



UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Joint Intersectoral Task Force on Environmental Indicators

Fifth session
Geneva, 4-6 July 2012
Item 6 of the provisional agenda

European Environment Agency



Developments and plans for work on indicators under ENPI-SEIS project for countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and the Russian Federation

Background document prepared by the European Environment Agency

Background on ENPI-SEIS project

As the members of the UNECE Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators have already been informed, the European Environment Agency is managing a contract funded under the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument to support Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and the Russian Federation to develop towards a shared environmental information system in the European Neighbourhood (ENPI-SEIS project).

The overall objective of the project '*Towards a Shared Environmental Information System in the European Neighbourhood*' (2010-2014) is to promote the protection of the environment in the countries of the European Neighbourhood Policy area.

This is to be achieved through specific objectives to:

- 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 / 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:

- Indicators
- Dataflows
- SEIS infrastructure
- Assessment
- Communication, and

- Coordination.

Following initial consultations on the development of work, the national focal points appointed by the environment ministries and statistical offices in each of the seven countries agreed to prioritise the following themes for the initial phase of work: water particularly freshwater both in terms of quality and quantity (with Black Sea as first marine waters); municipal/household waste; as well as air emissions, climate change, and eventually air quality.

Mandate of the UNECE Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators

In relation to dataflows and indicators, it was recognised at an early stage that the UNECE Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators established in 2009 could play a key role. The objective of the Task Force (as revised in 2010) is to assist national statistical agencies and institutions responsible for the production of national state-of-the-environment reports in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and SEE to further improve environmental statistics, strengthen environmental reporting and promote comparability of environmental statistics and indicators in the region.

This objective is to be achieved through a range of planned activities:

- Review further the indicators covered by the Indicator Guidelines to better explain the methodologies, clarify concepts and definitions and develop detailed guidance, possibly in the form of data tables, on the production of indicators;
- Provide guidance on primary data collection, including statistical data, as a basis for indicators in the Indicator Guidelines through data exchange on indicators and the subsequent evaluation of gaps and opportunities to fill them;
- Propose additional environmental indicators to be included in the Indicator Guidelines;
- 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;
- Provide and adapt to the needs of the countries concerned relevant guidance materials available at the international level;
- Maintain a network of environmental experts in statistical offices and Government agencies dealing with environmental assessments to further broaden the exchange of experiences and approaches.

These activities will provide a range of outputs including:

- Reviews of the application of environmental indicators from the Indicator Guidelines in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and SEE. Analysis of the results of these reviews will help to identify priority work areas where further improvement is most needed in these countries and where training courses and workshops may have a maximum effect. The reviews may also help international donors to identify potential areas for technical assistance;
- Further improvement of Indicator Guidelines on the texts of indicators not yet reviewed;
- Agreed texts of additional indicators that are not included in the Indicator Guidelines;
- Methodological documents, presentations and recommendations on data collection and production of indicators.

The Task Force has been reviewing sub-sets of the 36 indicators at each of its meetings between 2009 and 2011 to help improve the Guidelines and assess the consistency and completeness of national indicators. Through this process data has been collected on some indicators up to 2010 and for other indicators up to 2008 or 2009 depending on when the indicators were reviewed over the past two years.

Proposed way forward

The proposed approach for the future is to start moving from a cycle of reviews of a sub-set of 6 indicators at each JTF meeting to a **regular and sustainable dataflow** of the data required for each of the indicators in the UNECE guidelines starting with around 7-8 of the most completely and consistently available indicators and building progressively towards the full set of 36 indicators.

Based on an assessment of the results of the first four review meetings, a proposal by UNECE Secretariat (Annex 1) is made for developing 14 sub-indicators within 8 of the 36 core set indicators in the UNECE Indicator Guidelines.

In Annex 2 is presented a proposal for a feasibility study to help determine the most practical approach to be taken to develop a regular dataflow system building on the JTF work to date based on SEIS principles, taking also into consideration the newly established Working Group on Information Technology for the ENPI East within the ENPI-SEIS project.

The Joint Task Force (in its capacity of providing guidance on primary data collection, including statistical data, as a basis for indicators in the Indicator Guidelines through data exchange on indicators and the subsequent evaluation of gaps and opportunities to fill them) is asked to consider the proposals in the attached papers and agree on the further process in developing a core set of environmental indicators in the region.