

## 5<sup>th</sup> Joint OECD/UNECE Seminar on the Implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA)

13-14 February 2020, Geneva

### CONCEPT NOTE

#### 1. Background

The fifth *Joint OECD/UNECE Seminar on the Implementation of SEEA* will take place on 13-14 February 2020 in Geneva, following four previous seminars in 2015, 2016, 2018 and 2019.

The aim of the seminars is to provide a platform for exchange of knowledge and experiences on SEEA implementation and to facilitate coordination between all relevant partners in the OECD and UNECE regions. The seminars are planned to be held regularly with a long-term view to support the implementation of the SEEA.

All UNECE and OECD countries as well as other UN member countries can participate in the seminars. Participation is on a self-funded basis. The UNECE secretariat may be able to provide financial support for the participation from countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA).

The seminars are held with English-Russian interpretation.

Documents for the seminar will be available on the Seminar's webpage (<http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=52557>).

#### 2. Introduction

Taking into account the decisions and recommendations of the 2019 Seminar, the Organising Committee<sup>1</sup> selected "Circular Economy", "Environmental Goods and Services Sector", and "Experimental Ecosystem Accounting" as the main topics for the 2020 Seminar.

The seminar will also inform about relevant international developments and capacity building activities of international organisations and countries in the region.

Participants will benefit from presentations of countries and international organisations. The presentations will be combined with panel discussions and other forms of interactions with the audience (e.g. by using an electronic voting tool and enough time for discussions).

#### 3. Organisation of the Seminar

The 2020 Seminar will be organised in the form of **five sessions** which are outlined below.

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<sup>1</sup> Organizing Committee: Statistics Netherlands (Chair), National Institute of Statistics and Census of Argentina, Australian Bureau of Statistics, National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, Statistics Canada, Statistics Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan, National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, Statistics New Zealand, Eurostat, UNSD, OECD and UNECE

A **lunch break presentation** (in English only) is planned for 13 February.

A new feature this seminar is a **poster session** organised during the lunchbreak of 14 February. The session will allow more participants of the seminar to present their work on SEEA in a more informal setting. The idea is that presenters prepare an A2/A1 size poster which will be put up in the meeting room. They present this poster to the other participants who will mingle and walk past the various posters in the meeting room. There will be an award for the best poster!

Participants who are interested to give presentations, to participate in panel discussions, or to prepare posters, are invited to contact Peter van de Ven ([peter.vandeven@oecd.org](mailto:peter.vandeven@oecd.org)) or Michael Nagy ([michael.nagy@un.org](mailto:michael.nagy@un.org)) by 10 December 2019 at the latest.

## A. Opening and setting the scene

This session will be organised by OECD and UNECE. It will be chaired by Mr. Gerard Eding from Statistics Netherlands.

The session will inform about recent global developments of relevance for the region, including progress on the work of the *United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting* (UNCEEA) and the outcomes of the 25<sup>th</sup> meeting of the *London Group on Environmental Accounting*, which was held from 7-10 October 2019 in Melbourne, Australia.

In addition, international organisations will present updates on their implementation strategies and related capacity development activities.

The objectives of the session are to:

- Welcome participants and to adopt the agenda;
- Inform participants about global developments which are of relevance for the OECD and UNECE regions, including methodological work, global databases and capacity development.

Expected outcomes:

- Participants informed about global developments with relevance for the region;
- Contribution to the coordination of capacity development activities in the OECD and UNECE regions.

## B. Circular economy

This session will be organised and chaired by the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, Eurostat and UNECE.

Circular economy is an emerging policy issue with links to several SEEA accounts. Multiple definitions of the circular economy exist which makes it problematic to agree on a measurement framework for related statistics, accounts and indicators. From a measurement perspective, there are also open questions regarding the scope and conceptual relationship of circular economy with other policy and measurement frameworks.

There is no such thing as a single SEEA account on the circular economy. Rather several of the SEEA accounts can be used individually or combined to look at the circular economy phenomenon from different complementary angles: material inputs, waste, energy, emissions, growth, investments and jobs in the circular economy sector, etc.

The session will provide an introduction into the concept of the circular economy and its various definitions and discuss related policy questions and how they could be informed with SEEA.

Furthermore, it will discuss with the use of examples of selected accounts (e.g. MFA, waste, energy) how these accounts can contribute to measuring a transition towards a circular economy.

The session will conclude with a discussion of possible ways to arrive at an integrated set of accounts that can support the production of indicators on the circular economy, and how this information can be communicated in an effective way.

Speakers from selected countries and international organisations will share their practical experiences and participate in a panel discussion.

UNSD is planning to prepare a paper on the circular economy and SEEA. The outcomes of the session will provide an important input for this paper.

The objectives of the session are to:

- Introduce the concept of circular economy and to discuss information requirements to manage and monitor the transition towards a circular economy;
- Identify the possible role of specific SEEA accounts in measuring the circular economy and to discuss related challenges and possible solutions. This will help countries in developing their SEEA implementation plans, but may also identify issues to be considered in a possible future review of the SEEA-CF and the development of methodological guidelines;
- Discuss ways of integrating information from different SEEA Accounts to monitor the circular economy, and their communication towards users.

Expected outcomes:

- Participants are familiar with the concept of circular economy and the different existing definitions;
- Understanding of the linkages between circular economy and SEEA;
- Identification of possible SEEA-related products (e.g. indicators, analysis, etc.) to inform and measure the circular economy, including recommendations for communication;
- Discussion of challenges and possible ways to overcome them.

### **C. Environmental Goods and Services Sector (EGSS)**

This session will be organised and chaired by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Canada and the Statistics Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Measuring the Environmental Goods and Services Sector (EGSS) is of importance for most countries of the OECD and UNECE regions. This information is important in understanding the economic response to the challenges of environmental degradation and the depletion of natural resources.

The session will discuss the increasing information needed to manage the environment through business, and provide insights for trade and business opportunities. It will provide an introduction into EGSS and will discuss ways for implementation, including challenges that statistical offices may face in defining and measuring EGSS.

Experts from countries and international organisations (e.g. ILO, UNEP, World Bank, WTO) will be invited to showcase and discuss with participants the implementation and policy uses of EGSS.

The objectives of the session are to:

- Introduce EGSS;
- Showcase the implementation of EGSS with practical examples;

- Present examples of policy applications and discuss how EGSS could be used and communicated to better inform national and international policies.

Expected outcomes:

- Introduction to EGSS implementation: concepts, main challenges and possible solutions;
- Overview on EGSS-related activities of international organizations and future plans;
- Practical country examples of implementation;
- Policy applications of EGSS and the benefits from measurement;
- Recommendations for producers and users.

#### **D. SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EEA)**

The session will be organised and chaired by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic and UNSD.

There has been an enormous research and development of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EEA) since it was first published in 2013 as a result of policy demand. More than 40 countries are experimenting with the compilation of various modules of ecosystem accounts at various scales, national as well as subnational (e.g. region/province, river basin, protected, area, urban, etc.). These experiences have shown the potential of ecosystem accounts to inform policy decisions about the environment and natural capital. Since March 2018, a revision process of the SEEA EEA has been initiated, with the aim of reaching consensus on concepts and methods for ecosystem accounting. Several consultations on issue papers, chapters and the overall document will be undertaken during 2020 with the statistical community as well as experts from line ministries, academia, mapping agencies, etc. The revised SEEA EEA will be submitted to the UN Statistical Commission in March 2021 for its endorsement.

The uptake of the SEEA EEA and Natural Capital Accounting (NCA) is also evident in the current discussions that are on-going in the development of the Post-2020 Biodiversity framework which will be adopted in October 2020 in Kunming China.

The objectives of the session are to:

- Inform the participants on the current status of the revision process and outstanding issues on the research agenda. This will be an important input in the discussion which will take place at the Statistical Commission in March 2020;
- Illustrate practices in compiling selected accounts from the SEEA EEA, using concrete examples, in particular the results of the testing of applying the IUCN Classification of Ecosystem Types and condition accounts, as well as other accounts;
- Present examples of policy applications and discuss how SEEA-EEA could be used and communicated to better inform national and international policies.

Expected outcomes:

- Update on the SEEA-EEA revision process;
- Practical examples of implementation and policy uses;
- Recommendations for producers and users.

#### **E. Conclusions and follow-up activities**

The final session will conclude the seminar and identify follow-up actions. It will discuss and agree on recommendations for further advancing the implementation of SEEA in the OECD and UNECE regions.

