



Copenhagen  
29 October, 2010

**Working paper for the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Steering Group**  
*Geneva, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2010*

***“Europe’s Environment - Assessment of Assessments”***  
**Developing the Report for the Seventh “Environment for Europe”  
Ministerial Conference, Astana, 21–23 September 2011**

This working paper has been prepared to support the discussions at the second Steering Group meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2010. It provides reflections and substantive inputs to the items to be discussed in the agenda and identifies special points of consideration for the Steering Group.

## **1. Introduction and update**

### ***Recalling the setting, the issues and the working assumptions***

“Europe’s Environment Assessment of Assessment” (EE-AoA) addresses environmental knowledge governance for Europe which is part of the international environmental governance debate. Reforming the environmental reporting and assessment process across the pan-European region remains the overall objective of the EE-AoA. The aim here is to ensure that the region’s environment can be kept under review in a continuous and ongoing manner relevant for the challenges of sustainable development. This includes the evaluation of the environmental impacts of the multi-lateral environmental agreements, providing inputs to the Green Economy and water and related ecosystem priorities and making European contributions to UNEP’s GEO-5 and to Rio+20.

The Aarhus convention and the SEIS principles are working assumptions for this process. In summary this means: sharing environmental information; using information for multiple purposes; reducing reporting burdens on countries; and increasing effectiveness by strengthening the link between the assessment of problems and sharing practical experiences and solutions. Effectiveness means that the knowledge that needs to be governed has to be salient (relevant), credible and legitimate – these are the touchstones of the EE-AoA against which the assessments will be assessed.

## **EEA's 2010 State and Outlook Report**

On 30 November, EEA's fourth 5-year State and Outlook report (SOER2010) will be launched. The first testing of the EE-AoA methodology was carried out early this year on the basis of the European-level thematic assessments prepared for this report<sup>1</sup>. At the first SGEA meeting in March, the country-level assessments conducted for SOER2010 were introduced as a way to gather more specific country information for the EE-AoA. Information is already available for 38 European countries. The process followed to prepare these assessments involved close engagement with the countries. It helped identify new relevant sources of information and valuable insights into how to better tackle environmental issues. The effectiveness of this process in enriching the SOER2010 assessment lies in the way it taps into "local" knowledge. Such knowledge is often missing in regional summaries but the insights given can be extremely useful for developing more effective strategies to tackle environmental problems at country and regional levels. The potential and benefits to apply this approach to the EE-AoA and use the existing information already generated in the SOER2010 process is high and is raised below under point 2.

### ***Considerations for the Steering Group***

*Members are expected to report on and discuss any recent relevant developments, country and international initiatives that may be of interest for the EE-AoA process.*

## **2. Progress to date**

As foreseen in the work plan<sup>2</sup> the EE-AoA is being developed in modular and phased approach.

The phases of the project are as follows:

- I. Gathering relevant assessments in the Virtual Library (countries and organisations)
- II. Analysing a selection of the literature using the Review Template (countries and organisations)
- III. Assessing the Assessments based on the results from the Review Template (EEA led expert evaluation)

We are currently in both Phases I and II.

### ***Follow up and actions since the first SGEA meeting***

At the first SGEA meeting, the members of the Steering Group decided on the way forward to implement the EE-AoA, made a series of recommendations and agreed upon a number of lines of action. Based

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://aoa.ew.eea.europa.eu/documents/aoa-guide/final-report-soer-aoa\\_30\\_04\\_2010-2-.doc](http://aoa.ew.eea.europa.eu/documents/aoa-guide/final-report-soer-aoa_30_04_2010-2-.doc)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.unece.org/env/efe/Astana/SGEA/1stMtg/AstanaAoA\\_ProjectProposal\\_e.pdf](http://www.unece.org/env/efe/Astana/SGEA/1stMtg/AstanaAoA_ProjectProposal_e.pdf)

on these, the EEA identified and prepared a set of activities which have been followed over the period. These are summarised in the attached table and include the following: the confirmation of the network of national contact points and thematic experts; EE-AoA training session held on 28 May; the General/Review Template commented on and completed; a team established to work on content, IT and Russian language; the EE-AoA portal established, including the electronic version of the Virtual Library and Review Template; regular communications via letter and email to update on progress and call for inputs; countries and international organisations uploading and assessing relevant literature. Furthermore, additional offers of resources to support the process have been gratefully received over the period (a full overview will be distributed separately).

An important action identified at the first meeting which is still pending is to offer countries an opportunity to provide inputs about their “country specifics”.

***Considerations for Steering Group***

*The Steering Group are invited to discuss how to go forward with providing inputs about their “country specifics”. Much material is already available for 38 countries from the SOER2010. The process used to develop this is successfully tried and tested, was welcomed by the countries in Eionet and is readily applicable to non-EEA countries.*

***Analysis and results of the Review Template & Identified gaps (geographical coverage, thematic balance etc)***

Results to date are summarised in a PowerPoint presentation (circulated with this document). While some countries and organisations have made a significant effort here, contributions are currently insufficient.

***Considerations for Steering Group***

*The Steering Group is asked to reflect on and make recommendation concerning the contributions that are necessary from the countries, international/regional organisations and MEA secretariats to complete Phases I and II of the process (making inputs to the Virtual Library and Review Template) and carry out Phase III (Assessing the Assessments based on the results from the Review Template). In this regard the EEA proposes the organisation of two expert working meetings to complete this work.*

### 3. Outline of the report for the Astana conference

Three main products are envisaged for the UNECE Ministerial in September 2011:

- The Report
- A Paper for Ministers
- Web-Based Knowledge Platform

**The report** – This will include “assessment of assessment” modules covering the two priorities:

- Water and related ecosystems, based on available reports and indicators focusing on regional and national levels;
- The Green Economy, based on available reports and indicators on related sub-components at regional and national levels.

A crosscutting assessment of the results will be built on this which will form the basis for the paper for ministers.

All the above modules will be developed with the relevant multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) in mind with a view to understanding the capacity to assess their progress and impacts.

#### **Considerations for Steering Group**

*The EE-AoA findings will help point the way here but an additional complementary appraisal focused on the relevant MEAs may be useful. The Steering Group is asked to consider the role of the MEA secretariats and international/regional organisations in steering jointly this component.*

**Paper for ministers** – This is foreseen to be a paper authored by the Steering Group presenting reflections and considerations for ministers. The paper will draw on the results of the EE-AoA report to make recommendations for actions to fulfil the overall objective of the EE-AoA (i.e. to develop a sustainable Regular Process to keep the pan-European environment under ongoing review). The paper will aim to assist ministers in Astana in agreeing the way forward in the assessment process and pan-European reporting (Dobris+25)

#### **Considerations for Steering Group**

*The Steering Group are asked to discuss this proposal and agree authorship.*

**Web-based knowledge platform** – This will comprise the EE-AoA knowledge base built during the exercise. It will be delivered via a Web-based portal (an upgraded version of the working space found at <http://aoa.ew.eea.europa.eu/>) utilising the Eye-on-Earth platform. The platform will give easy access to the contents of the Virtual Library and

the results of the Review Template analyses. It will be designed to be continuously updated by countries and organisations in a manner compatible with the SEIS principles and able to be expanded in the future to cover new topics depending on the evolution of the EE-AoA process. This knowledge base will be the foundation for ongoing AoA activities to support the development of a Regular Process to keep the pan-European environment under continuous review.

***Considerations for Steering Group***

*The Steering Group is asked to discuss and agree upon this proposal.*

#### **4. Next steps**

Taking into account the points for consideration above and the discussions in the meeting, the Steering Group members are expected to discuss the next steps. These may include for example:

- Specifying the expected contributions from the countries;
- Specifying the expected contributions from the international/regional organisations and MEA secretariats;
- Organising two expert working meetings to progress the analysis and assessment;
- Clarifying further required inputs and resource needs;
- The role of the Steering Committee in the consultation & review process;
- Items for the next meeting.

The next meeting is currently foreseen to be held on 23 May 2011. In view of the production process the EEA proposes to hold an additional meeting in the first quarter of 2011.

#### **5. Proposals for CEP consideration**

The Steering Group will decide on the points to be taken to the UNECE/CEP on 2 November. These may include:

- Status of the process
- The need for countries to intensify their inputs into the Virtual Library and Review Template.
- Expert participation in Phase III
- Expected products
- Resources.

***Addendum:***

- *Table of activities\**
- *PowerPoint presentation on progress and analysis of preliminary results\**
- *Overview of financial contributions to EE-AoA\*\**

*\* distributed with this document*

*\*\* distributed separately*