



**6TH SESSION OF THE JOINT TASK FORCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS
01 NOVEMBER 2012, 9:30-12:30, PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA**

BRIEFING NOTE FOR AGENDA ITEM 6

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

The European Environment Agency is managing a contract funded under the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument to support and work with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and the Russian Federation in developing a shared environmental information system in the European Neighbourhood region (ENPI-SEIS project).

The ENPI-SEIS project focuses on identifying and further developing policy-relevant environmental indicators and, in doing so, improving capacities in the fields of monitoring, collection, storage, reporting and assessment of environmental data and information in the relevant environmental authorities, including the national statistical systems. This activity will furthermore support the fulfilment of national reporting obligations to regional and international agreements (Conventions) and will be coordinated with relevant regional initiatives.

With regard to data availability, the ENPI-SEIS project aims to identify country data needs and to further evaluate the relevant priority data and information flows by co-organizing and supporting seminars in priority areas such as the Waste Statistics and Water Statistics Workshops held earlier this year. It was observed that most of the countries present at the workshops had data sets and databases which can be used to underpin indicators (e.g. for producing resource efficiency indicators in the water area).

With regard to data and information management and indicator development, it was recognised that the UNECE Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators (JTF), which was established in 2009, could play a key role.

The Joint Task Force brings together the environmental and statistical networks in the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and South East Europe in order to encourage dialogue and cooperation towards the production of commonly agreed environmental indicators for producing state of the environment reports and policy relevant assessments.

Up to now, the emphasis has been on reviewing the indicators covered by the UNECE Indicator Guidelines in order to better explain the methodologies, clarify concepts and definitions and develop further detailed guidance, possibly in the form of templates to structure the data needed for the production of indicators. The aim has also been to provide guidance on the primary data collection, including statistical data, and the subsequent evaluation of gaps and challenges to be tackled in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and South East Europe countries. These efforts cover the **Monitoring** and **Data** aspects of the MDIAK (Monitoring, Data, Indicators, Assessment and Knowledge) information pyramid.

At its 5th session in July 2012, the Joint Task Force agreed on 8 environmental indicators for regular reporting and to contribute to a feasibility study, which aims to support the development of regular/sustained data flows for the agreed indicators, by participating in a metadata survey. The selection of indicators was based on the agreed thematic priorities for the ENPI-SEIS project (air, water, waste, with the addition of biodiversity), on comparability with EEA indicators, as well as on the availability and quality of data in the ENPI East countries and the Russian Federation.

The feasibility study was a participatory exercise built around an online metadata questionnaire. Eleven data sets were examined in order to identify their **production processes, comparability and availability for multiple use and reuse** according to Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) principles for the production of 8 environmental indicators.

The core findings of the survey are:

Two of the 11 data sets chosen for the feasibility study are regularly produced at the national level to meet international reporting obligations. These two data sets are available through international organisations in a common, comparable format with a prescribed harmonised data structure.

Nine data sets respond to national reporting obligations, and are produced, stored and disseminated in national languages; they are based on unique national data structures and appear in different formats. Moreover, although in most of the countries these data sets are free of charge, they are not easily accessible. This limits their usefulness for national assessments, policymaking, benchmarking and various regular regional and global assessment processes.

The European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI) East countries are ready to gradually share selected datasets through regular data flows. The major challenge to be addressed is the insufficient level of institutional cooperation at national level.

Proposed way forward

The proposed approach for the future is to initiate **regular and sustained data flows** linked to the data requirements of the indicators in the UNECE guidelines, starting with the 8 indicators (11 datasets) agreed in the 5th JTF session.

Assisting the countries in **the effective production (population) of the indicators, underpinned by regular data flows**, will be a fundamental step forward. This will also pave the way for establishing sustained data flows for the remaining datasets for indicator production.

The findings of the feasibility study suggest considering data flows for two distinct clusters of data – those used to meet international reporting obligations, and those collected exclusively for national purposes.

In the short term, JTF members should focus on **improving the data flows for data sets used for international reporting** (GHG, ODS). Using data for producing indicators towards regular assessment activities will support countries in fulfilling their reporting obligations to regional and international agreements.

The outcomes of the metadata survey also suggest that the data sets are available and free to use in the countries but they are not easily accessible. Therefore, countries could make quick progress by **making such data sets available and easily accessible** on their national websites.

In addition, JTF members are encouraged to consider working together in order to **make datasets accessible in common and harmonized formats** across the region in the short term. In this way, populating the indicators, underpinned by regular data flows will be initiated. The JTF members, together with the EEA, can support this process by guiding the national authorities in developing harmonized data structures and formats, (i.e. **Data Structure Definitions**) and data policies for sharing selected datasets, subject to national reporting requirements. This regional harmonization process could start by working with the data needed to produce the indicator “annual generation of municipal waste per capita” which was agreed in last JTF Meeting.

JTF members should also consider **participating in a new metadata survey for possible additional indicators** that have been the focus of the joint seminars (Waste Statistics, Water Statistics) held in the region, as these seminars have responded to country requirements for indicator production and data management.

The content of the sustained and regular data flows will also be addressed and improved during this process so as to become more relevant to the national policy requirements and to citizens within the region. This evolution will lead to the **development of policy-relevant assessments on the quality of and pressures on the environment at national level**. These will underpin future regional assessments in the ENP region as well as respond to global assessment demands.