance indicators.

Area 1: **Activities supporting result I: Improved implementation of regional/international commitments related to environmental reporting in line with EU/EEA best practices**
This area of work addresses methodological aspects related to the production of comparable environmental data and statistics to the benefit of effective policy-making and improved governance in the environmental field. The focus here is to support aggregation[15] and provision of data to

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[14] Paper on targets and performance indicators for measuring progress in developing SEIS across the pan-European (http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2014/ece/cep/ece.cep.2014.8.e.pdf) was adopted at the 12th session of the UNECE CEP, October 2014. Work on-going in 2015 to identify concrete ways for implementing the proposals from this paper - to be put forward at 13th session of the CEP in October 2015.
[15] The **MDIAK** reporting chain: **M**onitoring – **D**ata – **I**ndicators – **A**ssessment – **K**nowledge aims to specify and distinguish between the different types of information needed to support the policy process. The activities in Area 1 will not focus on developing monitoring infrastructure (the "M") – but rather to use the outputs from monitoring to create and streamline datasets (the "D", activity 1.1) for the production of environmental indicators (the "I", activity 1.2).

effectively respond to international commitments and consequently use this data in relevant international, regional and cross-border context.

Activities will aim at further aligning and harmonising methodologies for the production of environmental data and statistics – with the statistical offices in the countries as key partners – with the aim of streamlining reporting obligations and reduceing the administrative burden linked to data reporting. Continued efforts are needed to streamline the use of environmental data to serve different assessment needs.

Through this cluster of activities, the project will provide direct support to the countries and in coordination with relevant regional and international actors (donors, implementers, demandeurs) to whom the partner countries report environmental data and information. These activities will contribute to building a knowledge base to serve environmental policy by promoting the use of shared environmental data and indicators.

The potential benefit of SEIS at the regional level could be demonstrated through a pilot project, as for example the Black Sea Convention and its reporting mechanism under Activity 2.4 (considering that some EaP countries are riparian and/or in the Black Sea basin) and in synergy with other regional projects and activities (e.g. EMBLAS 2 project).

Activity 1.1: **Support to national capacities to respond to international commitments in priority areas**

Activities will cover expert assistance at national level to aggregate and align datasets for international use, and to respond to regional/international commitments, MEAs and standards, and connection, as appropriate, to the United Nations Framework for the Development of Environmental Statistics (FDES). The aim is to fill the gaps identified during the inception phase, considering data production/sharing compliance needs in each country, and as input for the production of common environmental indicators (working towards the full delivery of the pan-European set of indicators by the end of the project). Considering the signature of EU-Association Agreements (AA) with Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine in June 2014, the project, on a pilot basis and building on EEA/Eionet experience, could provide support these countries to address some of the compliance requirements related to the approximation of relevant EU environmental legislation (in a concrete thematic area agreed by the countries).

Activities:

- Provide relevant technical assistance through expert visits and support at national level on themes not already covered in the ENPI-SEIS project (i.e. mainly additional data sets related to water, waste, energy, transport, biodiversity, and land), and in coordination with other projects and partners (including MEAs, Convention Secretariats).
- 1 event per year with representative from the six partner countries to strengthen regional thematic network on the priority topics identified.

Deliverables:

- Annual reporting of progress by countries on delivering on the gaps identified;
- Increased number (compared to the baseline) of datasets to be shared/delivered by the countries to various conventions/MEAs they are part of.

Activity 1.2: **Harmonisation of methodologies for production of comparable environmental indicators across the region**

This activity will focus on the provision of expert visits and capacity building support for the aggregation and processing of environmental data and statistics, as input for the production of the regionally-agreed environmental indicators set (set of 36 indicators under the UNECE-umbrella as part of the pan-European process). Dedicated actions should also consider linkages with other indicator initiatives (coordinated by UN/UNSD, EU/Eurostat, OECD level).

Activities:

- Technical assistance at national level to support production of environmental data and statistics to underpin the production of the 36 regional indicators;
- 2 regional events per year organised jointly with other EU/regional/international partners/organisations;
- 2 events per year organised jointly with other EU-funded projects in the field of environment.

Deliverables:

- Annual country reports demonstrating progress towards full delivery of the pan-European set of 36 environmental indicators, subject to data availability, in line with international standards (Eurostat, UNSD and UNECE Statistical Division as key partners in this);
- Proceedings/conclusions from the regional and national events organised under this activity.

Area 2: **Activities supporting result 2: Improved capacities in the national administrations to manage and use environmental statistics, data and information in support to decision-making process in line with EU/EEA best practices**

The objectives in this area are to support the development of relevant national capacities in the management and use of environmental statistics, data and information needed to support the decision-making process. In this process, relevant aspects related to IT infrastructure and data management will be addressed, as well as development and implementation of national pilots in the partner countries.

With respect to infrastructure and data management, the emphasis will be on addressing specific country needs and build capacity to further develop relevant IT infrastructure and coordination structures to manage environmental data and information. Actions will target the development of technical specifications and further guidance on site for establishing a national integrated environmental information system and/or indicator management system[16]. Available EEA tools and platforms (developed in most cases in partnership with other organisations and/or on behalf of the EU), will be presented to support implementation if considered relevant and suitable to local conditions.

The project will seek to develop and support pilot activities/user cases, both at national level (one per country) and at regional/sub-regional level, around the integration of data and development of shared information systems. It is expected that supported activities are similar in nature to the ENPI-SEIS pilot activity to develop a shared environmental information system (SEIS) for Lake Sevan

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[16] Example of this is the support provided to the Republic of Moldova by UBA-Vienna and Eionet partners from Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia under the InSEIS project (implemented by EEA in the period Q3 2014-Q4 2015) to the development of technical specifications for the air quality information system in Moldova.

in Armenia, that led to the development of a dedicated environmental portal and formalised inter-institutional agreements between relevant key stakeholders. A possible support along similar lines could be provided to the Black Sea Secretariat to further enhance the existing exchange of data and information mechanisms available between the parties following SEIS. In this regard, coordination will be ensured with the EMBLAS II project.

The focus in this area will be to align methodologies for describing and sharing environmental data to those applied within EU/EEA, with the aim to increase comparability and possible integration of data across the wider European region. This will be achieved by supporting the establishment of dedicated thematic and expert networks similar to the existing National Reference Centres (NRCs) model of Eionet for key priority areas as well as for technical aspects of SEIS (based on the lessons learned for the ENPI-SEIS Working Group on Information Technology). Establishing linkages with appropriate national agencies working with spatial and geo-referenced data will be sought in order to help connect the activities under 2.3 in particular.

The appropriate engagement of countries' national stakeholders in an active inter-institutional dialogue to support project activities will be of crucial importance. This will be ensured through the development and realistic national work plans for the period 2016-2019 during the inception phase (see above activity 0.2).

Activity 2.1: **Expert assistance and capacity building in development of national environmental information system(s) and supporting infrastructure**

The focus of the this activity will be to provide expert assistance and capacity building to advance the development of national integrated environmental information system and/or indicator management system, based on IT developments in the countries, such as e-governance initiatives at national level. The ultimate aim is to improve access to environmental information and facilitate public participation with support of modern tools and tailor-made products and services (i.e. more products to be made available online), increasing the traceability of data sources and methodologies used (see activity 2.2).

Activities:

- Expert assistance at national level in the form of training workshops, on-site visits or similar to address the identified activities on infrastructure tools/systems and harmonisation of data formats (as reflected in the national work plans);
- 2 regional events per year on relevant infrastructure and QA/QC aspects (for the agreed thematic area), also reflected in adequate data policies and inter-institutional agreements.

Deliverables:

- Annual reporting illustrating developments in data policies and inter-institutional agreements between key institutional partners to operationalise the national integrated environmental information system. This reporting will also demonstrate how SEIS principles are reflected in the national long-term strategies on e-governance with clear targets attached – and the established networks and working procedures to guide technical developments related to improved data management and access – considering advancements on State of the Environment (SoE) online practices, taking EEA/Eionet current developments as a starting point;
- Established data flows to gradually be aligned with reporting obligations data flows in EU/EEA and, when feasible, gradual contributions to EU/EEA data and information platforms

and services (pending data quality assured, the existing water quality data flows serving the indicator production could serve as candidate cases). To be documented via an annual reporting on progress to improve metadata production and availability for the related environmental data sets and derived products.

Activity 2.2: **Support the development of inter-institutional dialogue and public participation in the environmental decision-making process**

Engagement of relevant stakeholders, including civil society, in an active inter-institutional dialogue to support project activities will be sought throughout the project. This activity will aim at establishing and formalising a networking structure that approximates working practices of Eionet. This will be underpinned by re-confirming and potentially upgrading Memoranda of Understanding/Letters of Intent between the European Environment Agency and the Governments of the EaP countries on the modalities of cooperation to achieve the intended project results.

Activities:

- Training of the National SEIS Implementation Teams (NITs) on Eionet working practices as applied in Eionet countries;
- Working meetings/visits to the partner countries to support the inter-institutional dialogue e.g. in connection with annual meeting between NITs and EEA
- Involvement of relevant civil society partners in the dialogue on SEIS implementation via working meetings between NITs and civil society;
- Participation of key NIT members in relevant Eionet activities (e.g. meetings of National Focal Points and thematic/expert National Reference Centres).

Deliverables:

- Inter-institutional and multi-stakeholder working group(s) established at national level;
- Signed Memoranda of Understanding/Letters of Intent between EEA and the Governments of the EaP countries;
- SEIS concept embedded in national strategies work plans for the coming years, and progress reported at EaP Ministerials and Panels.

Activity 2.3: **Pilot on extending CORINE Land Cover (CLC) methodology to capital areas of the partner countries**

Expand EEA work on land cover mapping in line with the CORINE Land Cover (CLC) methodology through pilot projects. It is planned that small-scale pilot projects will be undertaken with each of the partner countries for producing a CORINE Land Cover (CLC) map of the capital area (circa 3000 km^2) and mapping CLC changes over a period of 5-6 years. Training activities in the countries will be conducted with the relevant partner institutions identified for implementing this work. The aim is that CLC produced by the neighbourhood countries for these areas will be consistent with the CLC inventory carried out for EEA members and cooperating countries (EEA39). Improving land cover mapping in urban areas will be also beneficial to address cities vulnerability to climate change (disaster reduction[17], impacts of flooding, access to green areas, soil sealing, etc)

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[17] Building on the actions from the Programme for the Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Man-Made and Natural Disasters in the ENPI East Region (PPRD-EAST).

The activity is related to the access and use of spatial data produced by public authorities and is of direct relevance to the INSPIRE Directive establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community[18]. SEIS complements INSPIRE as it also addresses data of a non-spatial or non-numerical nature, while focussing on the improvement in data quality and comparability. The use of spatial data was an integral part of the ENPI-SEIS pilot project for Lake Sevan, Armenia, and also relates to the ENPI-SEIS work expanding the GEneral Multilingual Environmental Thesaurus (GEMET) to include all languages of the European Eastern Neighbourhood.

Activities:

- Expert assistance at national level (conditional upon agreement of national work plans) to train the national teams with the CLC methodology (at least two training activities per country). This will constitute a contribution to building the spatial data infrastructure (SDI);
- 1 regional event per year on QA/QC of the products by dedicated experts, to ensure integration in the CLC database and/or the use of land cover data for cross-cutting issue (e.g. cities vulnerability to climate change).

Deliverables:

- Pilots (a maximum of six) for land cover change mapping for the capital areas implemented.
- Integration of pilot data in CLC database, when possible.

Activity 2.4: Implementation of **national pilot projects demonstrating data sharing and integration**

The focus of this activity is on pilot projects (one per country) that are aimed at integrating data from several sources, in line with EEA/Eionet practices (similar to the ENPI-SEIS Lake Sevan pilot implemented in Armenia under the previous phase) or at developing a national system for environmental indicators in line with regional indicators. The pilots should be comparable to facilitate the sharing of experiences between countries on technical and organisational issues. Corresponding activities could facilitate linkages with projects and initiatives implemented by EU/EEA, as for example, with the EU Earth observation programme Copernicus. Other examples include development of an online system of environmental indicators at national level, as well as pilot exercise for sharing water-related data according to the Water Information System for Europe (WISE) methodologies (tested under the ENPI-SEIS project).

Activities:

- Support to the implementation of national pilots to support better environmental data sharing and integration via provision of expert assistance (expert workshops, training activities, etc.) from Eionet network at national level depending on the identified thematic areas;
- 1 regional event per year to make link to EEA/Eionet developments as relevant;
- Support for a pilot in the ENP East Black Sea riparian countries for contributing to the implementation of the Black Sea Information System (BSIS), under development by the Black Sea Commission; such support could include 1-2 (as appropriate) regional events. Strong coordination will be ensured with EMBLAS II activities.

Deliverables:

- One pilot per country in the priority areas identified by the countries;
- Web-site/pages developed on the pilots implemented at national level;

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[18] http://inspire.ec.europa.eu/index.cfm/pageid/48

- Possible pilot with interested EaP countries in support of the Black Sea information system, assist its further development in line with the EU Marine Framework Strategy Directive (MFSD) and the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

Activity 2.5: **Expert assistance to solidify legislative and regulatory frameworks around data management, access and use**

Expert assistance to support improvements in the implementation of the environmental legislation in the thematic areas linked to SEIS, identified and agreed with each country. Regular country visits will be conducted to ensure continuous high-level buy-in and engagement in the process, and increase the visibility of SEIS-related efforts at the country level (to strengthen the process stated with the Letters of Intent). Identified areas for further actions are legislative elements underpinning: the establishment of the integrated environmental information system; the institutionalisation of a national implementation team building on EEA/Eionet model; the development/production of regular indicator-based assessments and reports; and the development/production of outlooks and forward-looking studies in the countries by sharing EEA/Eionet experience.

Activities:

- Country visits to each of the beneficiary countries on an annual basis and provision of expert support at national level (conditional upon agreement and endorsement of national work plans) to identify gaps/areas for improvement regarding management of relevant environmental data and data access.

Deliverables:

With particular emphasis on the development, updating, and implementation of SEIS compatible legislation, the deliverables will be:

- Analysis of relevant environmental data and data access legislation and regulations, referring particularly to the implementation by countries of the Access to Information Directive/Aarhus Convention, and of the data policies adopted by the countries, identifying areas that need strengthening in order to achieve the desired objectives.
- Guidance, including a synopsis of expertise in drafting environmental relevant legislative acts, especially concerning data management, access and use, to be utilised by countries in support of drafting legislation to cover the identified needs.
- Regular reporting of progress made by the countries, on the implementation of the relevant legislation and regulation.

Area 3: Activities supporting result 3: Preparation of regular State and Outlook on the Environment Report (SOER) and indicator-based assessments in line with EU/EEA best practices

The inclusion of a dedicated assessment component linked to the work on indicators is a clear demand from the previous cooperation under the ENPI-SEIS project. This is in line with an increasing need for a more coordinated and streamlined approach when responding to various reporting obligations under national, regional and/or global processes, as well as for better linking the assessment and reporting process to the policy needs.

The use of indicators, outlooks and other methodologies used by EEA members and cooperating countries will be promoted to be implemented in the ENP East countries, subject to their interest to do so. Advancements in developing SoE online, building on tools and methodologies developed for

the European Environment State and Outlook 2015 (SOER 2015) will serve as a basis to help countries produce similar products nationally. All countries currently have 'data online' in support to the agreed indicators, where the assessment component remains very limited. The activity should result in a new generation of streamlined national assessments to help countries improve environmental governance and decision-making and improve their reporting under MEAs (addressed under area 2).

Under this process the project will aim to maintain linkages and dialogue (potentially through joint meetings and products) with relevant initiatives at regional level of key importance to the partner countries and in line with EU and international developments, i.e. green economy, environmental accounting, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the post-2015 agenda. Such an example is the March 2015 workshop organised within the framework of EU-funded project EaP Green in an attempt to establish synergies and common way forward with partners working on aspects close to SEIS, green economy, assessments and environmental indicators. The EEA dialogue with UNECE and UNEP on putting in place a regular assessment and reporting process until 2020, demonstrated through the first UNEP GEO regional (pan-European) assessment as a pilot for 2016, is a live SEIS-type example of streamlining the assessment landscape and building the regular reporting process on the efforts invested at national and regional levels.

Activity 3.1: **National training and expert assistance on SOER production, based on SEIS-compliant data**

The focus will be to develop country-specific training programmes to build national capacities for producing state and outlook on the environment reports (SOER) in line with EEA/Eionet tools and methodologies. All the six EaP countries have ratified the Aarhus Convention under which they are regularly producing reports on the State of Environment, in some cases the production/publication is irregular and/or delayed. Activities within this work package will build on the outcome of the work undertaken in the previous two areas and in continuation of implemented activities under the ENPI-SEIS and InSEIS project – the latter for Moldova in particular.

Expert technical assistance and visits to the countries will be provided in the field of integrated assessments, potentially also on outlooks and forward-looking studies, based on the SOER2015 experience and with strong Eionet (NFPs/ NRCs) involvement.

Activities:

- Experts visits/missions to the ENP East partner countries in line with the identified needs;
- National events organised related to development of appropriate tools and information for SOER production, and online presentation on national sites, as appropriate;
- 2 regional events on assessments/SOER methodology in line with EEA guidance.

Deliverables:

- Guidance documents on the production of SOE reports in line with EEA/Eionet best practices;
- National SOE report(s) regularly produced by the countries according to international standards, incorporating conceptual and structural elements from the SOER2015 model and available tools.

Activity 3.2: **Methodological support for production of indicator-based assessments**

Methodological support for the regular production and use of the core set of 36 regional indicators in national assessments (Eurostat will provide the relevant expertise, share practices and methodology applied in the EU in the area of waste) will aim at establishing a comprehensive knowledge-base in the countries to serve as basis for the production of regular assessments and associated tools/portals (covering assessments, reports, indicators, websites, project results, etc.). Comparability and easy navigation across countries' assessments will be a direct result of this package as basis for further use, aggregation and benchmarking against regional and global targets (SoE online on national websites and increased visibility through EEA tools and services).

This activity shall be supported by dedicated and functioning stakeholder community involved in the production and use/re-use of the assessment products from various national authorities, also in support of national data policy development.

Activities:

- Expert assistance at national level (upon agreement of national work plans);
- 2 regional events per year on indicator-based assessment methodologies;
- 2 regional events per year for IT-related expert network (aspects related to development of online products/services on national sites), also in connection to the activities under 2.1.

Deliverables:

- Development of a suite of derived products of different nature (printed, online) – produced by the countries - such as input for the Eighth Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial in 2016 or related to the SDGs, from the existing assessments (Executive Summary, policy relevant thematic briefings, key messages, etc.) using institutions and networks in the partner countries (including Aarhus Centres, RECs) and involving the civil society (NGOs and their Eco Forum network).
- Improved traceability of data and indicators used in national websites and reports using available EEA tools and methodologies (SOER 2015 model)

Area 4: Communication and visibility

The work under this area will aim to implement the activities of the communication and visibility plan, which is an integral part of the project. The objective will be to raise awareness and promote the visibility of the project activities at European, national and regional level, and use social and national media to engage with a wide community on the benefits of SEIS.

Activity 4.1: **Development and implementation of project communication and visibility plan at regional and national levels**

At the start of the project a regional communication and visibility plan will be developed and support will be provided to the development of similar national plans for each country if considered necessary. Communication and visibility activities at national level will be conducted in agreement with the National Focal Points (NFPs) and relevant project partners (e.g. Aarhus Centres and RECs) and in consultation with the EU Delegations.

Activities:

- Support to national activities as identified in the national work plans;

- Creation/updating and management of the project website, as well as production of bi-annual newsletters and other promotional materials (leaflets, flyers, banners, etc.) as necessary for adequate dissemination and presentation at relevant events. Translation of promotional materials and guidance/ methodological documents of relevance for the SEIS implementation into Russian and/or local languages;
- 3 events per year dedicated at visibility of SEIS as side events at relevant European and regional fora.

Deliverables:

- Developed and implemented regional communication and visibility plan for the entire project period (operational project website hosted and maintained by the EEA);
- A national communication and visibility plan for each country incorporated in national work plans (linked to Area 2);
- Bi-annual project newsletters and promotional materials developed and disseminated at relevant events. Translation of relevant promotional materials and documents into Russian and/or national languages;
- 3 visibility/communication events per year, including a launching event and a closing conference;
- Contributions and/or links to the Capacity4Dev.eu website and other EU-funded environmental projects.

Activity 4.2. **Regular dialogue with Eionet and synergy activities**

The focus will be to create appropriate synergies between the project and Eionet NFPs and ensure structured Eionet involvement in the project activities (closely linked to Activity 2.2: Fostering inter-institutional dialogue and public participation in the environmental decision-making process). In order to reach the right audiences a strong link with the EEA communication programme and coordination with the communication/PR experts in the national authorities of the ENP East partner countries will be sought. In this process a close dialogue/interaction with the EU Delegations in the partner countries would be ensured.

Activity:

- Regular dialogue with Eionet NFPs and experts to ensure awareness of, and involvement, in project activities.

Deliverable:

- Documented engagement and involvement of Eionet on cooperation with the ENP East partner countries.

Area 5: Management and coordination

Work under this area will ensure effective and smooth implementation of the project activities – horizontal and vertical coordination among the different areas of work and thematic clusters, regular coordination with key partners and initiatives, including project management and administration.

Activity 5.1: **Project management and coordination of cross-cutting issues with relevant partners**

The proper project management and coordination of cross-cutting issues with relevant partners, covering the project Management Group, the Regional Project Steering Committee and the

European Commission representatives beyond the MG are the core of this activity. The EEA project team/coordinator will have to ensure effective decision-making process for achieving best possible outcome of the project.

Activities:

- Set-up, organisation and support for national coordination, also through appointment of 1 dedicated national assistant per country (subject to country's interest and commitment);
- 1 national event per year (i.e. annual meeting of National Implementation Team);
- 1 Regional Steering Committee meeting per year (to enhance synergies with EIONET, eventually the Regional Steering Committee meeting could take place back-to-back with the EIONET meeting).

Deliverables:

- Day-to-day management: To ensure smooth execution of the planned activities and maintain close dialogue with the relevant partners involved;
- Strategic steering: Project Management Group (PMG) at project coordination level, comprising the project team (EEA) and representatives of EC DG NEAR, DG ENV, Eurostat & JRC. The PMG will meet on a six-month basis, either with face-to-face meetings or with conference calls / video-conference;
- Project steering: Project Steering Committee (PSC) at regional level, comprising the European Commission (chair), the EEA, 2 representatives from each of the partner countries (designated project NFPs from relevant environment and statistical authorities – in order to ensure continuity, countries will be encouraged to keep the nominated NFPs under ENPI-SEIS project, supported by the designated national assistants/local consultants), as well as relevant key partners from international organisations as observers;
- National steering: National Implementation Team (NIT), comprising 10 or so members as appropriate, representing the inter-institutional setting at national level to take a joint position on the way forward for national work and implementation of national SEIS work plans. The project will ensure close links between the work of the NITs and the EU Delegations;
- Regular dialogue and coordination with Eionet through dedicated groups to be established and organisation of back-to-back meetings.

Activity 5.2: Overview and reporting of the project administrative and financial execution

The project team in EEA will ensure proper coordination and management of all related administrative, legal and financial issues with the project Contracting Authority in EC DG NEAR, and in close dialogue with DG ENV as needed.

Activity:

- Quality and timely provision of deliverables and regular monitoring and execution of project implementation.

Deliverable:

- Annual progress reporting and quarterly work plan updates to the Contracting Authority in EC DG NEAR.

Activity 5.3: **Interaction(s) with relevant regional expert and initiatives**

The project team in EEA will interact with regional thematic/expert networks and engaged in activities supporting the development of SEIS in priority areas, building on synergies with other relevant regional activities and initiatives (EU-funded and from other donors). The EEA could play an important role by being part of, and/or participating in, Steering Committees/Advisory Boards of relevant regional projects.

Activity:

- Input to, and interaction with, other regional networks and project, primarily by being part of, and/or participating in, Steering Committees/Advisory Boards of relevant regional projects.

Deliverable:

- Reporting to the Project Management Group on synergies