8 October, 2009

# Europe's Environment Assessment of Assessments Draft project proposal

*This draft project proposal has been prepared following the high-level consultation held at the EEA on 3 July, 2009. The aim of this document is to develop further the ideas developed and supported at this meeting and to clarify in more detail the concept, possible content and resource estimates. This is envisaged as a living document to be used in relevant discussions over the next several months to help support the development of this project. The aim is to facilitate the development of a common understanding of the project and help the various and many different players specify their contributions.*

## Why do we need an AoA?

In the current circumstances, it is no longer possible to continue "business as usual" producing a new pan-European report every 3 to 5 years. Why is this? Since 1992, the EEA has successfully produced four such reports and all have been received positively. So why can the EEA not simply continue? Four reasons can be identified:

- Efficiency – each exercise proved to be too long and too costly against the practical use made of the report in terms of concrete actions taken as a result of its publication. There is an increased need to use the information available for multiple purposes by streamlining efforts and initiatives using SEIS platform and principles;
- Political context  - the evolving policy frameworks, especially related to EU enlargement and external EU policy are requiring more flexible and targeted assessment outputs;
- Information technology progress – there is an increasing need to access information in an easy and timely fashion. This requires regular updates in order to maintain interest and keep the product alive and living;
- Taking stock and framing options for the future – following the reform of the UNECE "Environment for Europe" (EfE) process, there is a further need to reform the assessment reporting needs and streamline the initiatives in the area in order to remain relevant, reliable and timely at the same time. In order to do so an exercise of evaluating the actual reporting context is needed, filtering the priority concerns, identifying the gaps and the emerging needs and framing a realistic set of options for the future.

Consequently the aim of this proposal is to gradually develop a sustainable long-term process to keep the pan-European environment under continuous review.

**Concept and approach**

The current proposal, discussed at the High-Level consultation on 3 July, is inspired by the first "Assessment of Assessments" (AoA) of the state of the marine environment just completed under UNGA (see: http://www.unga-regular-process.org/).

The marine AoA was undertaken as part of the start-up phase establishing a regular process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment (in accordance with paragraph 64 (a) of UNGA's 2003 resolution 58/240). It was requested by governments in order to serve as one of the main foundations for the development of a Regular Process for the global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects. It builds on the work done by other international forums and, either directly or indirectly through those forums, by national authorities concerned with the marine environment. The Assessment of Assessments (AoA) for a Regular Process does not make any new assessments about the state of the oceans or about the state of any particular environmental component or human activity, but brings together and reviews existing assessments to evaluate their strengths and to identify methods which could achieve regular and comprehensive overall assessments of the world's oceans and seas.

**A phased modular approach**

The preparation of the first AoA at the pan-European level is foreseen to build on the model set up by the marine AoA and have a modular approach in which various running activities or projects could serve as input. Following this approach a first building block of the AoA is the marine AoA itself.

The work of UNECE/EfE Secretariat itself summarizing the key products planned or relevant for the process at pan-European level is expected to be further developed so a thorough analysis of the key problems and main gaps in the region can be provided as input to the AoA process. This building block could also represent the starting phase of the process and feed relevant information to other components. Therefore it is recommended that this work of the UNECE Secretariat is further developed this year, building on the previous results.

The UNECE conventions' secretariats are expected to play a key role in assessing the country compliance and whenever possible the distance to targets. A concrete example, and consequently a building block in the AoA preparatory process, is represented by the transboundary waters report commissioned by the ministers in Belgrade and currently under preparation.

In its turn, UNEP can provide substantial input to the process, on the one hand through the legal frameworks managed by its various structures (convention secretariats, ENVSEC partnership etc.), and on the other in the context of the preparatory work for GEO-5 report due to start this year.

Other bodies at both regional and international levels are invited to participate and based on the availability of relevant information from the region add additional building blocks for the process.

The countries in the region are also invited to add additional elements to the process in particular by helping bringing to the surface the key findings of projects, programmes and initiatives, highlighting gaps identified, measures taken, or targets established.

At international level, a number of activities under preparation and their planned input/output products could feed into the process and add valuable elements to this overall assessment (e.g. COP 15 of the UNFCC in December 2009, the biodiversity year 2010, the ministerial conference on environment and health in 2010 etc.).

Last but not least, the EEA is adding several relevant elements to the process within the EU policy framework, by harvesting relevant information from the preparatory process of its regular 5-yearly State and Outlook Report for 2010 (SOER2010 is in production at the moment), from the implementation of the SEIS ENP[1] project due to start later this year, as well as from previous activities such as for example the inventory of the forward looking studies in environment and related fields carried out for all EECCA countries.

Due to the multitude of potential inputs at various stages and the variety of partners to be involved a strong coordination of the work is needed at all stages coupled with a broad networking and communication activity. It is proposed that EEA plays this coordination role as endorsed unanimously by the 3rd of July meeting participants.

## Aim

Building on the marine AoA approach and experience, it is foreseen to develop a similar process for the pan-European region and consequently feed the debate and support decisions at the Astana conference concerning streamlining assessment and reporting across pan-Europe including the gradual development of a shared environmental information system (SEIS) in the region.

As in the marine AoA, and used in other integrated assessment activities, Europe's Environment Assessment of Assessments will apply three major criteria to the assessment – scientific credibility, policy relevance and legitimacy and usefulness– and in the course of the work seek to maximize these properties in the result.

There is considerable material available in the region scaling from national, sub-regional, and pan-European levels in the environmental field. Furthermore for each environmental theme, studies and reports are being produced both by countries as well as by international organizations covering the pan-European region or parts of it. Among these, the regular comprehensive SoE reports produced by EEA for the pan-European region represent a valuable starting point, with most of the regional challenges and priorities already fleshed out. Other organizations such as OECD, UNECE, UNEP, UNDP, World Bank and OSCE have addressed regional or thematic aspects in the pan-European region complementing and/or expanding particular aspects also addressed in EEA's State and Outlook Reports.

---

[1] SEIS ENP project: Shared Environment Information System, European Neighbourhood project

As a consequence, for developing future assessments, and before launching new initiatives, much can already be understood by drawing on available findings of existing activities and initiatives and by analysing and assessing their results in a critical way.

Such a critical review and analysis of the existing material would be geared towards the following objectives:

1.  Making a gap analysis of the regional needs and priorities for conducting assessments, in terms of capacities and data/information needs;

2.  Evaluation of progress on targets and conventions and agreed actions;

3.  Developing proposals for a framework and options to build a Regular Process for regional environmental assessments, including potential costs, based on relevant assessment processes and practices, partnerships and programmes.

**Thematic coverage**

The marine AoA focused on reviewing and evaluating the available assessments in the marine field (structured/organised in specific marine issues). The proposed AoA for the pan-European region is foreseen as a step-wise approach with a first delivery for Astana. Consequently the proposed AoA report for the Astana conference should concentrate on a number of themes (3-4 cross-cutting themes, for example biodiversity, climate change, sustainable production and consumption), dictated amongst other things by the key environmental priorities of the region and the availability of resources. If successful this exercise could be further expanded to other themes of regional interest/significance, regularly maintained and updated. Furthermore, each of these thematic/topic AoA modules could become in the long-run, building blocks for streamlining the reporting process having SEIS as a common platform.

**Geographical coverage**: the pan-European region – 53 UNECE member countries.

**Potential country groupings:** EU 27/EEA 32, candidates and accession countries (SEE), ENP East, Central Asia, Russian Federation, other relevant groupings used in the reviewed publications, addressed by a specific legal instrument or reflecting a given ecosystem.

**Final goal**

By producing for the first time such a comprehensive review in the region, it will be possible to streamline existing and new assessment initiatives and processes in the region resulting in:
1.  A more consolidated and coherent basis for the work of the different actors in the region, policy and decision makers, including in the various thematic areas;
2.  Better knowledge and sharing of available information for multiple purposes;

3. Better use and linkage of local, national and regional information and knowledge to the pan-European and global levels ensuring better comparison, benchmarking and aggregation;
4. Capacity building;
5. A gradual reduction in the reporting burden at national level and building SEIS in the region;
6. Better use of available resources at various levels by identifying the overlaps, the existing gaps as well as the emerging issues to be further addressed.

## Organisation of work

*1. Lead organisation*: The EEA have been asked to assume this role which includes:
- Project coordination (full time person managing the project/report implementation)
- Assessment experts (3-4 part-time experts/detached experts ensuring the thematic coordination, communication/consultation and networking)[2]
- Secretariat support (including Russian language availability, IT portal maintenance, networking and organisation of the expert group meetings)
- Publication and communication.

*2. Ad hoc Steering Group:* Co-chaired by the EEA with another high-level representative of a partner institution and/or country from the region. This body would set the frame of the AoA, agree on the selection of topic/themes to be addressed and reviewed at the start of the work, guide and assess progress and endorse the result. The Steering Group will largely consist of country and international/regional organizations' representatives involved in the decision-making process, communication or policy implementation (mainly users and communicators) appointed by the respective countries and bodies. The UNECE/CEP/Bureau could organise the meetings for example back-to-back with the regular CEP bi-annual meetings.

*3. Group of Experts*: appointed from a pool of experts nominated by the countries, international organisations and bodies in the network, based on their thematic and geographical expertise to comprehensively cover all the selected topics. The Group of Experts could be composed of number of sub-groups (say 3-5 to still remain manageable in number and size) covering a range of topics and areas. The groups should meet at least three times during the process for developing and finalising their input. Regular exchange will be facilitated through an EEA dedicated Web-portal and if necessary by the Secretariat.

**4. National Contact Points:** These bodies would be supported a National Contact Point for each country to be responsible for the country contributions to the assessment. These National Contact Points should preferably be appointed from existing networks engaged in the region such as Eionet and

---

[2] It is expected that EEA will complement this expertise with in-house expert support in the thematic areas identified for the pan-European AoA

WGEMA to avoid duplication and build synergies between existing networks in the region.

**Outline**

The main output from Europe's Environment Assessment of Assessments for the Astana conference is foreseen to be a short report (60-80 pages) complemented by a number of detailed Annexes by, for example, sub-regions topics or/and cross-cutting themes. A brief executive summary may be also produced. The envisaged structure of the report is foreseen as follows:

**Part A (15-20 pages)**

**Critical review and evaluation of existing assessments against key priorities of the pan-European region for the selected cross-cutting themes**

1. Assemble information about assessments of regional relevance at national, regional and global levels.
   *(This work can be structured by key topic/themes as agreed at the start of the work by the Steering Group. Annexes will complement and expand/develop this part and be Web-based only with possibility/option of further/regular updates);*
2. Undertake a critical appraisal of the assessments in order to evaluate their scientific credibility, policy relevance, legitimacy and usefulness (10 pages);
3. Identify emerging issues and priorities (2 pages);
4. Consideration of gaps and needs for future assessments (4 pages);

The following tasks are foreseen for Part A:
   - Identification of relevant literature for each team/topic selected;
   - critical analysis of their relevance using the 3 criteria *(scientific credibility, policy relevance and legitimacy and usefulness);*
   - selection and analysis of key issues
   - assess findings, identify emerging problems and potential gaps;
   - write first draft;
   - translation and consultation;
   - input from Ad hoc Steering group;
   - revised draft based on input received;
   - cross-checking and coordination with Part B findings;
   - conclusions and regional priority setting.

**Part B (20 pages)**

**Critical assessment of countries' legal commitments and other policy relevant targets for the pan-European region**

1. Assemble information from relevant organisations, conventions and national bodies on progress to meeting targets including actions and activities;
2. Undertake assessments in selected thematic areas where needed;
3. Identify emerging regional issues and priorities;
4. Consider gaps and needs for future assessments.

The following tasks are foreseen for Part B:
- based on the themes/topics selected, identify the available targets and tools used for monitoring progress (regular data and reporting systems, indicators, scorecards etc.);
- critical analysis of the progress achieved against the targets and assessment of the current status using available tools;
- identification of gaps, missing targets or data reporting behind, identify causes and possible solutions/actions needed (monitoring, standardisation, institutional-related etc.);
- write first draft;
- translation and consultation;
- input from Ad hoc Steering group;
- revised draft based on input received;
- cross checking and coordination with Part A findings;
- conclusions and priority setting.

*Part C (20 pages)*

**Proposal for a coherent and regular reporting framework based on SEIS policy coordination framework in the pan-European region**

*(Part C will be also based to the extent possible on the findings of the ENP SEIS project to be carried out by EEA from 2010 onwards)*

1. Working with national focal points to identify SEIS-like activities and develop a work plan for implementation of SEIS approach to support the regular assessment of the environment.

*For EEA member countries and cooperating countries (32+6) this section can be fed by the findings of the SEIS country visits and related reports carried out in the recent years (from July 2007 onwards). This part can also be served by the ENP East project component for the related countries. For Central Asian countries, complementing actions can be organized depending on additional funding[3].*

*The findings will be provided through the planned SEIS-type country visits (including dedicated workshops in ENP countries) and through related information in relevant reports, activities and projects in countries*

---

[3] Kazakhstan proposal to support the production of the AoA concerning Central Asia should be further explored.

    2. Develop a proposal for a framework and options to build a Regular Assessment Process, including potential costs, based on relevant assessment processes and practices, partnerships and programmes.

*This section relates the findings and related assessments made in Parts A and B with the SEIS requirements and current status in the region. The aim is to compare the present and potential future reporting demand against the current reporting system potential (including planned developments and running initiatives) in the pan-European region and draw a coherent plan for a step-wise implementation in the future based on a streamlined reporting approach. This will be produced by the Group of Experts, in close consultation with all thematic/topic expert teams and EEA staff. The view of the Ad hoc Steering Group and other key stakeholders in the region gathered through consultation will be essential for defining a realistic way forward for the SEIS extension at the pan-European region.*

## Funding needs

Funding discussions are at an early stage of development. The following are current estimated costs for this project which cannot be covered by existing funding sources (including the EEA budget[4] and the expected funding from the European Commission to the EEA for European Neighbourhood Activities[5]). For these activities additional resources from other donors are needed, as presented in the table below.

The total budget estimate of the project is 2 MEuro out of which EEA is ready to provide one-quarter consisting of both in-kind support, expert technical assistance, support to events organizations, editing, communication, publication and IT services. The remaining amount of 1.500.000 EUR needs to be covered from additional contributions from countries and possibly international bodies. It is also important to underline that the timely availability of funding is as important as the funding itself for securing the production and the delivery of an AoA report in time for Astana conference. In concrete terms it means that most of resources need to be available from the beginning of 2010 in order to start implementation at full speed and allow at least one year for production and consultation with the countries.

---

[4] EEA foresees to make contributions in line with its annual work programmes from own resources and for example supporting expert participation from Eionet.

[5] Due to timing and priorities, the EEA ENP project (covering the EU neighbours only) is only expected contribute to this AoA project in the latter part of the 2010-2011 period. However, in a 4-year time perspective it will contribute to the on-going streamlining monitoring and assessment process via capacity building, SEIS extension and to the production of a report on the 6 ENP-Eastern countries and Russia.

Project outline AoA Astana

**Proposed tasks vs. estimation of needs (or in kind contribution) by partner organizations (k Euro)**

| Task | Total budget needs from donors | Total available contrib. in kind[6] | EEA Needs/ (in kind contrib.) | UNECE[7] Needs/ and (av. in kind) | UNEP[8] Needs/ (av. in kind) | Other needs/ (av. in kind) (countries, RECs, etc.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Secretariat (coordination and full-time in-house secretarial support) | 300 | | 300 | | | |
| Initial analysis of existing assessments Part A | 100 | 25 | (25) Contribution under SOER2010 | 50 | | 50 |
| Evaluation targets and compliance legal obligations Part B | 100 | 25 | (25) Contribution under AMP 2010 | 50 | 50 | |
| Evaluation SEIS related activities Part C | 100 | 200 | (200) Contribution under AMP2010 & ENP project | | | 100 [9] (to cover Central Asia countries) |
| | | | | | | |
| Governance lead coordinating expert | 50 | | | | 50 | |
| Scientific assessment methods lead coordinating expert | 50 | | 50 | | | |
| Thematic lead coordinating experts | 100 | | 50 | | 50 | |

---

[6] The in kind contribution mentioned in the table covers at this point only EEA (500KEuro)

[7] Own contribution still to be clarified (including in kind contributions)

[8] Own contribution still to be clarified (including in kind contributions)

[9] Additional support to Central Asia (if not identified otherwise): 5 country visits x 4 days, one workshop for the region = 100.000 EUR

Project outline AoA Astana

| Task | Total budget needs from donors | Total available contrib. in kind[6] | EEA Needs/ (in kind contrib.) | UNECE[7] Needs/ and (av. in kind) | UNEP[8] Needs/ (av. in kind) | Other needs/ (av. in kind) (countries, RECs, etc.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Other thematic experts (short term) [10] | **50** | 50 | (50) Contribution under AMP2010 | | | **50** |
| Meetings Ad hoc Steering Group[11] | **150** | | | **150** | | |
| Meetings group of experts & sub-groups[12] | **200** | 100 | (100) Contribution under AMP 2010 & ENP project | | **100** | **100** |
| Editing & translation | **150** | 50 | (50) Contribution under AMP2010 (English) | | | **150** [13] (for Russian) |
| Publication & Communication | **150** | | **100** | **50** | | |
| IT services and website | | 50 | (50) Contribution Under AMP2010 | | | |
| **TOTAL** | **1500** | **500** | **500** (+ 500 own contrib.) | **300** | **250** | **450** |
| **Total project cost** | **2 000** | | | | | |

---

[10] Short term expert-support: 20 pers x 5000 EUR = 100.000 EUR

[11] Three meetings of the Ad hoc Steering Group (~20 pers.) for 3 days =150.000 EUR (including interpretation)

[12] Three meetings of Group of Experts and two meetings of each sub- group x min. 3 groups (10 pers.) x 3 days

[13] Editing and translation into Russian (drafts, consultation, final for report/Summary and Annexes)

**Timing**

The implementation period is foreseen to be 16 months (January 2010-April 2011). This is based on the assumption that resources are available for commitment in late 2009. A draft timetable is found in Annex I.
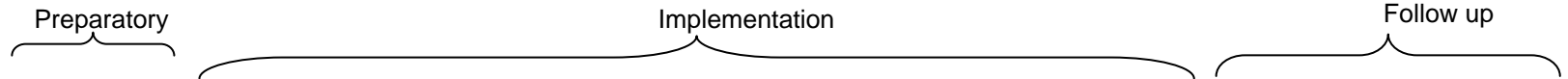
**Country consultation**

As for the Belgrade report development process, a similar portal in English and Russian is proposed to be created. The portal would be maintained by the EEA through the project secretariat and IT support. It would also be used as a production tool by the expert groups involved in the preparation of the different parts of the report.

**Report format**

Following the EEA Strategy 2009-2013, a move towards Web publishing will be foreseen. The report, the Annexes and the Summary will be available on the Web in English and Russian. It is also foreseen to have a paper version only of the report and a Summary in English and Russian.

-------------------------

**Draft time table**

| | Preparatory | Implementation | | | | | | | | Follow up | |

| AoA Astana Proposed activities | 2009 | 2010 | | | | 2011 | | | | 2012 | 2013 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Sem.1 | | Sem.2 | | Sem.1 | | Sem.2 | | | |
| | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | | |
| Secretariat (project coordination and full-time in-house secretarial support) | ▒ | ░ | ░ | ░ | ░ | ░ | ░ | ░ | ░ | | |
| Initial analysis of existing assessments Part A | ▒ | ░ | ░ | | | | | | | | |
| Evaluation targets and compliance legal obligations Part B | ▒ | ░ | ░ | | | | | | | | |
| Evaluation SEIS related activities Part C | | ░ | ░ | ░ | ░ | ░ | | | | | |
| Meetings of Ad hoc Steering Group | | ▲ | | ▲ | | ▲ | | | | | |
| Meetings of Group of Experts & sub-groups | | | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | | | | |
| Editing & translation | | | | | | ░ | ░ | | | | |
| Publication & Communication | | | | | | | ░ | ░ | ░ | ▓ | |
| IT services and website | ▒ | ░ | ░ | ░ | ░ | ░ | ░ | ░ | ░ | ▓ | |
| Launch of the report | | | | | | | | ▲ | | | |

| **ENP SEIS Project** | Inception phase | Implementation phase |
|---|---|---|

Astana
- ▒ Advanced work to be initiated already in 2009 by the EEA, UNECE to kick up the process
- ░ Pending funding
- ▓ Follow up activity

ENP
- ░ Expected project life