

Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

Group of Friends of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS)

First meeting

Geneva, 12 May 2014

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Friends of SEIS mandate and the work plan for 2014–2015

Draft workplan of the Friends of SEIS for 2014–2015

Note by the secretariat

I. Background

1. At the Seventh Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Conference (Astana, 21–23 September 2011) Ministers decided to establish a regular process of environmental assessment and to develop the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) across the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region in order to keep the pan-European environment under review. These two developments should serve multiple policy processes, including MEAs, and include the building of capacity in countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe to monitor and assess their environment.
2. The Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) agreed that the decision to develop SEIS across the region was one of the most important outcomes of the Astana Conference and recommended that progress in its development be reported at the next EfE conference. To strengthen the work of CEP at the political level and the work of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment at the technical level, the Bureau recommended to CEP to consider establishing a SEIS coordination mechanism in the form of an ad hoc group of “Friends of SEIS” in which the main SEIS stakeholders would be expected to participate.
3. At its nineteenth session (Geneva, 22–25 October 2013), CEP convened a mid-term review to assess progress in the implementation of the main outcomes of the Astana Ministerial Conference, including on the establishment of a regular process of environmental assessment and the development of SEIS. The progress in this area was found to be rather limited. In spite of an increasing number of SEIS and regular reporting-related initiatives, the landscape remains fragmented and there is a lack of coordination between these activities. Understanding SEIS and its benefits in support of the regular assessment and reporting, as well as for increasing the level of environmental awareness and education, continue to represent a top priority and a key challenge at the same time.
4. To support the development of SEIS and following recommendations by the Bureau, CEP decided to establish a coordination mechanism in the form of a Group of Friends of

SEIS and approved the terms of reference for such a group (see paragraphs 38, 39 and 116 (v) a. of the document ECE/CEP/2013/2¹).

5. Subsequently, the ECE Executive Committee formally approved the establishment of the Group of Friends of SEIS, its mandate and its terms of reference and financial requirements (see document ECE/EX/11²).

6. The terms of reference stipulate that, at its first meeting, the Friends of SEIS will agree on a work plan with concrete and results-oriented activities. Such a plan shall take into account SEIS-related developments, including, among others, the SEIS-related documents submitted to the nineteenth session of CEP (ECE/CEP/2013/13, ECE/CEP/2013/15 and ECE/CEP/2013/18).

II. Scope

7. The main purpose of the Group of Friends of SEIS is to provide a platform for the exchange of information about ongoing and planned activities relevant to the development of SEIS and to build synergies among and join the efforts of the main interested stakeholders.

8. During the period 2014–2015, the Friends of SEIS will look into and provide answers to the following questions:

(a) How should progress be monitored and evaluated: what should be the clear targets and performance indicators for the development of SEIS?;

(b) How should the regular assessment process be organized and shaped, taking into consideration the benefits of SEIS?

9. The geographical scope for SEIS development covers the pan-European region, including all 56 countries of ECE.

III. Activities in 2014–2015

10. The Group of Friends of SEIS will hold two or three meetings during the period 2014–2015, organized back-to-back to meetings of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment or of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators. In between its meetings the Group will work by email, as necessary.

11. At its first meeting (Geneva, 12 May 2014), the Friends of SEIS will work on developing targets and performance indicators for monitoring and evaluating the progress in establishing SEIS, based on a working document prepared by the ECE secretariat in consultation with EEA. The final document will be submitted to CEP for approval. The Group will also commence the discussion on organizing and shaping the regular assessment process, taking into consideration the benefits of SEIS.

12. At its second meeting (date is to be decided by the first meeting of the Group), the Friends of SEIS will finalise the organization and shape of the regular assessment process, taking into account the benefits of SEIS, based on a working document prepared by the ECE secretariat in consultation with EEA. The final document will be submitted to CEP for

¹ <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2013/ece/cep/ece.cep.2013.2.e.pdf>.

² <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2014/ece/ece.ex.11.e.pdf>.

approval. Should CEP request additional work to be done regarding the development of targets and performance indicators, the Group will also address this issue.

13. Depending on decisions by CEP, the Group will consider whether to hold a third meeting during 2014–2015.

14. The ECE secretariat will support the work of the Group of Friends of SEIS within the existing financial resources and through extrabudgetary funds by:

- (a) Servicing on average one meeting per year of the Group (with simultaneous interpretation), including the preparation of meeting agendas and reports;
- (b) Preparing working and background documents for the Group;
- (c) Arranging for financial support to eligible members of the Group for their participation in the Group meetings;
- (d) Liaising and coordinating with the Chair of the Group and Group members;
- (e) Arranging for country inputs, as necessary;
- (f) Identifying and networking with organizations and institutions that are relevant for the SEIS development.

15. The servicing of the Group will be ensured through the existing regular ECE secretariat staff resources. At the same time, extrabudgetary funds will be required to cover participation costs of eligible members of the Group and the costs of possible coordination missions with the main stakeholders. A detailed table presenting ECE extrabudgetary resource requirements is annexed to the Executive Committee document (see Annex III of ECE/EX/11). Should CEP decide to expand the activities of the Friends of SEIS beyond the two tasks assigned by CEP at its nineteenth session, for example to support SEIS development in some countries with technical expertise, provision of additional funds would be necessary to support such additional activities.

16. The annex to this document provides a table with the workplan of the Group of Friends of SEIS for 2014–2015. The workplan might need to be revised in the light of relevant decisions by CEP and should the Friends of SEIS decide to have a third meeting in 2014–2015.

17. The Group of Friends of SEIS will be invited to consider for adoption its workplan for 2014–2015.

Annex

Workplan of the Friends of SEIS for 2014–2015

<i>Activity/meetings</i>	<i>Output</i>	<i>Tasks (responsibility)</i>	<i>Timing/deadlines</i>	<i>Financial implications</i>
First meeting of Friends of SEIS, Geneva, 12 May 2014	Targets and performance indicators to monitor and evaluate the progress in the SEIS development	Preparing a draft document for the meeting (ECE secretariat in consultation with EEA and the Chair of Friends of SEIS)	By 30 April 2014	Existing regular ECE secretariat staff resources
		Revising and finalizing the document (Friends of SEIS with support by the ECE secretariat)	In-session	Extrabudgetary resources to support participation of eligible Friends of SEIS
		Processing and submitting the official document to the 20 th session of CEP (CEP-20) for approval (ECE secretariat in consultation with the Chair of Friend of SEIS)	By 21 July 2014 (for editing); by 18 August 2014 (for submission and posting on CEP-20 website)	Existing regular ECE secretariat staff resources
		Commencing the discussion (Friends of SEIS)	In-session	Extrabudgetary resources to support participation of eligible Friends of SEIS
	Initial vision/concept on how to organize and shape the regular assessment process, taking into account the benefits of SEIS			
	Report of Friends of SEIS on its first meeting	Preparing, processing and submitting the report to CEP-20 for consideration (ECE secretariat in consultation with the Chair of Friend of SEIS)	By 21 July 2014 (for editing); by 18 August 2014 (for submission and posting on CEP-20 website)	Existing regular ECE secretariat staff resources
Intersessional work by email	Advanced vision/concept on organizing and shaping the regular assessment process, taking into account the benefits of SEIS	Continuing the work on organizing and shaping the regular assessment process, SEIS included (Friends of SEIS with support by the ECE secretariat)	November 2014 – May 2015	Existing regular ECE secretariat staff resources Extrabudgetary resources for possible coordination missions with the main stakeholders
		If additional work requested by CEP, revised targets and performance indicators to monitor and evaluate progress in SEIS development	If additional work requested by CEP-20, revising the targets and performance indicators to monitor and evaluate the progress in SEIS development (Friends of SEIS with support by the ECE secretariat)	November 2014 – May 2015

Second meeting of Friends of SEIS, Geneva, 11 May 2015 (to be confirmed)	Final document on organizing and shaping the regular assessment process, taking into account the benefits of SEIS	Preparing a draft document for the meeting (ECE secretariat in consultation with EEA and the Chair of Friends of SEIS)	By 30 April 2015	Existing regular ECE secretariat staff resources
		Revising and finalising the document (Friends of SEIS with support by the ECE secretariat)	In-session	Extrabudgetary resources to support participation of eligible Friends of SEIS
		Processing and submitting the official document to CEP-21 for approval (ECE secretariat in consultation with the Chair of Friends of SEIS)	By 20 July 2015 (for editing); by 17 August 2015 (for submission and posting on CEP-21 website)	Existing regular ECE secretariat staff resources
If additional work requested by CEP, final targets and performance indicators to monitor and evaluate progress in SEIS development	If additional work requested by CEP, finalizing the targets and performance indicators (Friends of SEIS with support by the ECE secretariat)		In-session	Extrabudgetary resources to support participation of eligible Friends of SEIS
		If additional work requested by CEP, processing and submitting the official document to CEP-21 for approval	By 20 July 2015 (for editing); by 17 August 2015 (for submission and posting on CEP-21 website)	Existing regular ECE secretariat staff resources
Report of Friends of SEIS on its second meeting		Preparing, processing and submitting the report to CEP-21 for consideration (ECE secretariat in consultation with the Chair of Friends of SEIS)	By 20 July 2015 (for editing); by 17 August 2015 (for submission and posting on CEP-21 website)	Existing regular ECE secretariat staff resources
Intersessional work by email	If additional work requested by CEP, final document on organizing and shaping the regular assessment process, taking into account the benefits of SEIS	If additional work requested by CEP, finalizing the document on organizing and shaping the regular assessment process, taking into account the benefits of SEIS (Friends of SEIS with support by the ECE secretariat)	November – December 2015 (to be confirmed by CEP-21)	Existing regular ECE secretariat staff resources Extrabudgetary resources for possible coordination missions with the main stakeholders