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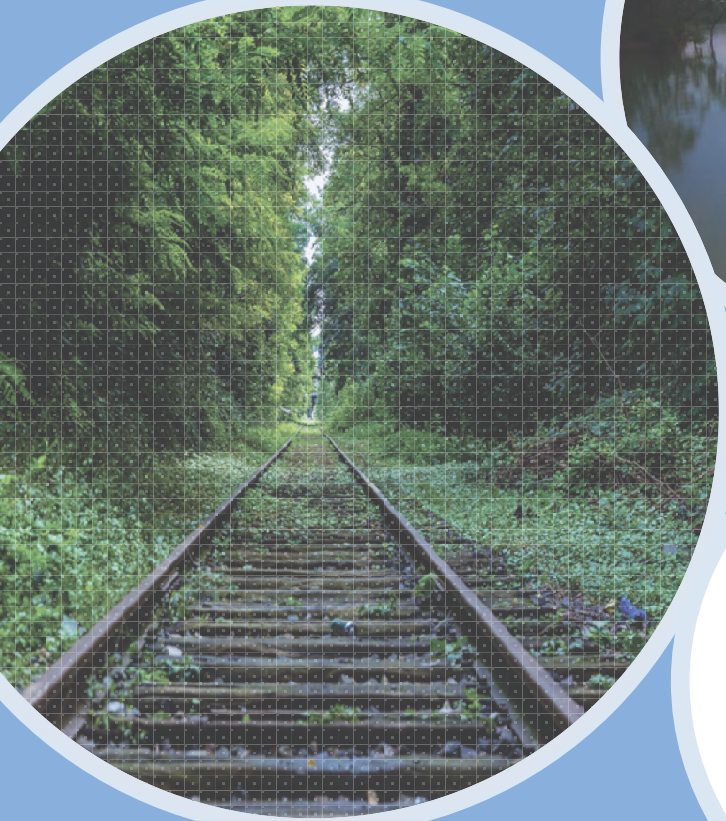

Road Map 2021

Defining a Strategy for the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

Note

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About the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment was established in 2000 by the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) to address the demand for reliable environmental information and data and to provide recommendations, propose action plans, and improve coordination of international initiatives concerned with environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting.

We have, since the Working Group was launched, seen significant political progress and change, both internationally and nationally. More recently, these development include the adoption of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and commitments made to the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**, including the call by Ministers of the Environment, at the **Eight Environment for Europe Conference**, to continue efforts to develop national information systems to have a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) in place in the countries of Europe and Central Asia by 2021. These agreements have direct and indirect implications concerning several areas of work for the Working Group.

To capture these changes and consider the spectrum of developments and options for the Working Group, we organised a forward-thinking process during our eighteenth session to undertake long-term thinking and analysis, addressing key priorities for the Working Group in the coming years. The aim was to create a vision for 2030 and a roadmap up to 2021.

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The Working Group is a **collaborative platform** through which our members have been able to learn, find new opportunities and bring home new capacities. It has created interconnections, spanning different policy areas and institutions, through the organisation of regular sessions and capacity-building, and it has **created a common space** through which our members have been able to operationalise joint activities and set targets for the region.

The Road Map is meant as a framework to set **long-term strategic goals and objectives**, to define where the Working Group wants to be by 2021, including the type of activities that the Working Group wants to focus on in the coming 5 years. The goal of the roadmap is to allow us to think long-term but act now..

Shared forward-thinking, futures-thinking or foresight, is ultimately a key component when considering options for the years to come, in particular, to focus and **realigning efforts on the right questions and problems** more clearly. This is all part of an implicit effort by the Working Group to consider its ongoing work and to establish a framework that can **catalyse action and change**.

The Road Map takes into consideration that it is the **collection, production, analysis, sharing** and **dissemination of high-quality** and **robust environmental information and data** that represents the core function and driver behind the activities of the Working Group. It is as such the provision of environmental information and data for monitoring and assessment that takes the centre stage for our Road Map 2021.

Cross-cutting goals and objectives

Objective 1

Enhancing capacity-building

1. Characterise capacity-related challenges and gaps unique to the pan-European region.
2. Prepare new tools, guidelines and mechanisms for integrative and sustainable capacity-building in the region.
3. Convene workshops on regionally and internationally agreed environmental data flows and indicators coherent with the principles of a Shared Environmental Information System.
4. Anticipate the need for capacity-building associated with new environmental information and data demands leading up to 2021.

Objective 2

Activity-driven & result-oriented cooperation

1. Deepen the collective effort to promote the sharing of knowledge, experiences and technology to support capacity-building in the region leading up to 2021.
2. Consolidate the Working Groups regional profile and play a constructive and complementary role together with other international, regional and sub-regional forums.
3. Actively promote the streamlining and improved efficiency of environmental monitoring and assessment.
4. Establish a regional "environmental information and assessment network-of-networks" as an active forum for dialogue and collective action on regional issues of common concern.

Cross-cutting goals and objectives

Objective 3

Mobilise more and better resources

1. Improve efficiency of on-going activities to ensure that costs are reduced and that the range and type of activities can be expanded.
2. Mobilise direct support from prospective contributors, leading up to the establishment of a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) by 2021 and monitoring and reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Sustainable Development Goals and the Green Economy

2016 to 2021

Objective

Streamlining reporting obligations for the 2030 Agenda and Green Economy

1. Evaluate and regularly report on environmental data and information needed to cover the production of regional and international environmental indicators to monitor progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and Green Economy.
2. Prepare and publish new tools, guidelines and mechanisms on Sustainable Development Goals and Green Economy indicator-related methodologies and data collection for use in the pan-European region.
3. Undertake capacity-building for national environmental authorities and statistical on how to prepare indicator-based and regularly reports on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and Green Economy.
4. Facilitate regular inter- and cross-agency collaboration and dialogue to ensure that environmental information and data is interconnected, integrated and made available for multiple use.
5. Provide technical assistance to improve indicator frameworks to monitor the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda and the Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy, including the establishment of a reporting mechanisms and procedures for methodological review, leading up to 2021.

2016 to 2021

Reporting and Assessment

Objective

Support towards regular environmental reporting and assessment

1. Undertake capacity-building on the use, harmonization and streamlining of indicator-related methodologies, data collection and quality assurance and quality control aspects of environmental data and indicators towards national and international reporting obligation.
2. Support and facilitate the establishment of Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) by 2021.
3. Promote and assist in the streamlining of regular reporting by 2020, and facilitate increased collaboration and dialogue with the secretariats of relevant multilateral environmental agreements as part of this process.
4. Assist in common activities carried out by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, European Environment Agency and United Nations Environment Programme – as characterised by the common approach laid out by the three institutions.
5. Support the development of a reporting mechanism for countries to self-monitor and self-evaluate progress on SEIS establishment and ensure that priority data flows for international exchange are properly managed as part of a regular reporting process on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Green Economy.

Environmental Statistics

2016 to 2021

Objective

Servicing environmental authorities and statistical agencies

1. Ensure that the Working Group and the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators and Statistics continue to work closely together in setting priority areas for action leading up to 2021 and that activities carried out by the two bodies are done in a collaborative manner.
2. Address the demand for the integration of economic, social and environmental information and data.
3. Allow for cross-national and inter-agency communication on experiences and know-how concerning the production of environmental statistics. This should include addressing concerns about methodologies in the field of environment statistics and the ability to compare environmental indicators and statistics across the pan-European region.
4. Ensure that the sharing and increased accessibility of all environmental statistics is coherent with the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) principles and to build linkages that help to facilitate integration.

Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment
at its Eighteenth Session at Palais des Nations in Geneva

The Road Map 2021 is the result of a consultation and a meeting organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment.

Mr. Filip Aggestam, programme manager, prepared the first draft of text contained in this publication. National experts from Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan participated in the preparation of this document, together with experts from the European Environment Agency (EEA), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, National Biodiversity and Biosafety Centre of Tajikistan and the international non-profit organizations Covalence EthicalQuote, International Center for Environmental Research (ICFER) and Zoï Environment Network.

The ECE secretariat, served both as content editor and overall project manager.

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Environmental Monitoring, Indicators and Assessments, Environment Division
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Palais des Nations, 8-14, avenue de la Paix
CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Email: WGEMASec@unece.org