

4th Joint OECD/UNECE Seminar on the Implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA)

20-21 February 2019, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

CONCEPT NOTE

1 Background

The fourth *Joint OECD/UNECE Seminar on the Implementation of SEEA* will take place on 20-21 February 2019 in Geneva, following three previous seminars in 2015, 2016 and 2018.

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 self-funded basis. 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.

2 Introduction

The previous SEEA seminar (21-22 February 2018 in Geneva) recommended to continue the organisation of “Joint OECD/UNECE Seminars on SEEA implementation” on an annual basis. The seminar should last for two days and focus on strategic issues of interest for all countries in the region. Proposed topics for future seminars are as follows:

- a) Using new techniques and data sources for compiling SEEA accounts;
- b) Communication strategies and policy applications;
- c) Challenges related to the implementation of selected accounts, such as air emission accounts, energy accounts, water accounts, environmentally related taxes and subsidies, and environmental protection expenditure accounts.
- d) Coordination of work in the region.

Participants also recommended that future seminars will be informed about the revision process of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA-EEA) and other related developments.

The Organising Committee¹ of the 2019 Seminar has taken these proposals into consideration. The thematic focus of the 2019 Seminar will be on water accounts and on environmentally related taxes and subsidies. These accounts are among the priority accounts for global SEEA databases, as they are of global, regional, and national importance for policy makers. The substantive sessions will discuss policy

¹ Representatives of National Statistical Offices of Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Sweden as well as from Eurostat, OECD, UNECE and UNSD.

applications, communication strategies and technical implementation of the aforementioned accounts. Another substantive session will provide practical examples on the implementation of SEEA-EEA.

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

3 Contents and expected outputs of the 2019 Seminar

The following needs for discussion and coordination have been identified by the Organising Committee:

- a) Updating regional priority settings and implementation plans – this will be done via a short survey before the Seminar;
- b) Informing about relevant global initiatives, the revision of SEEA-EEA, and coordination of capacity building activities;
- c) Guidelines for SEEA implementation and new ways to generate data;
- d) Policy applications of SEEA;
- e) Practical examples of SEEA-EEA implementation.

It will be desirable to have presentations from different regions and countries with different level of development.

The Seminar will include the following sessions:

I. Opening and setting the scene

This session will be organised by OECD and UNECE. It will be chaired by the Chair of the Organising Committee.

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 24th meeting of the London Group on Environmental Accounting, which was held from 1-4 October 2018 in Dublin (Ireland).

The session will furthermore inform about the SEEA-EEA revision process.

Updates on implementation plans in the region, collected through a survey before the seminar, will be presented and discussed.

International organisations will inform about their implementation strategies and related capacity development activities.

Expected outputs:

- Information about global developments with relevance for the region;
- Discussion of the SEEA-EEA revision process;
- Update on SEEA implementation plans in the region and implementation strategies of international organisations;
- Contribution to the coordination of activities related to capacity development.

II. Water accounting

This session will be organised and chaired by Statistics Canada and UNECE.

Countries and international organisations will be invited to present how water accounts are used in policy making and monitoring of progress towards sustainable development. The session will show how physical and monetary water accounts inform important policy questions. Water accounts will also be discussed from an ecosystem perspective. Challenges and solutions related to communicating with users will be discussed, as well as the role of NSOs in preparing outputs which can be understood by policy makers and the general public.

The session will furthermore discuss the technical implementation of water accounts based on practical experiences of countries. Important issues such as spatial and temporary disaggregation of water accounts will be addressed. Participants will also be informed about international guidelines for the compilation of water accounts, such as the “Technical Note for Water” and the “Compilation Guidelines for Water Accounts and Statistics”.

A panel of users and producers of water accounts will discuss strategies to make water accounts fit for policy makers, to strengthen communication between producers and users and to improve quality of the data. The panel will interact with the plenary and may come up with concrete recommendations.

Expected outputs:

- Shared experience and knowledge of using water accounts for policy making;
- Knowledge about challenges and possible solutions for compilation of water accounts;
- Recommendations to NSOs and other stakeholders for implementation of water accounts and better use in policy making.

III. Environmentally related taxes and subsidies

This session will be organised and chaired by Statistics Sweden and OECD.

The objectives of the session are threefold:

- a) Showcase data on environmentally related taxes and subsidies to inform policy, researchers and general public;
- b) Present the methodology and technical implementation of compiling data on environmentally related taxes and subsidies, including constraints and challenges.
- c) Enhance the understanding of the methodologies, the user demands and building a momentum for compiling data on environmentally related taxes and subsidies.

There will be presentations from countries with varying degrees of experience with environmentally related taxes and subsidies in terms of data compilation, meeting user demands and advancement of environmental economic instruments at large.

An interactive panel discussion will bring together various perspectives to discuss the key challenges and opportunities in compiling data on environmentally related taxes and subsidies, allowing participants to discuss and exchange with one another the area in question.

Expected outputs:

- Practical examples on the relevance and applications of data on environmentally related taxes and subsidies to inform policy, researchers and general public;
- Exchange of knowledge and experience in collecting and using relevant data;
- Recommendations to further develop and encourage compilation.

IV. SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting

The session will be organised and chaired by Statistics Netherlands.

The SEEA EEA framework is being implemented in more and more places. This session will illustrate practices in compiling data for different parts of the SEEA EEA, using concrete examples. International organisations and selected countries will share their experiences, outcomes and challenges toward implementation of SEEA EEA.

Expected outcomes:

- Introduction of the SEEA EEA framework;
- Practical examples of implementation.

V. 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 region.
