

COUNTRY	COMMENTS
ARMENIA	No comments related to the draft outline
AUSTRIA	<p>Austria welcomes the EEA's efforts reflected in this paper and fully supports the necessary continuation of co-operation efforts with the targeted countries.</p> <p>While a lot has been achieved in the last decade on capacity building and better governance, the paper clearly states e.g. on p. 7 and 8 that more has to be done in order to ensure a sustainable, self-supporting process in a long-term perspective. In this regard we recall the Chisinau declaration "Rio plus Aarhus – 20 Years on – Bearing fruit and looking forward", its chapter on environmental governance and para 4 on the role of governments "in providing the necessary stimulus, tools, information and assistance to enable transparent decision-making processes in order to ensure informed, balanced and effective public participation".</p> <p>With regard to the individual short- term measures, it is difficult for us to assess sometimes the robustness of certain measures e.g. Eye on Earth, semantic web technologies and other fairly sophisticated tools in comparison with the analysis on the previously mentioned pages 7 and 8 where it is said that the data storage and management situation in Central Asia is still a major issue.</p> <p>It is however crystal-clear that environmental administrations on the spot including national agencies should be strengthened by EU and EEA efforts/authorities in their enforcement activities including all appropriate approaches giving more support and recognition to sub-regional NGOs.</p> <p>We suggest focusing on a few common thematic areas e.g. water, biodiversity or green bridges and prioritize those that enable most overlap and sufficient technical resilience with UNECE and international conventions.</p> <p>The long term perspective elements are very well elaborated.</p> <p>It is hoped that the list of approaches could perhaps still be adjusted by an "INSPIRE light approach" one day or of major ideas crystallizing within the 7th EAP in the period of 2012-14. Climate change and land use issues and implications already play and will continue playing a large role. At this stage we would however clearly tend toward a more cautious language line on GMES as a downgrading of local monitoring forces e.g. in EECCA countries by the promise of more EU financed GMES technology from 2014 alone is probably not desirable, compare p.11.</p>
POLAND	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The structure of the document is clear but it would be advisable to develop financial aspects of implementation SEIS in Pan-European region. It is also worth to include costs and benefits analysis as well as presentation of threats to the project. 2. Chapter III, part A „Short-term actions”, 3rd bullet – clear information about future of AoA Virtual Library is needed as well as explanation on the relation with another service hosted by EEA – SERIS. Integration of both services is needed. It will allow to avoid double work with inserting information on state of environment assessments to two different services. The action proposed on p. 14 "SERIS+" at this stage might be controversial. The link between AoA virtual library and SERIS seems to be natural and obvious. But linking AoA virtual library with SENSE 2 project, aiming at environmental indicators exchange, seems to be unclear and too far-reaching 3. In chapter „Managing the process” the role of Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators should be indicated. 4. The document seems to be too optimistic, especially taking into account the fact that SEIS initiative on EU level has lost its momentum.
PORTUGAL	Portugal thanks the European Environment Agency for the excellent document they have prepared in reply to the request of the ministers in Astana. We consider this document to be a good basis for fulfilling the Astana mandate by allowing us to have a

	<p>better notion of the state of the art of the already existing instruments and to have a better view on the necessary actions to the establishment of a regular process of environmental assessments and to launch the discussion on developing SEIS across the pan-European region.</p> <p>The decision taken in Astana to establish a regular process of environmental assessment and to develop the SEIS across the pan-European region was a milestone for the Environment for Europe Process. The implementation of SEIS will represent an important added-value for keeping the environment of the region under review and can play a vital role to strengthen and streamline the work of UNECE and it will also certainly represent one of the main challenges for its work in upcoming years. In that regard the EEA document sets a most useful outline of actions to implement.</p> <p>Portugal looks forward to the development of the discussion on SEIS implementation and in that view we consider that a future version of the EEA document could benefit from having additional information on financing needs and opportunities.</p> <p>Concerning the proposed governance model, we believe that the Committee on Environment Policy will be a suitable fora for follow up to this exercise while allowing a broad and open involvement off stakeholders who can provide important inputs. Considering the important work done by the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators, we believe these two groups are in condition to play a key operational role in the establishment of the regular assessment and reporting process and the development of SEIS.</p> <p>We also find it useful to have the opportunity to look into how can the Astana mandate be articulated with the Rio +20 outcomes.</p>
RUSSIAN FED.	The role of WGEMA in supporting the development of SEIS at pan-European level needs to be strengthened
SWITZERLAND	<p><u>General comments:</u></p> <p>Switzerland fully supports any initiative which focus on building the capacity of the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe in environmental monitoring and reporting. In particular, we would like to underline of 1) improving environmental observations, 2) data collection and 3) reporting capacities. Previous processes with similar objectives were established on an ad hoc basis. It is important to establish a regular process of environmental assessment for the beneficiary countries. Therefore, Switzerland welcomes in particular the Astana Ministerial Declaration and the request addressed to European Environment Agency (EEA) by the ministers “to develop an outline for the establishment of a regular process of environmental assessment and for the gradual development of Shared Environment Information System (SEIS) across the pan-European region”.</p> <p>SEIS will allow the beneficiary countries to provide timely and accurate environmental data to improve monitoring and assessment in these countries, and at the end to answer in a proper to their international obligations in the domain of environmental monitoring and reporting, in particular those of the Aarhus convention.</p> <p><u>Detailed comments:</u></p> <p>In part II, “under establishing a regular process of environmental assessment” (p.5), we are not sure that the first objective “Support to the implementation of EU legislation ‘to help embed the Astana mandate into EU activities, is the most appropriate for non EU MS such as countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia. For these countries, drivers should be the Aarhus convention and not the EU legislation.</p> <p>In part III “Next steps”, we fully agree with the proposed pragmatic approach reusing existing initiatives.</p>

	<p>In “managing the process”, we particular welcome the link of the Astana follow-up activities within the Aarhus convention, and the fact that the annual meeting of the parties to the Aarhus convention “could offer the legal platform for assessing progress and coordinating actions towards implementing the requirements of the Astana Declaration”. We support that, in this context, the Secretariat of the Aarhus convention could be assigned to service the Astana follow up activities.</p> <p>We fully support the expected outcomes (short term). For the long term perspective, we doubt that the Europe 2020 strategy and the 7th Environmental Action Programme should be the reference for the beneficiary countries. Please refer to the Aarhus convention.</p> <p>Finally, necessary financial resources should be secured, both for short and long terms steps in establishing SEIS in these countries.</p>
--	---

INT. ORG	COMMENTS
EUROPEAN COMMISSION DG ENV	<p>Include in the paper an overview of the previous EU activities and projects and their added value to this process as basis for further SEIS development (ENP, Balkans etc.)</p> <p>Agree with the priority actions proposed but recommended to organize these priorities in an order of importance as to be clearer on what needs to be addressed first</p>
EUROPEAN COMMISSION DG CLIMA	<p>DG CLIMA generally agrees with the three sets of comments received so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To include an overview of SEIS experiences gathered so far; - To set clear implementation priorities of the Astana mandate and be clearer regarding proposed specific actions; - To develop further the financial aspects concerning the implementation of the Astana mandate. <p>The latter point, nevertheless should be considered further as participation should not result in a major diversion of EEA resources (i.e. both budgetary and human resources) from core processes, nor contradict EEA’s mission as stated in Regulation (EC) 401/2009 by going far beyond the mandate. In this sense, DG CLIMA welcomes the further clarifications that are to be provided to the MB meeting in June on how work in this area would be financed.</p> <p>DG CLIMA can be involved in the further consultations on the outline as well as possibly in the high-level stakeholder meeting, foreseen for the autumn, with the purpose of supporting the inclusion of climate-relevant reporting in any future strategy on environmental reporting.</p>
OECD / EAP Task Force	<p>We welcome very much follow up work on SEIS and are ready to contribute to it, for instance, through the planned work on green growth indicators (in OECD countries and elsewhere in the UNECE region). As concerns the circulated paper, it constitutes a good basis for advancing the discussion. In its next draft, the following points may need further clarification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The type of coordinated products from sub-regional to pan-European levels that are planned for future and who would produce them; • Possible mechanisms (to be depicted in general terms for a start) to ensure the synchronicity of those products and timing suitable to maximizing their use in multiple policy processes, as recommended in the Assessment of Assessments; • Possible ways of enhancing the accessibility of information, including in light

	<p>of language barriers within the region;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible lines of action to help with information infrastructure development in SEE and EECCA. In this context, the question is what would be a minimum information infrastructure for countries to contribute and benefit from SEIS; The need for a better data production chain and data verification/validation mechanisms leading to information that is analytically sound. Human (individual) capacity that is needed for SEIS development and operation. <p>Finally, given a large and increasing OECD membership of countries from the UNECE region, mentioning the Recommendation of the Council on Environmental Information (3 April 1998 - C(98)67/FINAL) as a complementary instrument of international law transposing the Principle 10 would be useful (see ShowInstrumentView.aspx?InstrumentID=45&Lang=en&Book=False">http://acts.oecd.org/Instruments>ShowInstrumentView.aspx?InstrumentID=45&Lang=en&Book=False)</p>
UNEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After scanning the EEA-SEIS document, the only comment at this stage I have is that I see quite a few references to InforMEA but don't see mentioning of linking the European assessment work to UNEP and GEO (well, only to the other GEO), and of SEIS with UNEPLive. Just like SEIS is to support and enable European assessments, and do it more dynamically than only through a big report every couple of years, UNEPLive is to that for the global level - so we can both learn from each other in the process, as well as practically integrate/link the (European) piece into the (global) puzzle. - The first six pages focus on what is already there and done, while the last four look towards future steps and implementation. I think a next-draft would better reverse that treatment and only spend three-four pages on background/"how we got here"/mandate etc, and provide more detail on proposed implementation. - In the last paragraph, if I understand correctly, the EEA is calling on "international organisation(s) and body(ies)" to contribute more information to the AoA portal on related and relevant activities from our Programmes of Work. Just to note there would be (human) resource implications if we accept the same.
ECE Water Convention secretariat	<p>1) Is the paper capturing all relevant aspects for implementing the Astana mandate?</p> <p>As pointed out in the document, the content of the regular environmental assessment referred to in the mandate still remains to be addressed. To "serve multiple policy processes, including MEAs", e.g. the information needs and the assessment frameworks of the various legal instruments have to be taken into account. Without such clarification, the concept remains very vague.</p> <p>2) Countries & organisations are invited to map concrete activities and contributions against the proposed tasks.</p> <p>The next assessment of transboundary waters under the UNECE Water Convention will be a thematically focused edition, which is to be prepared by 2015. The origin and mandate for the assessment lies in the decision of the Meeting of the Parties to carry out regularly regional assessments of transboundary waters. In the light of the decisions by the governing bodies up to date the edition will likely focus on the water-food-energy nexus. This is also reflected in the draft work plan of the Water Convention for 2013–2015. If appropriate, UNECE Water Convention's thematic assessment could be a contributor to the regular environmental assessment process mandated by the Astana Conference, however how SEIS could support the Convention's assessment and the interfacing between the two processes remains</p>

to be clarified.

As preliminary comments, the following potential difficulties / incompatibilities that would need to be addressed appear:

- The entry into force of the 2003 amendments opening the UNECE Water Convention to countries outside the UNECE region approaching sets a requirement for a wider geographical scope, and consequently a number of transboundary basins from other regions (Africa, Asia and Latin America) are foreseen to be included.
- The focus on the water/food/energy nexus will broaden the scope of information required. Would SEIS capture such information?
- Moreover, **the water assessment will be made at the basin level, while most of the information to EEA is reported at the national level.** In the first and second Assessments under the Convention, the information used/needed by EEA and UNECE was not consistent and could not be used/shared by the two processes. While hopefully for the future water-related information might more and more be available at the basin level, other sectors' information might not.

3) How best to manage the overall process, monitor progress and increase country ownership?

- The scope, approach and process for the development of the future assessments under the Water Convention will be dictated by its Meeting of the Parties. These will influence information needs. From the Convention's perspective it is key that the SEIS is flexible enough to support its work and can respond to evolving situations. **Appropriately the document recognizes the importance of strengthening existing institutional structures** (for environmental assessment).
- The **UNECE secretariat of the Water Convention is keen in exploring future cooperation and clarifying opportunities.** As important decisions related to the future assessment under the Convention will be taken already in July and November 2012, it would be timely to identify key aspects of the cooperation within this time-frame. Obviously the final decision will remain with the Parties to the Convention.