Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

Twenty-fourth session, Geneva and online, 11-12 April 2022

Agenda Item 4: Reporting on the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) to support a regular process of environmental assessment

Presentation of draft key messages & policy recommendations to be forwarded to the Ninth EfE Ministerial Conference
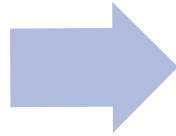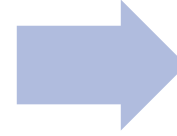
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Mandate

7th Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nur-Sultan, 2011)

- Ministers requested that a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) be developed to underpin a regular environment assessment process across the pan-European region
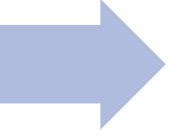
8th Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, 2016)

- Ministers invited countries to further develop their national information systems to have SEIS in place by 2021
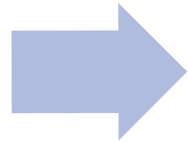
24th session of Committee on Environmental Policy (January 2019)

- The Committee requested Working Group to lead a further review of progress in establishing SEIS in Europe & Central Asia in advance of next Ministerial Conference
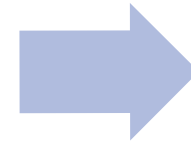
Mandate

22nd session of Working Group (October 2020)

- Secretariat presented a first draft of final review report on SEIS & Member States were invited to submit their self-assessment until 15 December 2020

23rd session of Working Group (May 2021)

- Working Group adopted final progress review report on SEIS establishment in Europe and Central Asia (ECE/CEP/AC.10/ 2021/6)

27th session of Committee on Environmental Policy (November 2021)

- Committee welcomed final review report on establishment of SEIS and forwarded it to the 9th Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference

Key messages (SEIS final review)

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Key messages to be forwarded to minsters at 9th Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference together with SEIS final review report

Overall a Shared Environmental Information System has been successfully established in Europe and Central Asia

All member States, to varying degrees, made progress on establishment of a national system during past years & in making environmental information available & accessible.

National SEIS vary in form and regularity regarding their updates and content

Gaps remain for all SEIS principles and pillars that need to be addressed

Key messages (SEIS final review)

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Key messages to be forwarded to minsters at 9th Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference together with SEIS final review report

SEIS is not static and will need to evolve over time into fully integrated and open data systems based on SEIS principles

SEIS will need to adapt to future developments in order to inform policies and the public holistically, including through applying the ECE revised indicators and other relevant indicator frameworks

Countries still need assistance to fully implement SEIS pillars and principles for full production and sharing of all data flows associated with the ECE environmental

Key messages new proposals

Key messages to be forwarded to minsters at 9th Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference together with SEIS final review report

It is important that countries understand SEIS as part of their regular internal environmental monitoring process. Such an approach will effectively guide any future developments and ensure that quantifiable progress can be made in the system (*European Union during CEP, November 2021*)

Further reviews of SEIS implementation would help to address gaps and, by doing so, ensure that it supports regular assessments and reporting also in the future

Key messages (proposals from pan-European assessment)

Key messages to be forwarded to minsters at 9th Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference together with pan-European assessment

Availability and access to information and knowledge to support Government decision-makers, industry and the public taking impact-oriented choices is improving but continues to be challenging in some sectors more than in others

Challenges remain for measuring progress towards policy targets in the pan-European region including for emerging policy developments such as circular economy or sustainable infrastructure as revealed during this assessment

This assessment reveals various data gaps across the region in almost all areas, with data available for some countries but not others, or no recent data available. Data for some indicators needed for this assessment are not routinely collected, in particular for emerging policies including the two conference themes.

Policy Recommendations

POSSIBLE

Working Group recommends countries address remaining gaps in SEIS implementation, covering all pillars, thematic categories and data flows, for example:

SEIS pillar – content

1. Align SEIS with revised UNECE environmental indicators to enhance their policy relevance
2. Regularly revise indicators and data flows to inform latest global policies
3. Continue work on integration and harmonization of data flows in line with SEIS principles
4. Better align data collection processes with national policy targets and improve use of indicators and data in environmental assessments and reports including for pan-European assessment
5. Improve use of relevant environmental assessments and reports to measure progress against policy targets
6. Bring policy and science together for developing appropriate and standardized methods and systems for monitoring and information management, including through application of new technologies, to fill data gaps and improve decision-making (proposal from assessment)
7. Promote use of appropriate and standardized methods, particularly for monitoring air pollution emissions, and public availability of monitoring data, while strengthening cooperation and national investment to fill monitoring gaps (proposal from assessment)
8. Enhance regular data production and timely availability and publication of information online (proposal from assessment)

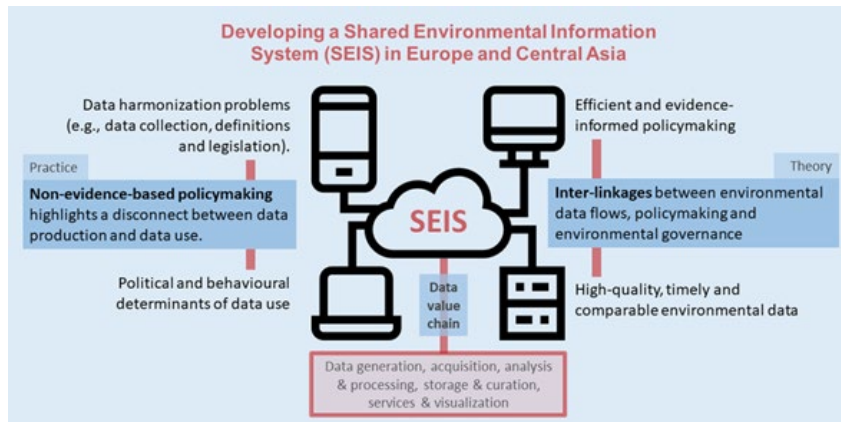# Policy Recommendations - proposals from pan-European assessment

SEIS pillar – content

- Increase efforts to complement inventories of beach and marine litter with information on composition and sources of litter
- Establish a region-wide chemicals and waste impact-oriented monitoring scheme
- Improve data collection systems on environmental financing, for example on environmental expenditures (which entities spend money on the environment, how much, with what objectives and who finances these expenditures)
- Develop a common definition of sustainable infrastructure to allow reporting on and quantifying of progress across countries and subregions
- Select some specific key-impact tourism indicators to be included in UNECE statistical databases and align them with those being developed for the monitoring of sustainable development in tourism and be compatible with SDGs
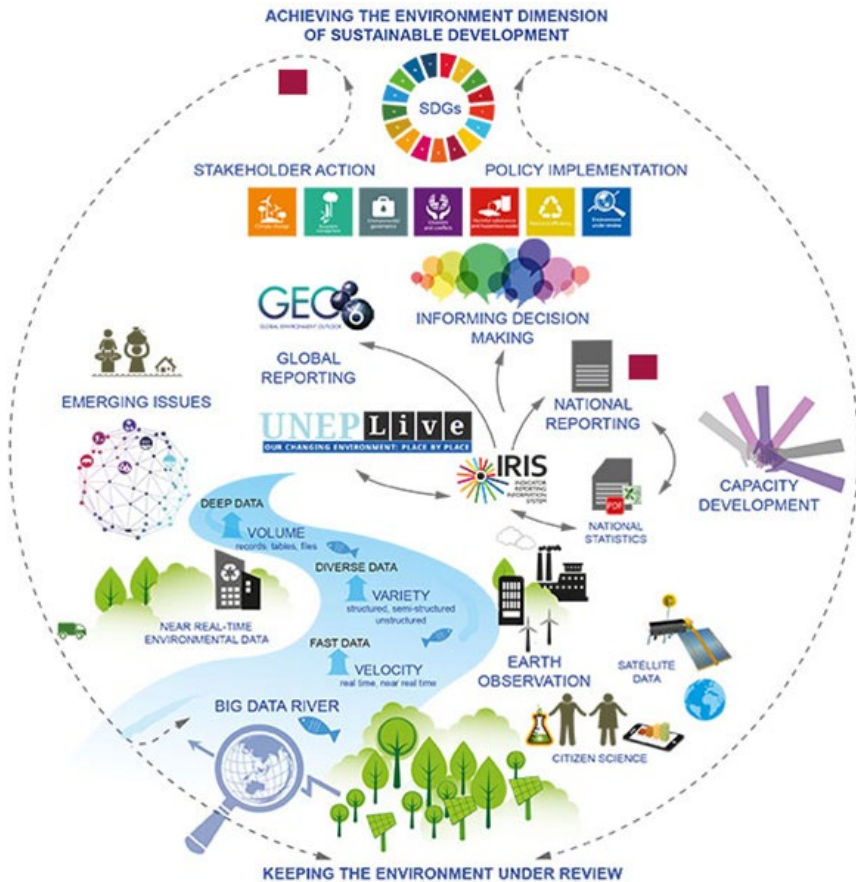
Working Group - Policy Recommendations

Developing a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) in Europe and Central Asia

SEIS pillar – infrastructure

- Improve national legislation and close legislative gaps on monitoring and reporting
- Enhance digitalization and use of new technologies in environmental monitoring systems and data production and analysis to enhance high-quality data production, availability, accessibility and use
- Ensure sufficient financial resources for establishment, operation and maintenance of environmental monitoring and information systems, based on national budgets and, where necessary, international support
- Invest in data collection and information processing as knowledge is instrumental for decision-making and water policy design (for example, water accounts, ecosystem assessment and indicators). Continuous improvement of monitoring and communication technologies is a top priority in terms of a water information system for the pan-European region (proposal from assessment)

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Source: UNEP

SEIS pillar – cooperation

- Establish or improve institutional arrangements for regular production and sharing of data between various institutions at national level (use of SEIS assessment framework and reporting considered useful for interagency cooperation at national level)
- Assist countries to fully implement the SEIS pillars and principles and the full production and sharing of all data flows associated with the UNECE environmental indicators

Draft Ministerial Declaration

Key findings and messages and recommendations from SEIS and pan-European assessment were used as input to the Draft Ministerial Declaration:

We, the ministers and heads of delegation from [number] countries of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region and the representative of the European Commission meeting in Nicosia from 5 to 7 October 2022 in the framework of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, make the following declaration:

…

- We confirm the value of the "Environment for Europe" process as a unique pan-European platform for addressing environmental challenges, **improving environmental governance, promoting environmental and cross-sectoral cooperation and information sharing among countries**, and as a pillar of sustainable development in the region with a 31-year-long proven track record of important and tangible achievements the result of cooperation among all stakeholders.

Draft Ministerial Declaration

- We recognize the **crucial importance of reliable, up-to-date, quality data and statistics** for facing both current and emerging needs and challenges. **We reaffirm our commitment to partnering with and supporting national statistical offices** and systems to produce data and statistics for monitoring progress in environmental protection, having access to diverse information sources and using modern tools and techniques.

- **We also commend the general establishment of a Shared Environmental Information System** across the region to support a regular process of environmental assessment and **invite countries to continue their efforts to implement all pillars of the Shared Environmental Information System, address any remaining gaps and make environmental information publicly available and accessible** in support of sustainable development and the transition to a circular and green economy.

Thank you!

Proposed Decisions

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Proposed Decision:

The Working Group:

a) Welcomes the key messages and recommendations from the final progress review report on the establishment of SEIS in Europe and Central Asia as contained in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2021/6 and the draft pan-European environmental assessment

b) Decides to provide additional comments on the proposed additional key messages and recommendations within two weeks and, if comments are provided, requests the secretariat to circulate a revised version for approval by a silence procedure over a further period of two weeks

c) Requests the secretariat to inform the Committee on Environmental Policy on the outcomes of this agenda item and to forward the key messages and recommendations to the Ninth-Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference together with the SEIS final review report and the pan-European environmental assessment