



Outline on the establishment of a regular assessment and reporting process underpinned by the gradual development of a Shared Environment Information System

3 December 2012

Summary

The present document is a response to the request addressed to the European Environment Agency (EEA) by the ministers of environment in the context of Astana Ministerial Declaration to develop an outline for the establishment of a regular process of environmental assessment and for the gradual development of a Shared Environment Information System (SEIS) across the pan-European region. The document was presented to the UNECE/CEP meeting in April 2012 and it was open for comments and input from countries and organisations in the region. The current version is the result of this dialogue and the basis for setting in place a long term action plan for the gradual SEIS development in the pan-European region.

In preparing this paper a number of key policy and legal documents across the region, as well as relevant reports and articles have been consulted to ensure that the outline is embedded in existing and evolving related frameworks and developments.

As a first step in the development of the outline for establishing the regular process, the paper addresses the following elements:

- **Background**
- **Part I – “The Astana mandate”**
- **Part II – “The current status”**
- **Part III – “Next steps”**

In addition, Annex 1 provides an overview of SEIS implementation activities in which EEA/EIONET are currently involved with potential relevance for the pan-European region, supplemented with a first list of other relevant project-based SEIS activities as a start to be completed by countries, international organizations, NGOs and the business community.

In response to the comments received, Annex 2 and Annex 3 are providing concrete examples of SEIS related activities implemented by EEA in Western Balkans and in the EU neighbours as well as their added value in support to the regular assessment and reporting process and to better environmental policies.

Background – aims to place the Astana Ministerial request in the global framework of facilitating public access to information and increasing the use of relevant and reliable information in the whole policy chain, from development to implementation.

Part I – “The Astana mandate” – is a comparative analysis of the Astana mandate against the present assessment and reporting landscape across the pan-European region by highlighting both the novelties as well as the elements of continuity to be addressed in this process. The analysis recognises that a legal framework for regular assessment is already in place¹, that tools and methods for reporting and assessment are being used across the region and that SEIS elements start being applied in support to various reporting processes. There is however a clear need to coordinate and streamline these efforts and to orient them towards clear and achievable goals.

Part II – “The current status” – is a brief overview of the main findings gathered through the Assessment of Assessments (AoA) process (pan-European complemented by its sub-regional components) concerning the current reporting practices across the region, the main shortages/gaps in terms of policy demand versus content focus, networks involved, tools and methodologies applied and supporting information available.

¹ Aarhus convention for UNECE region, Directive 2003/4/EC on public access to environmental information

Part III – “Next steps” – identifies possible alternatives to support countries in a step-wise development of SEIS in the region. Two time perspectives are considered, namely:

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- a short-term perspective: 2012 -2013; and,
 - a medium/long term perspective: 2014-2020
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For both time intervals the activities foreseen are structured according to the three SEIS components: governance/cooperation, content and infrastructure.

The immediate actions needed are rather straightforward. EEA actions and involvement are listed. Others have yet to be identified including possible synergies and interlinkages² between existing relevant initiatives to enhance their effectiveness.

For the medium/long term perspective the picture of foreseeable activities is gradually emerging as a result of dialogues and cooperation with countries and organisations in the region. Annex 4 provides an overview of key events in 2012 relevant to the implementation of the Astana mandate.

Background

In 1992, at the World Summit on Environment and Development the world leaders concluded that environmental issues are of common interest and consequently best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens at the relevant level. In this context an open invitation to countries and information holders was launched, to find appropriate ways and practical means to facilitate the public access to environmental information as a practical tool for informed action. This invitation was captured in the Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration³. Twenty years later, in Rio again, in order to promote the enhancement of the institutional framework for sustainable development particular attention has been given to the need of effective analysis and assessments for the decision making process (see Annex 5).

For the pan-European region the translation into practice of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration materialised in the adoption of the Aarhus Convention. Worldwide, the 1998 UNECE convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice is the first (and still the only) legally binding instrument transposing the provisions of Principle 10. And by January 2012, 45 countries⁴ from Western Europe to Central Asia, that is to say 85% of the pan-European region, were gradually implementing its provisions. Furthermore, the European Union re-modelled its legislation in the field and adopted a new Directive on access to environmental information based on the Aarhus provisions⁵.

² See also the same approach pursued by UNEP for strengthening the international environmental governance (UNEP/GCSS.XII/13/Add.2)

³ “Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes, States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided” (Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 3-14 June 1992).

⁴ http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXVII-13&chapter=27&lang=en#1

⁵ Directive 2003/4/EC on public access to environmental information

In more than ten years of implementation⁶ the most successful pillar of the Aarhus convention translated into actions across the UNECE region is access to environmental information.

As an important tool for communicating and disseminating environmental information, the state of the environment report is specifically addressed by the Aarhus provisions⁷. The parties are requested “*at regular intervals not exceeding three or four years, to publish and disseminate a national report on the state of the environment*”. From the content perspective, the reports need to contain, among other things, “*information on the quality of the environment and information on pressures on the environment*”.

Building on these provisions, the 2003 Directive of EU on access to environmental information stipulates further that “Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure that national, and, where appropriate, regional or local reports on the state of the environment are published at regular intervals not exceeding four years; such reports shall include information on the quality of, and pressures on, the environment”⁸.

The EE-AoA (which underpinned the Astana ministerial decision related to regular reporting) was published by EEA in 2011. It assessed the status of current environmental reporting and assessment across the UNECE region and concluded that all countries have developed websites containing relevant environmental information and have produced, in the last five years, at least once a state of environmental report. That is to say that even countries not yet party to the Aarhus convention are producing state of environment reports and, more broadly, making steps towards ensuring the public access to environmental information⁹.

The aim of the current document is to develop a clear vision and integrated approach for EEA and pan-European activities towards supporting the Astana mandate welcoming at the same time concrete contributions from various partners, countries and international/regional bodies.

Part I - The Astana mandate

While first taking note on the progress achieved in the region concerning the provision of environmental information and reporting on the state of the environment, including on the existing gaps and shortcomings, the Astana Ministerial Declaration¹⁰ of 23 September 2011, decided:

“14. ... To keep the pan-European environment under review, we decide to establish a regular process of environmental assessment and to develop the SEIS across the region.”

The Declaration also indicates in brief some possible ways to achieve this objective by strengthening the role of the countries through capacity building (training, exchange of experience and good practices, networking, etc.) along the entire monitoring-to-reporting chain.

The geographical focus of future cooperation is also reflected in the Declaration by highlighting sub-regions in need of particular attention and support, building on the findings of EEA’s report ‘Europe’s Environment An Assessment of Assessments’ - EE-AoA (which was complemented by the regional AoAs for Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia and Russian Federation).

⁶ The convention has entered into force in 2001

⁷ Art.5.4.4. “Each Party shall, at regular intervals not exceeding three or four years, publish and disseminate a national report on the state of the environment, including information on the quality of the environment and information on pressures on the environment”.

⁸ Art.7.3 of the Directive 2003/4/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2003 on public access to environmental information, see: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32003L0004:EN:HTML>

⁹ It is the case for example of Russian Federation (in process of ratifying Aarhus convention) who produced in 2010 the latest SoER, see: <http://aoa.ew.eea.europa.eu/>

¹⁰ Astana Ministerial Declaration 23 September 2011, at: <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2011/ece/ece.astana.conf.2011.2.add.1.e.pdf>

The Astana declaration goes onto say:

...“these will serve multiple policy processes, including Multilateral Environment Agreements, and include capacity-building of countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe to monitor and assess their environment.”...

The Declaration refers to a large spectrum of policy processes and legal instruments¹¹ which need to be served by a regular process of environmental assessments and supported by a Shared Environmental Information System.

To properly steer the process and develop a realistic road map for implementation, the Ministers invited the “**EEA and its partners** to develop an outline for how these actions could be performed and to present it to the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy....”¹² That outline is the current document.

The following section highlights what is new in the mandate compared with the current monitoring-to-reporting chain of activities in the pan-European region in order to put in place a regular assessment process and to develop SEIS across the region.

a) A regular process of environment assessment

At the pan-European and EU levels the frequency of the environmental reporting process is already regulated by both Aarhus convention and the EU Directive on access to information, indicating that a comprehensive state of the environment report has to be produced every four years. In practical terms the situation varies amongst countries and sub-regions and is influenced by national policy demands, legislation or financial considerations. Consequently the scope of the current mandate is to assist the countries in the **gradual stabilisation of the national environmental reporting process to a four year cycle**.

The content of the “regular reporting” is also foreseen to be addressed and improved in this process so as to become more relevant to the policy process and to the public at large. This evolution is indicated by the “assessment” perspective introduced by the Astana Declaration on the quality of the environment and the pressures on the environment¹³, rather than the descriptive approach identified in the current environmental-related reports.

One approach to help embed the Astana mandate into EU activities is to consider the following objectives:

- Support the implementation of EU legislation (covering primarily the EU Member States, but also other EEA member countries, EU candidates, possibly ENP countries)¹⁴
- Support the implementation of Aarhus convention provisions related to regular reporting on the state of the environment and furthermore of Principle 10 of Rio conference (covering in particular the non-EU members);
- Support the enforcement of key international environmental agreements (covering the EEA countries and other countries in the pan-European region party to conventions);
- Support public participation and awareness raising by increased on-line and near real-time dissemination of environmental information (data, indicators, assessments etc.).

These are identified to help countries in other regions prioritise and organise their responses to the Astana requests.

¹¹ National Strategies and action plans, national legislation, compliance with multilateral agreements, reporting to EEA, UN etc.

¹² Astana Ministerial Declaration 23 September 2011, at:

<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2011/ece/ece.astana.conf.2011.2.add.1.e.pdf>

¹³ As defined by the Aarhus convention

¹⁴ Subject to additional funding

b) The development of Shared Environmental Information System

The AoA methodology, applied to marine¹⁵ and water related issues, as well as to the green economy topic, provided insights about the information and assessments available in these areas over recent years in the pan-European region and on who is involved and where and what can be found as a potential basis to be re-used, shared and built upon in the future. However, a full overview of what information exists across this region is not available.

The production of regular reports is a complex process, involving networks, data and information, tools and methodologies and expert support. With SEIS in the Astana Declaration, this opens up the possibility of improving the organisation of available information, to facilitate their re-use and sharing and in the end provide a stable platform for future assessment and reporting activities. Within the same objective it is also intended to identify the data and information gaps and incompatibilities, the accessibility restrictions (confidentiality, formats etc.) and suggest possible ways for addressing and overcoming these issues.

Part II. The current status

The EE-AoA process, carried out at both pan-European and sub-regional levels, provided relevant information on: a) the current environmental reporting landscape; as well as b) on the manner and ways (networks, tools, information systems) by which these reporting activities are organised and implemented. A summary of the current status, extracted from the EE-AoA reports and from other recent materials, is presented below.¹⁶

a) CONTENT

The analysis of SoE and thematic assessments has revealed a multitude and variety of products and information. At the same time, much information is lacking and the policy relevance of the information remains weak.

Assessments are currently too restricted to environmental status and trends. The most common assessments are thematic (75%) or status and trends (71%), and very few take a more integrated approach, encompassing a range of concepts or the whole of the DPSIR framework.

In existing assessments, ex-post analysis is preferred to ex-ante or forward-looking analysis. Reliance on long time-series is limited. Forward-looking analyses are included in approximately 20% of the assessments reports.

In Central Asian countries, assessments of the state of environment, policy formulation, fulfillment of reporting obligations under multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and capacity developments, have been significantly supported and assisted mainly through the UN organizations and programmes and Official Development Aid.¹⁷ Consequently the sustainability of the assessment process is not ensured.

Western Balkans and EEA member countries have the highest number of reports based on regular reporting cycles (approx. 70%).

b) INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Assessments are very poorly supported by infrastructure and services across pan-Europe and only in 22 per cent of the reviewed assessments was there an indication that any information system supporting the data management for access and sharing was

¹⁵ See: <http://www.unga-regular-process.org/> and <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/europes-environment-aoa>

¹⁶ The information provided is extracted from the EE-AoA report, 2011 and from the AoA sub-regional reports for Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia and Russian Federation, 2011.

¹⁷ See: AoA Central Asia, CAREC (2011)

established while preparing the assessment. Central Asia and Eastern Europe are lagging behind in the use of service providers and common platforms supporting data management, sharing and exchange.

Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Russian Federation countries have the basic hardware and software available, but more advanced equipment (for data transfer via Internet), clear data policies and special software (databases, Geographic Information System (GIS), Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI), internationally recognized models for data treatment and interpretation) are often missing.

In Central Asia data storage and management are still a major issue. Environmental data are not always stored using electronic media, databases being incomplete and generally inaccessible; integrated environmental monitoring, databases and information systems do not exist.¹⁸

The internet is the most used interface across the pan-European region to make the assessments available. Nevertheless, the production of hard copies is still significant, with the Russian Federation and Caucasus showing the highest shares of dissemination of their assessments as hardcopy.

c) GOVERNANCE/COOPERATION

Institutional arrangements are unclear, with a wide range of organisations and ministries involved in the preparation but with limited coordination either between or within regions and countries, or between the public and private sectors. An assessment undertaken as a contribution to the 2011 Astana Ministerial Conference shows that only 28 per cent of the reports analysed are produced in coordination with different assessment processes. With the exception of the Russian Federation and, to a lesser extent, of Central Asia, not even one-third of the assessments produced in the other sub-regions are coordinated with other processes.

In the late 1990ies an initial capacity building activity was carried out by countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia together with EEA and the UNECE Working Group on Environment Monitoring and Assessment. The initiative conducted under the TACIS programme helped assess the availability of environmental data and information, collect them into a database and establish a prototype reporting system initially developed by EEA and customised and implemented by UNECE. Since then, complementary, voluntary international developments like GEO/GEOSS¹⁹ have increased networking and availability of selected data. Being a very recent development, the Global Network of Networks (GNON) activity (a special initiative established at the Eye on Earth summit 2011²⁰) is a further initiative to improve networking focusing in the first instance on providing support to the implementation of UNEP-Live, providing better access to and use of environmental data and information globally following SEIS principles.

Part III. The next steps

Across the pan-European region the implementation of SEIS and its principles is already taking place. With different speeds, in various ways and gradually engaging diverse target groups, the exchange of environmental information, their re-use and dissemination is growing.

The central role in the development of a regular assessment process based on SEIS belongs to the countries themselves. The ownership of the process by each participating country is a basic requirement for a successful step-wise implementation. Furthermore, to ensure the sustainability of the actions proposed, the assessment work needs to be driven by countries' own policy needs

¹⁸ AoA Central Asia, CAREC (2011)

¹⁹ The intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations (GEO) is leading a worldwide effort to build a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) over the next 10 years

²⁰ See: <http://www.unep.org/civil-society/MeetingsandEvents/UpcomingMeetingsandEvents/EyeonEarthSummitDecember2011AbuDhabi/tabid/54257/Default.aspx>

and gradually be able to respond to and guide their effective and efficient implementation. Therefore the focus of future actions should, in the first phase at least, be oriented towards countries, with the international and regional partners supporting this process by facilitating the cooperation and the exchange of knowledge between countries and adding, whenever possible, additional environmental dimensions (regional, global) to the national perspectives. The AoA consultation paper “Europe’s Environment: Enhancing the Knowledge Base”²¹ provides an assessment of the nature of the current environmental challenges and the data and information base needed to address them which have implications for the content and the approach to be taken by the regular assessment process and SEIS at all levels.

Expected outcomes (short-term)

In the short-term perspective two outcomes will be focused on the implementation of the Astana Declaration: **a) the production of the next national SoERs based on SEIS elements; and b) improved reporting of obligations under MEAs using SEIS elements.**

To reach these goals, the following activities are proposed:

1. Identifying data and information available, facilitating access and sharing, support to building regular priority data-sharing (formally “data flows”) (countries assisted by EEA and its partners²²)
2. Creating or facilitating institutional partnerships at national level to respond to such obligations (e.g. through government decisions, ministerial orders, joint governmental bodies or structures, etc.)
3. Supporting the development of common/shared platforms for dialogue and information sharing (e-governance, Reportnet²³, InfoMEA²⁴, Caspian Environment Information Center²⁵, UNEP Live, etc.)
4. Training and capacity building in the use of assessment tools and methodologies (indicators, Integrated Environment Assessment/IEA, scenarios and forward looking studies, etc.)²⁶
5. Developing through partnership with existing projects and initiatives building blocks for the regular State of Environmental Reporting (SoER)²⁷ and for MEAs reporting obligations
6. Assisting the countries in the preparation of new SEIS compliant project proposals and in filling in the monitoring to reporting gaps identified in the EE-AoA process (EEA and other partners including at the regional level).

The implementation of these activities will imply bringing together and connecting all existing and planned initiatives across the region. Below, some concrete actions currently taken in support of the overall Astana goal are highlighted. Furthermore, a comprehensive list of SEIS related activities currently underway at various levels is presented in Annex 1. The list is not exhaustive but a living one which should be regularly updated with the contribution of all stakeholders.

²¹ The AoA consultation paper “Europe’s Environment: Enhancing the Knowledge Base” can be found at the AoA portal as follows: <http://aoa.ew.eea.europa.eu/europe-s-environment-an-assessment-of-assessments/europe-s-environment-an-assessment-of-assessments/index.html>

²² The international organisations, MEAs secretariats etc. are invited to enlist in specific type of support based on competence and specific expertise.

²³ Reportnet is the system used by EEA/EIONET for electronic reporting according to SEIS principles

²⁴ UN information portal on multilateral agreements, see: <http://informea.org/>

²⁵ Serving the Teheran convention on the Caspian sea- project currently implemented by UNEP/Grid Arendal with EEA support

²⁶ Activities such as workshops, seminars, trainings currently covering these areas are organised by EEA jointly with UNECE, DG Eurostat, OSCE.

²⁷ The current AWARE project funded by EU in Central Asia is promoting SEIS in the region and is assisting countries in the region in the preparation of the next SoER. Similar activities are carried out for EU neighbours under the ENP/SEIS project managed by EEA.

A. Short-term actions

- Review of the EEA core set of indicators (CSI) is underway, covering EEA member and cooperating countries, with proposed adjustments, which aims to have a direct impact on the next state of environment reporting process (in particular the forthcoming EEA State and Outlook Report 2015).
- Assist the countries in the effective production of a trial set of indicators underpinned by regular data flows²⁸. Moreover assist the countries in the use of these indicators into the regular assessment and reporting activities. The extended mandate of the UNECE Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators until 2014 and the EEA support provided through the ENPI SEIS project will facilitate this progress from methodological improvements to the effective production and use.
- Update the State of Environment Reporting Information System (SERIES) by using the AoA methodology and AoA related tools. A light version of AoA portal for hosting the national SoE reports is already in development by EEA.
- Promote the annual indicator based assessment process of EEA (in 2012 addressing the complex and cross-cutting issue of green economy) as possible model in view of establishing a regular assessment process at national level.
- Facilitate the countries' access and contribution to the Water Information System for Europe (WISE) as basis for assessing the sustainability and vulnerability of water resources as well as for providing information on policy responses. Capacity building activities attached to the use of the system can be also provided within the existing ENP/SEIS project.
- Promote and gradually facilitate the use of Reportnet beyond EEA countries (e.g. ENP, Central Asia). The system is continuously enhanced through new technical approaches in order to cover new legal demands around reporting obligations.
- Promote the use and further population of the SEIS cookbook by countries beyond EEA members. The SEIS cookbook activity was launched under ENP/SEIS project in 2012 and extended also to all EEA and cooperating countries, and will lead to the development of a living collection of SEIS good examples and best practices²⁹. EEA global public environment information platform "Eye on Earth" is already available for use to other communities beyond EU.

B. Long term perspective

In the context of Europe 2020 strategy EEA and Eurostat will join their networks and information holders to provide statistical information and indicators that allow sustainability to be measured and reported. Above will be focused around the long term priorities to be addressed by the EU and is reflected in the current activity plan and, expected to be further detailed in the context of the EU 7th Environmental Action Programme (7EAP), as follows:

- assessing implementation of existing instruments and ensuring ways for better implementation
- moving towards a greener and more resource efficient economy
- better integration of environmental concerns into sectoral policies in view of promoting Sustainable Development (SD)
- achieving the 2020 targets on halting biodiversity loss
- addressing water scarcity and extreme events
- tackling climate change.

²⁸ In 2012 the Joint Task Force on indicators planned two meetings on this topic, namely July and October-November. Support to ENP East countries and the Russian Federation to actively participate in the process was provided by EEA under ENPI/SEIS project (See: <http://enpi-seis.ew.eea.europa.eu/>).

²⁹ See SEIS cookbook version 1 at: <http://www.seiscookbook.net/>

By 2014 the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) operational services for land monitoring and emergency response are expected to be fully operational and able to provide timely and consistent information in support to policy making and its implementation. Since it is foreseen³⁰ that the core data will be freely accessible important input is expected to be provided to the next reporting cycle (the next EEA regular assessment is due in 2015) as part of the regular assessment process on the state of the environment. Similar contributions are expected to feed the national regular assessment processes from 2014 onwards and complement the in-situ monitoring activities.

The new LIFE+ programme 2014-2020 with dedicated sub-programmes for environment and for climate change will promote new type of projects - "Integrated projects" – aiming at implementing on a large territorial scale environmental or climate strategies or action plans, and mobilising other EU, national and private funds. These will focus primarily on nature, water, waste, air, and climate change mitigation and adaptation sectors. The LIFE sub-programme for Environment will support three priority areas: Environment & Resource Efficiency, Biodiversity and Environmental Governance and Information, the later could represent the basis to accommodate SEIS development and regular assessment processes. LIFE will also enlarge its territorial scope to countries outside the EU, under certain conditions, and will adopt lighter procedures³¹.

The Digital Agenda for Europe process supports the growth of e-Government services and open data provision. The current review of selected EU legislation (e.g. Public Sector Information-PSI and access to information directives) will have a positive impact on environmental information flows and significant improvements are expected already in 2012.

Until 2019, the current legislation on INSPIRE³² will have to be fully implemented by the Member States. Data discovery and access across all INSPIRE themes – using a range of modern IT services will be achieved. INSPIRE could be gradually implemented by a set of neighbouring countries (or Central Asia countries) – based on voluntary agreements and responding to specific policy priorities.

The EEA indicator review processes is leading to an improved and more widely shared set of indicators which are underpinned by more continuous e-reporting flows. EEA member countries are expected to be forerunners, complemented by cooperating countries which are keen to share along the same lines. The outcome will feed already into the SOER 2015.

Thematic information services – linked to data centres and beyond - will be more strongly based on indicators, provide more depth and be better integrated across domains. Individual thematic areas in particular air, waste and water are expected to be strengthened in the neighbouring countries through project like the ENP/SEIS by 2014.

Role and potential contributions of UNECE/WGEMA and Joint Task Force on indicators (JTF)

The mandate of UNECE/WGEMA and of the Joint Task force on indicators (JTF)³³ have been recently extended³⁴ until 2014 reconfirming their role as key contributors to the implementation of

³⁰ An EU Regulation is expected by end of this year to endorse the access and use of the GMES information for environmental purposes. It is expected that the core satellite data and the core information services will be widely available free of charge, at least for EU Member States and candidate countries

³¹ Continuation of Life + beyond 2013, see:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/about/beyond2013.htm#proposal>

³² Infrastructure for Spatial information in European Community – Directive 2007/2/EC establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE)

³³ Revised terms of reference for the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators for 2013–2014, approved by the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy at its 18th session in April 2012 (see paragraph 49 and annex IV of Committee's report:

<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2012/ece/cep/ece.cep.2012.2.e.pdf>).

the Astana mandate³⁵. Their planned activities are expected to assist the countries in the region in both the gradual SEIS development and the development of a regular assessment and reporting process. The work of the two structures is complementary and will address elements across the entire monitoring to reporting chain.

In this framework WGEMA will focus on the following aspects:

- a) Modernization and upgrading of national monitoring networks and information systems;
- b) Improvement of data collection, transfer and use, and the application of modelling;
- c) Strengthening monitoring of specific environmental media;
- d) Promotion of the use of indicator-based mechanisms for periodic environmental assessments and evaluation of the effectiveness of environmental policies and decision-making;
- e) Improvement of environmental assessments, including the use of the methodology of the Europe's Environment — An Assessment of Assessments report.

Concerning the SEIS content and tools components, the Joint Task Force on indicators will “(d) continue strengthening, in cooperation with the European Environment Agency (EEA) and other relevant institutions, the capacity of the countries concerned to produce environmental data, including statistical data, and indicators through providing technical assistance and training, in coherence with the principles of the Shared Environmental Information System and regular environmental assessments.

The JTF will also contribute to another SEIS component namely institutional cooperation and networking by “maintaining a network of environmental experts in statistical offices and government agencies dealing with environmental assessments to further broaden the exchange of experiences and approaches”.

Since the two groups are playing an important role in SEIS development across the region as well as in the development of a regular reporting process a better interlinkage between the activities and deliverables of the two groups will be envisaged. In this respect the indicator work of the JTF should lead to the effective production of common environmental indicators across the region underpinned by regular data flows. On its turn, WGEMA, with the support of EEA and other international bodies, could further work with the countries towards the preparation of the next environmental reporting cycle (2014-2015) and using the produced indicators and related assessments as key inputs.

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- European Commission, DG Environment – Management Plan 2012

³⁴ The mandate of WGEMA was extended for the period 2012-2014 by the Committee on Environmental Policy at its 18th session in April 2012 (see paragraph 48 of Committee's report <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2012/ece/cep/ece.cep.2012.2.e.pdf> ; as well as the approved terms of reference of WGEMA: <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2012/ece/cep/ece.cep.2012.6.e.pdf>).

³⁵ Art.2 para (a) of the ToRs indicates that the Working group ...will contribute to establishing a regular process of environmental assessment and the development of the SEIS across the region jointly with EEA and its partners”

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- UNECE regional Preparatory meeting for UNCSD – Report of the regional preparatory meeting for the UN conference on Sustainable Development – Co-chairs’ summary of the meeting, Geneva 1-2 December 2011
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- COM (2011) 152 – Towards a space strategy for the EU that benefits its citizens
- Regulation 911/2010 on the European earth monitoring programme (GMES) and its initial operations (2011 to 2013)
- COM (2011) 831 on the European earth monitoring programme (GMES) and its operations (from 2014 onwards)
- Directive 2007/2/EC establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE)
- GEOSS Data Sharing Action Plan- for the implementation of the GEOSS data Sharing Principles, GEO- VII Plenary, November 2010, see: http://www.earthobservations.org/documents/geo_vii/07_GEOSS%20Data%20Sharing%20Action%20Plan%20Rev2.pdf
- Group on Earth Observations - GEO 2012-2015 Work Plan, 13 December 2011
- EEA- Review of EEA indicators – update and proposed approach to the refresh of the Core Set of Indicators (CSI), internal note January 2011
- EEA – Cooperation Agreement between the Government of Greenland and EEA, 25 November 2010
- UNEP Governing Council – Discussion paper “International environmental governance in “The future we want”, 24 January 2012 (UNEP/GCSS.XII/13/Add.2), see: http://www.unep.org/gc/gcss-xii/docs/working_docs.asp
- Rio +20 UNCSD – The Future we want – Outcome document, 19 June 2012, see: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N12/381/64/PDF/N1238164.pdf?OpenElement>

- UNECE/CEP – Revised Terms of Reference for the Joint Task Force on Environmental indicators, for the period 2013-2014 (17-20 April 2012), see:
http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/ge.33/2012/mtg2/TF_ToRs_for_2013_2014.Final.Eng.pdf
- UNECE/CEP – Terms of Reference of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment for the period 2012-2014 (17-20 April 2012), see:
<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2012/ece/cep/ece.cep.2012.6.e.pdf>

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Annex 1: SEIS implementation activities

a) EEA/Eionet SEIS implementation activities

Lead	Geographical Area	Project	Focus* (G/C/I)	Time line	Activities	Member country / country impact
EEA / ESTAT	EEA 39 + ENPI-SEIS 16 partner countries	Indicator review	Content	2012-2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint project with Eurostat on a shared approach and set of indicators Revised indicator management system Update of GEMET to represent indicator terminologies and other user needs Development of comparable regional indicator sets for ENPI East and ENPI South, taking into consideration the EEA CSI review process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced set of more policy relevant indicators Better tailored to user needs
EEA	EEA 39 + ENPI-SEIS 16 partner countries	SENSE	Infrastructure (I)	2012-2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SENSE2 project to allow exchange of indicator and underpinning data and information between EEA and member countries and amongst countries (supported by semantic web technologies) SENSE2 project meeting as part of the NRC EIS workshop at INSPIRE conference 6/2012 Expanding SENSE examples to ENPI region Continued work from 2013-15 to stepwise build an operational system incl. enhanced indicator – data linkages and increased country participation with the aim to underpin the 2015 SOER 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More consistent message on the countries SOE Less “reporting” burden
EEA	EEA 39 + ENPI-SEIS 16 partner countries	SEIS state of play review	Governance (G)	2012 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEIS country visits where needed, identifying further country priority needs and joint actions (also between Eionet and ENP partners) Support national activities on demand Progressive inclusion of good practice examples of SEIS implementation in the ENP region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modernised information systems Better common understanding
EEA	EEA 39	European Data Centres	C	2012 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work on the European Spatial Data Infrastructure as a link to National SDIs Identifying the need for and establishing reference data sets – partly servicing across domains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better data link between Europe and countries

Lead	Geographical Area	Project	Focus* (G/C/I)	Time line	Activities	Member country / country impact
DG ENV with EEA	EEA 39	eReporting	I	2012-2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernise and further develop thematic reporting systems with emphasis on air (AQD-IPR), water (WISE) and biodiversity (BISE) • Review links between INSPIRE provisions and EU reporting obligation (supported by an INSPIRE eReporting workshop 6/2012) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier reporting • Improved visibility of country data and information
DG ENV, ESTAT, JRC	EU 27 and volunteers + ENPI- SEIS	INSPIRE implementatio n	I	2012 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stepwise supporting INSPIRE implementation by finalising data specifications, identifying needs for common code-lists/nomenclatures and registries to host them, establishing an EEA metadata catalogue and link this to European and national SDIs • Support implementation activities (content/technology) in thematic areas in close cooperation with countries • Inform and market the INSPIRE/SEIS connections at the INSPIRE conference in Istanbul 6/2012 and the INSPIRE eReporting workshop 6/2012 • Dedicated side event planned at the annual INSPIRE Conference in 2012 for the ENP region, supporting activities in the process towards development of Environmental Information Systems and Spatial Data Infrastructure in these countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved national SDI • Easier access to EU and neighbouring country data
EEA	EEA 39	NatureWatch	I	2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch a new watch as part of EoE to allow citizen participation around invasive alien species together with the EC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complement and support country activities
EEA	EEA 39	GMES	C	2012-2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver outcomes of the GISC project related to in-situ activities of countries and (international) organisations in particular establishing links and service agreements • Present and discuss activities during 2012 at the GMES in action: DK Presidency event (6/2012) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better linkages of in-situ and earth observation data • Better x-country comparison
EEA	EEA 39	GIO-land	C	2012-2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under the GMES umbrella and with DG Enterprise funding, develop Corine Land Cover (CLC) update and five thematic high resolution layers and local components on biodiversity (riparian zones) and the Urban Atlas in close cooperation with EEA member countries incl. the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost reduction on national environmental through replacement

Lead	Geographical Area	Project	Focus* (G/C/I)	Time line	Activities	Member country / country impact
					datasets and the necessary web service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present and discuss activities during 2012/13 at the NRC land workshop • 	by remote sensing derived data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better x-country comparison
EEA	ENPI-SEIS 16 partner countries: ENP East (6) ENP South (9) Russia	ENP/SEIS	G	2012-2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under the European Neighbourhood policy and with DG-DEVCO funding: • Support production of a core set of environmental indicators, underpinned by regular data flow collection, for ENP-East and Russia in line with EEA CSI to monitor progress and to review of environmental policies in support of various national, regional and international obligations • Support the development of regular data flows for the production of indicators and regular reporting to international agreements • Provide capacity building and expert support activities to the partner countries in the identified priority areas (air, water and waste), jointly with key partners and international organisations active in the region as relevant • Reinforce countries' capacities in the field of monitoring, collection, storage, assessment and reporting of environmental data in the relevant environmental authorities including the national statistical systems (creation of dedicated IT Working Group, publication of a first edition of a 'SEIS cookbook', participation in relevant EEA/EU thematic meetings, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlining leads to a reduced number of indicators to be compiled, i.e. increasing the efficiency of the data collection/storage process and provide clearer guidance on indicators' definition, metadata, presentation/analysis concepts • Indicator sets will be tailored to different users' needs, meeting better policy demand and international reporting obligations • Allowing countries a better approximation
EEA	pan-European	SERIS +	C/I	2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan a follow-up project in 2013 to building on the Astana Assessment of Assessments (AoA) application in a lighter version - to include also the latest SOERs from non-EEA countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More visibility of country assessments
EEA	Global	Eye on Earth network	I	2012 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop the Eye on Earth (EoE) Network application • Maintain and enhance available watches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier access to and distribution of

Lead	Geographical Area	Project	Focus* (G/C/I)	Time line	Activities	Member country / country impact
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully establish the EoE governance arrangement Market EoE to new partners link EoE to UNEP life Run an EoE user conference early 2013 	environmental information
Open communities EEA as Partner	Global	Global Network of Networks (GNoN)	G	2012-2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further develop the GNON initiative as a Special Initiative stemming from the Abu Dhabi summit. The initiative aims to connect relevant international networks dealing with environmental information which are previously not related in a similar way Eye on Earth summit 2 in early 2014 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved country participation in international networking and information exchange
GEO EEA as partner	Global	GEOSS contribution	I	2012-2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribution to GEOSS work plan through the Ecosystem Capital Accounting and the linkage of EoE with the GEOSS GCI architecture Develop the link GEOSS-EoE- mainly through the EuroGEOSS project Continuous delivery of EEA data to the GEOSS data core Participation in the establishment of the GEOSS data sharing principles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better visibility and access of national data to the international level and vice versa
EEA	EEA 39	Eionet Priority Data Flows	C	2012 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance both, quality and quantity of EEA member countries delivery to EEA EEA publishes annual report on detailed performance In 2014 consider the inclusion of reference data from the ENP countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced performance of countries in benchmarking
DG ENV	EU 27	Better regulation / revision of directives	G	2012 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The "Draft Commission Staff Working Paper" on SEIS implementation indicates activities to review reporting obligations and related legislation according to the policy review cycle Incl. SEIS for ENP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved legislation meeting better member countries needs
DG InfSoC	EU 27	EU Digital	I	2012-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A range of actions will be identified to be implemented by the EU Commission and suggested to countries Mainly they are related to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modernised in- and external member

Lead	Geographical Area	Project	Focus* (G/C/I)	Time line	Activities	Member country / country impact
		Agenda		2020	e-Government and open data activities	country services

b) Other project-based activities supporting SEIS implementation at pan-European level

[N.B. List to be completed by countries, international organisations, NGOs, business community]

UNEP/Grid Arenal EEA as contributor	Caspian sea countries (Azerbaijan Russia Kazakhstan Turkmenistan Iran)	Dev. of Caspian Environment Information Center		2012-2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web Portal environment • Content, documents and meta-data management system • Interactive GIS database & Stakeholders and Projects database • Inputs to first draft of Caspian Environment Atlas and State of Environment report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a centralised database and information management system to store data and support reporting to Caspian convention • Capacity building and enhanced cooperation
CAREC EEA as contributor	Central Asia (5)	AWARE SEIS		2012 - 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop and seminars in each CA countries promoting SEIS benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness concerning SEIS and its benefits
DG DEVCO (in evaluation)	Central Asia	MONECA – Environmental monitoring in CA		2013-2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of SEIS in Central Asia through indicator development and related data flows, support to reporting activities • Capacity building, training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Legend:

*Focus: refers to the SEIS pillars G – governance C – content I - infrastructure



ANNEX 2: Input to the post-Astana process from the IPA West Balkan project

Participation of West Balkan countries in the work of the European Environment Agency (period of implementation: December 2011 – November 2013)

Overall objective of the project

To support West Balkan countries participation in the full range of activities of EEA and Eionet as per EEA Work Programme 2012 and 2013.

Specific activities to meet the overall objective

- Further extension of the EEA/Eionet annual work programme to the West Balkan countries.
- Strengthened support in the Eionet network of organisations and participation of the National Focal Points, National Reference Centres and country experts in major EEA/Eionet meetings and events.
- Technical Support in the Western Balkan countries.

The EEA work programme is extended through this (and previous) projects to include West Balkan countries according to their state of development and the scale of financial support provided to participate in a selection of the main EEA/Eionet activities.

Geographical coverage

The European Environment Agency has been cooperating with West Balkan countries since 1996 (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia since 1996, Croatia since 2001, Serbia and Montenegro together since 2002 and separately since 2007, and with Kosovo under UNSCR 1244/99 since 2010).

The seven West Balkan cooperating countries participate in the European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet) on a similar basis as do the 32 EEA member countries.

Relevant SEIS activities in the West Balkan region providing value to the countries in preparing for accession as well as benefits to the European Union in terms of enhanced cooperation and security

Cooperation

- Establishment of a network and regular contact with National Focal Points and up to 25 National Reference Centres in each country.
- Agreement on the main thematic priorities for development in the West Balkan region.
- Agreement of continuing development of indicators and regular state and outlook reporting
- Country Visits and Regional Workshops.

Content

- Building up regular reporting and exchange of information according to the EEA Priority Data Flows³⁶ and EEA Core Set of Indicators.
- Regular Assessment work - the West Balkan countries were fully included in the main EEA assessment and thematic reports (pan-European environmental assessment reports in 1998, 2003, 2007) and most recently in the European Environment: State and Outlook 2010³⁷ and Europe's environment - An Assessment of Assessments report in 2011³⁸.

³⁶ <http://www.eionet.europa.eu/dataflows>

³⁷ <http://www.eea.europa.eu/soer>

³⁸ <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/europes-environment-aoa>

- Extending the work of the EEA European Topic Centres to West Balkan countries (currently Air Pollution and Climate Change Mitigation; Climate Change Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation; Spatial Information and Analysis; Inland, Coastal and Marine Waters; Biological Diversity; and Sustainable Consumption and Production).
- Participation in European level projects: e.g. CORINE Land Cover and Emerald Network.

Infrastructure

- Eionet telematics network development and application, ensuring the communication tool for environmental data and information exchange across the entire EEA network.

More information on the specific activities, events and country information is available on the Eionet portal: <http://www.eionet.europa.eu/>

Way forward

West Balkan countries will continue to participate in all Eionet meetings alongside representatives and experts from 32 EEA member countries benefiting from exchange of experience and all the tools and support available to Eionet countries. These activities will benefit individual countries, regional cooperation and legal reporting obligations under EU and international law and can be grouped as follows:

- 1) Support to the EU accession process in relation to policy-relevant environmental information
- 2) Support to the development of SEIS-compatible environmental information systems by providing European and international expertise, advice and quality control to the accession and pre-accession countries (addressing the cross-cutting elements of national information systems, their legal basis, data management and communication, as well as the specific sub-systems related to agreed priority themes).
- 3) Support to the development and the use of common environmental indicators by all the countries to ensure increasingly comprehensive and consistent assessment and reporting across countries, sub-regions and regions
- 4) Facilitate overall access to EU expertise and technologies through training, workshops, expert missions and exchange visits addressing the three SEIS components.



ANNEX 3: Input to the post-Astana process from the ENPI-SEIS project

Towards a Shared Environmental Information System in the European Neighbourhood (period of implementation: 2010 – mid-2014)

Overall objective of the project

To promote the protection of the environment in the countries of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) area.

Specific objectives

- Promote the setting up of national and regional environmental information systems in line with SEIS principles
- Improve capacities in the field of monitoring, collection, storage, assessment, and reporting of environmental data
- Identify and/or further develop environmental indicators
- Track progress of the regional environmental initiatives (European Neighbourhood Policy, Eastern Partnership, Horizon 2020, etc.)

These objectives are being addressed through six main activity areas, namely (1) Indicators; (2) Dataflows; (3) SEIS infrastructure; (4) Assessment; (5) Communication, and (6) Coordination.

Geographical coverage

ENPI East: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and the Russian Federation

ENPI South: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, (Syria) & Tunisia

Relevant SEIS activities in the ENPI East region providing value to the countries and eventually benefits to the European Union in terms of enhanced cooperation and security

I. Cooperation

- Establishment of a network and regular contact with National Focal Points (one from the Ministry of Environment and one from the Statistical office) in each country;
- Agreement on the main thematic priorities for development in the East region: (a) water particularly freshwater both in terms of quality and quantity; (b) municipal/household waste; (c) air emissions, climate change, and potentially air quality;
- Country Visits to all partner countries in 2011 and the resulting country reports that have provided an insight into the countries' situation, priorities and needs, as well as contributed to the design of next steps in project implementation. Overall, the demands cover activities across the three SEIS 'pillars' of cooperation, content and infrastructure in the agreed thematic priorities.

II. Content

- Training workshops, seminars and other events organised jointly with major regional partners in the agreed priority areas to build capacities and experience in putting SEIS into practice;
- Specific expert country support offered upon request from the countries;
- Enhanced support to indicator review and development already underway under the coordination of the UNECE Joint Task Force (JTF) on Environmental Indicators as well as the development of a regular and sustainable dataflow and indicator production to improve the quality and consistency of environmental information, assessment, reporting and resulting policy making and implementation to improve the environment within the countries and more widely across Europe.

III. Infrastructure

- Working Group on Information Technology established in support of developing a regular dataflow system based on SEIS principles;

- Sharing of data and information on the EEA tools and practices to help kick-start the countries in a SEIS-compliant manner, including the preparation of the first edition of 'SEIS cookbook';

More information on the specific activities, events and country information is available on the project website: <http://enpi-seis.eu.eea.europa.eu/>

The way forward

A range of common (regional, sub-regional, bilateral) and individual country actions are envisaged based on the feedback received during the country visits in 2011 and the regional discussions held so far. These will benefit individual countries, regional cooperation and legal reporting obligations and can be grouped as follows:

- 1) Support to the development of SEIS-compatible environmental information systems by providing European and international expertise, advice and quality control to the interested countries (addressing the cross-cutting elements of national information systems, their legal basis, data management and communication, as well as the specific sub-systems related to agreed priority themes).
- 2) Support the development and the use of common environmental indicators by all the countries and in particular by their statistical offices to ensure increasingly comprehensive and consistent assessment and reporting across countries, sub-regions and regions.
- 3) Facilitate overall access to EU expertise and technologies through training workshops, expert missions and exchange visits addressing the three SEIS components in the identified priority areas.



ANNEX 4

RELEVANT EVENTS FOR ASTANA MANDATE IMPLEMENTATION

DATE	PLACE	EVENT	INSTITUTION
03 - 04 July 2012	GENEVA, SWITZERLAND	Water-Joint meeting of Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment and Working Group on IWRM	UNECE
4-6 July 2012	GENEVA, SWITZERLAND	Joint Task Force on environmental indicators	UNECE
03 - 05 September 2012	GENEVA, SWITZERLAND	Fifteenth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention	UNECE/ Aarhus conv. secretariat
13-14 September 2012	ALMATY, KAZAKHSTAN	EU-Central Asia Strategy for a New Partnership - Platform for Environment and Water Cooperation; Working Group on Environmental Governance and Climate Change	EU
17 - 19 September 2012	GENEVA, SWITZERLAND	36th session of the EMEP Steering Body	UNECE/ LRTAP secretariat
24-25 September 2012	OSLO, NORWAY	Annual Meeting of the EAP Task Force	OECD
2 October 2012	Copenhagen	Workshop on env. Information system in Caspian region	EEA UNEP UNEP/Grid Arendal
11 - 12 October 2012	GENEVA, SWITZERLAND	Water and health Protocol - Fifth meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health	UNECE/water conv. secretariat
17-18 October 2012	Luxembourg	NFP/Eionet meeting	EEA
30 Oct.-1 November	GENEVA, SWITZERLAND	Joint Task Force on environmental indicators	UNECE

2012			
01 - 02 November 2012	GENEVA, SWITZERLAND	Thirteenth session of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment	UNECE
20 - 21 November 2012	GENEVA, SWITZERLAND	PRTR Protocol - Second meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol on PRTRs	UNECE
21-22 November 2012	COPENHAGEN, DENMARK	ENPI-SEIS Steering Committee meeting	EEA
28 - 30 November 2012	ROME, ITALY	Water convention - Sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention	UNECE/water conv. secretariat
10-11 December 2012	Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	Ministerial meeting CA	EU-CA partnership
11 - 13 December 2012	GENEVA, SWITZERLAND	LRTAP/Executive Body for the Convention thirty-first session	UNECE/ LRTAP Secretariat

ANNEX 5: Rio+20 process and the reform of the institutional framework

How the Rio outcomes³⁹ contribute to reinforce the Astana mandate:

- As major outcomes of Rio+20 green economy and the strengthening of the institutional framework have been considered as the most valid tools for achieving sustainable development and for poverty eradication. In particular, ***promoting inclusive, evidence based assessment as well as access to reliable relevant and timely data*** have been listed among the necessary actions of intervention for reforming the institutional framework

76. We recognize that effective governance at the local, subnational, national, regional and global levels representing the voices and interests of all is critical for advancing sustainable development. The strengthening and reform of the institutional framework should not be an end in itself, but a means to achieve sustainable development. We recognize that an improved and more effective institutional framework for sustainable development at the international level should be consistent with the Rio Principles, build on Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and its objectives on the institutional framework for sustainable development, contribute to the implementation of our commitments in the outcomes of United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social, environmental and related fields and take into account national priorities and the development strategies and priorities of developing countries. We therefore resolve to strengthen the institutional framework for sustainable development, which will, inter alia: [..]

(g) Promote the science-policy interface through inclusive, evidence-based and transparent scientific assessments, as well as access to reliable, relevant and timely data in areas related to the three dimensions of sustainable development, building on existing mechanisms, as appropriate; in this regard, strengthen participation of all countries in international sustainable development processes and capacity-building especially for developing countries, including in conducting their own monitoring and assessments;

- Furthermore in Rio has been agreed that a new structure will replace the actual Commission on Sustainable Development. This structure shaped on the base of a universal intergovernmental high level forum could decide among its tasks ***to provide support in bringing together dispersed information and assessments and contribute to the on-going efforts for capacity building for data collection and analysis in developing countries.***

85. The high-level forum could: [..]

(k) Strengthen the science-policy interface through review of documentation bringing together dispersed information and assessments, including in the form of a global sustainable development report, building on existing assessments;

(l) Enhance evidence-based decision-making at all levels and contribute to strengthening on-going efforts of capacity-building for data collection and analysis in developing countries.

³⁹ The future we want (<https://rio20.un.org/papersmart>), 19 June 2012

- At the same time it has been highlighted that ***the decision making process in order to be effective needs integrated social, economic and environmental data and information as well as effective analysis and assessment of implementation.***

98. We encourage regional, national, subnational and local authorities as appropriate to develop and utilize sustainable development strategies as key instruments for guiding decision-making and implementation of sustainable development at all levels, and in this regard we recognize that integrated social, economic and environmental data and information, as well as effective analysis and assessment of implementation, is important in decision-making processes.

- In the light of the above the Rio document recalls that ***there is a need for global integrated and scientifically based information on sustainable development hence regional economic commission need support from the United Nations system in collecting and compiling national inputs.***

251. We recognize that there is a need for global, integrated and scientifically based information on sustainable development. In this regard, we request the relevant bodies of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates, to support the regional economic commissions in collecting and compiling national inputs in order to inform this global effort. We further commit to mobilizing financial resources and capacity-building, particularly for developing countries, to achieve this endeavour.

The Astana mandate finds its justification and recognition at a global level within the framework of the Rio Summit. The Heads of States in fact have stressed in several sections of the document how important it is for relevant decision making processes the use of relevant and reliable information collected at regional, national or local level with the support of the regional economic committees in order to keep the world environment under constant review. Moreover, this information collected need to be integrated also with social and economic data in order to be the most comprehensive as possible. Decision cannot in fact be taken without information and knowledge. In this important scene setting EEA and its partners can contribute to work towards the achievements of this important goal in an easily and effective way paving the way to the gradual development of SEIS.