

Working modalities of a regional environmental information and assessment network of networks

I. Background

1. At its twenty-second session (Geneva, 25–27 January 2017), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy approved the new mandate and terms of reference for the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (ECE/CEP/2017/2). The new mandate calls for the Working Group to initiate a consultation on the development of a regional environmental information and assessment network of networks (hereinafter referred to as the regional network of networks) for the ECE region (ECE/CEP/2017/2, annex II, para. 3(c)).

2. The purpose of the consultation was to bring together the Working Group, the European Environment Agency and its European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and other relevant actors to discuss the benefit and feasibility of establishing a regional network of networks and elaborate its working modalities.

3. The current document has been prepared by the secretariat in consultation with members of the Working Group, Eionet, UNEP, [...] and [...], in response to this mandate. It takes into account inputs provided through a questionnaire and a discussion organized during the nineteenth session of the Working Group (Geneva, 27-28 June 2017) and a workshop on the working modalities of the network-of-networks (Rome, 6 October 2017) organized in the same week as the fourteenth session of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators.

4. The questionnaire, Working Group discussion and workshop addressed whether and how to operationalize the regional network of networks, taking into consideration that its establishment is dependent on the commitment and willingness of its possible members.

5. The present document includes the following components:

(a) Objectives of the regional environmental information and assessment network of networks and proposed scenarios for its working modalities;

(b) Inputs, suggestions and comments received through the questionnaire, consultation and workshop;

(c) An implementation plan as well as decisions and recommendations from the Working Group.

6. The Committee on Environmental Policy will be invited to consider the present document with a view to adopting the proposed recommendations on the establishment of a regional network of networks, its associated working modalities and implementation plan.

A. Objectives of the regional environmental information and assessment network of networks

7. The objectives of the regional network of networks will be to:

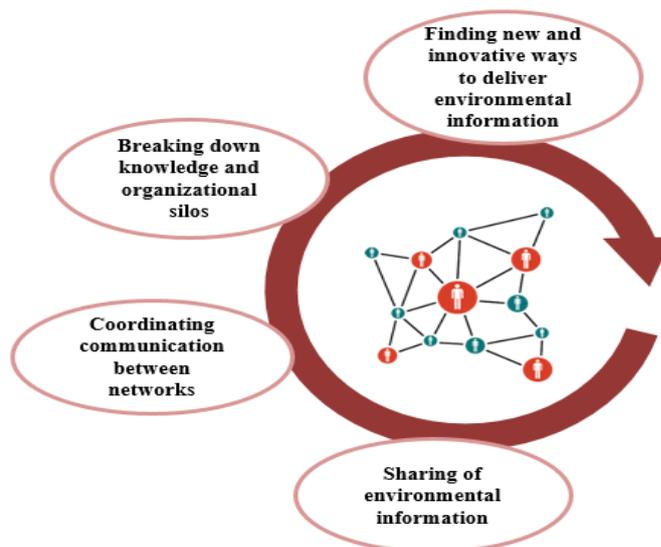
(a) **Share environmental information between the networks that are members of the regional network of networks.** The regional network of networks will create new opportunities to share environmental information, ideas, experiences and good practices between relevant networks around common challenges. It will include the Working Group, Eionet, UNEP, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, academic institutions and other interested actors;

(b) **Improve coordination and connection between environmental information and data networks.** The regional network of networks will provide a platform to develop coordinated ways through which environmental information and data can be more effectively communicated to relevant target groups. It will also facilitate co-learning and establish connections between stakeholders to encourage new and fruitful collaborations and partnerships;

(c) **Break down organisational and knowledge silos.** The regional network of networks will provide a space that encourages communication between relevant actors across the pan-European region, which aim to break down organizational and knowledge silos and facilitate the provision of comparable environmental data and information across the region;

(d) **Find new and innovative ways to deliver environmental information and data to policymakers.** The regional network of networks will endeavour to find new and innovative tools and methods to deliver environmental information and data to policymakers, members of the regional network of networks and other relevant bodies. The emphasis will be on making available environmental information more accessible to decision-makers and to improve information management, communication and dissemination.

Figure 1
A regional network of networks



B. Working modalities of the regional network of networks

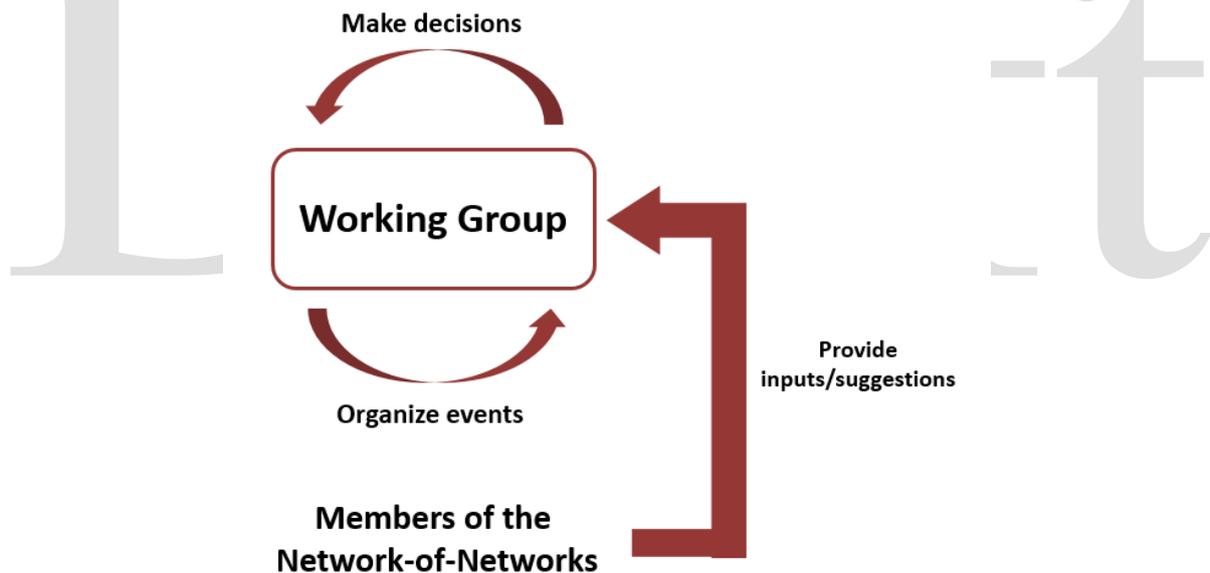
8. Three scenarios for possible working modalities of the regional network of networks have been prepared to facilitate discussion:

Scenario 1: The regional network of networks is managed by the secretariat of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment.

- The secretariat of the Working Group coordinates and prepares the draft programme on all proposed activities for the regional network of networks (see Figure 2).
- This programme is based on the inputs and suggestions provided by the Members of the regional network of networks. The Working Group will review and decide upon these inputs and suggestions at its annual meeting.
- The Working Group will produce an annual programme and oversee the organization of all events, as presented by the secretariat.
- Members of the regional network of networks will be invited to participate in the organization of events based on an expression of interest during the annual meeting of the Working Group.

Figure 2

Scenario 1: Business as usual



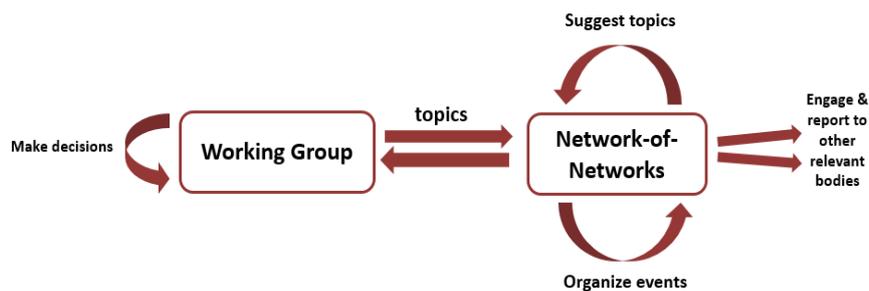
Scenario 2: The regional network of networks is established as a sub-group to the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment.

- The regional network of networks is established as a sub-group to the Working Group (see Figure 3).
- The setup is envisaged as being similar to that as between the Committee on Environmental Policy and the Working Group. More specifically, this means that the sub-group would be separate and have its own chair, under the supervision of the Working Group.

- Possible topics and associated events to be organized by the regional network of networks would be prepared by the sub-group. The Working Group will review and decide upon these suggestions at its annual meeting.
- Following the decision by the Working Group, the sub-group will take the lead in organizing events and meetings for the regional network of networks and its members under the supervision of the secretariat of the Working Group.

Figure 3

Scenario 2: Regional network of networks as a sub-group.

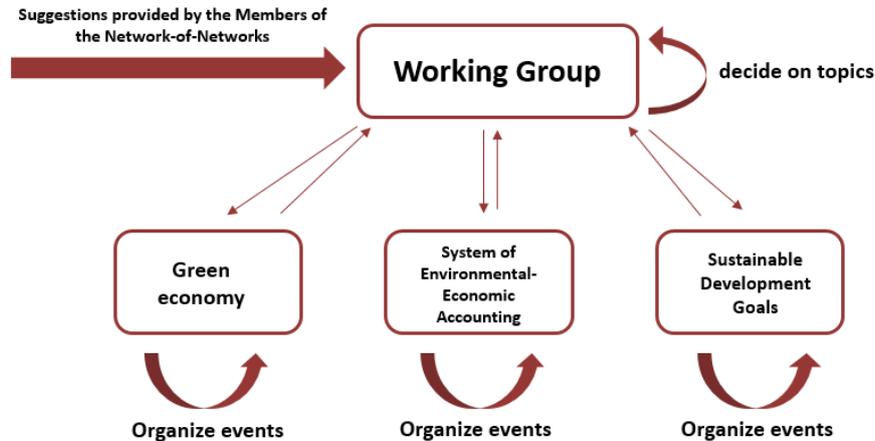


Scenario 3: The regional network of networks is established as several sub-groups to the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment based on topics.

- The Working Group coordinates and makes decisions on all proposed activities for the regional network of networks (see Figure 4).
- Members of the regional network of networks will be invited on an annual basis to provide to the secretariat suggestions regarding possible topics and associated events to be organized by the network-of-networks .
- Topical sub-groups (e.g., on green economy, the sustainable development goals and the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting) will then be established by the Working Group based on selected topics. Members of the regional network of networks will then be invited to join relevant topical sub-groups.
- Each topical sub-group will be in charge of organizing the meetings and events associated with its assigned topic, under the supervision of the Working Group. This also means that each sub-group will be managed by the members that have volunteered to take the lead.

Figure 4

Scenario 3: Regional network of networks as topical sub-groups.



II. Inputs received from potential members of the environmental information and assessment network of networks

9. As part of the process of preparing the present background paper, the secretariat issued a questionnaire on the working modalities of the regional network of networks. The purpose of engaging the Working Group members and other interested parties was to address how the regional network of networks could be established and, more importantly, what its overall objectives should be.

10. The questionnaire included questions on possible objectives, drivers and topics for the regional network of networks. It also aimed to identify expectations regarding how the regional network of networks should function and to gauge the level of support for its establishment.

11. The Working Group discussed the establishment of the regional network of networks during its nineteenth session. It also discussed the inputs received through the questionnaire and examined the feasibility of establishing a regional network of networks. The outcome of this discussion was integrated into the present document (see section A below) in preparation for the workshop on the working modalities of the regional network of networks.

12. The main purpose of the workshop was to continue discussion on the feasibility of establishment and operationalizing the network-of-networks and to determine the appropriate way for the network of network to be organized.

A. Inputs received through the questionnaire and results of the discussion during the nineteenth session of the Working Group

[...]

B. Inputs received during the workshop on the working modalities

[...]

C. Summary of the consultation process

[...]

III. Implementation plan

[...]

IV. Decisions and recommendations

[...]

Draft