

Data sharing

Data sharing and open access to data has been an ongoing discussion in the WGE community for about 10 years for several reasons. The trend in science and monitoring is in general towards higher transparency and open access to data and models. This is enforced by mechanisms like the Aarhus convention and EU legislation on open data. EMEP has a long tradition for open access to data and the use of open-source models, and this has been quite successful.

The issue has been discussed in the individual WGE ICPs based on a questionnaire and substantial progress has been made and presented at the thematic session on access to data. The general opinion is positive towards open access and the following of FAIR rules for data access. There are, however, still some worries and wishes regarding open access to data.

One ICP mentioned a worry of misinterpretation or misuse of data. It is, however, a normal part of the scientific process, that different scientists, groups, and communities can have different views and get different results and conclusions based on the same data. Similarly, different politicians, journalists and the broader public can have different perspectives.

There were some expressed worries on cost. To that it could be noted that full open access is not necessarily costly. Data from all tables in a database can be made available with license information and metadata in a repository with open read access and a defined DOI, e.g., through the webpage, where also a login / registration procedure can be implemented. At least the user should accept data rules and license. Some ICPs expressed a wish to know who uses the data and preferably also the intended purpose. Information can be saved from a registration page. The data repository can be updated daily as part of the database backup procedure and, if wished, limited to a certain level of QA. Such a procedure is not costly. Higher costs would occur if limitations to access should be enforced, which should be avoided, or if a user-friendly interface should be developed and maintained. Interfaces can be limited to key data and developed over time.

More ICPs have today a policy where users must apply for access to data, which is normally granted. From a data user perspective, it can, however, be problematic to base a commitment, curriculum, or application on a use of data without knowing if or when access will be granted and if data can be used as intended. In addition, it is probably a breach on EU legislation and the Aarhus Convention to signal and enforce a limitation to access. The same purpose might be served by a registration / login procedure [maybe mention the experience from IIASA].

Open access to data will be a good way to promote knowledge of work done under the WGE, increase the use of data for advisory, science and teaching, and thereby increase the justification for the work, and for the continuation of the programs. Open access to data should be seen as something we do because it serve the interest of the WGE, and not because we are forced or pushed to do it.