

## The joint OECD/Eurostat Questionnaire and international data collection on water

*Mauro Migotto (OECD; also on behalf of Jürgen Förster - Eurostat)*

Joint OECD/UNECE Seminar on Implementation of SEEA  
(15 March 2023; Session on WATER ACCOUNTS AND RELATED INDICATORS)

1

- The OECD developed the inland waters section of the questionnaire on the state of the environment in the late 1970s-early 1980s. It became a joint OECD/Eurostat questionnaire (JQ-IW) in 1988. A simplified version has been used by UNSD since 1999, thus ensuring a quasi-global country coverage.
- The data collected provide a basis for calculating several indicators. They contribute to water-related SDG indicators, in particular 6.4.1 (water use efficiency), 6.4.2 (water stress) and 6.3.1 (wastewater safely treated)
- FAO also collects water data.
- Since June 2018 UNSD, FAO, Eurostat and OECD are having regular teleconferences to discuss options for aligning their questionnaires, and for jointly increasing data availability and quality for water-related SDG and other indicators. In 2020, WHO and UN-Habitat joined the discussion (mainly on wastewater for SDG 6.3.1).

2

- The discussions have mainly been revolving around differences in:
  1. definitions used in the questionnaires (and therefore in scope and interpretation)
  2. definitions with respect to the global SDG indicators
  3. definitions with respect to the SEEA Central Framework and SEEA Water
  4. data submissions from countries
  5. how to better mobilise data for SDG 6.3.1
  6. practical arrangements for collaboration on data collections
- A consolidated questionnaire (which would eliminate double-reporting) is not on the agenda for the moment.
- The focus is therefore on better aligning questionnaires among themselves and with the SEEA framework: the current questionnaires are based on the international water statistics definitions/conceptual schemes. The idea is to progressively move towards water accounts (SEEA), though inconsistencies between SEEA CF and SEEA-Water should be addressed.

3

- The OECD and Eurostat are conducting consultations with member countries on a series of modifications for implementation during the 2023 data collection round. More specifically:
  1. Additions, deletions and clarifications that are independent of SEEA. Among these, adding a variable on “environmental flow requirements” (EFR) to reflect the volume of water required to sustain freshwater and estuarine ecosystems. But EFR methodology is not yet agreed and operational. Data is also difficult to mobilise
  2. Modifications to align to SEEA (see next slides)
  3. A more complex issue are the definitions of water use and consumption (mainly concerning the inclusion/exclusion of losses and returns). These will be changed in the questionnaire, according to a new flow scheme (see below)
- Some differences with SEEA will remain, e.g. abstractions for hydroelectricity and cooling water (see next slides)

4

### Differences with accounts that will remain and need to be highlighted:

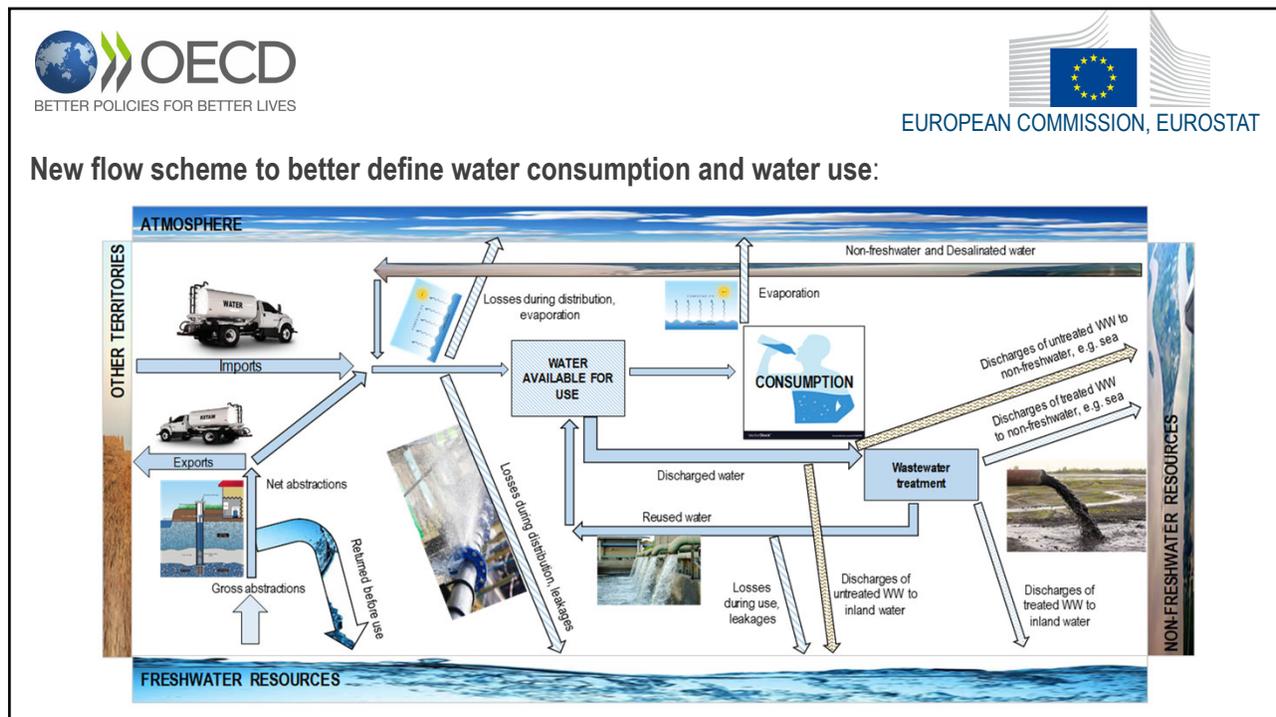
1. Abstractions for *hydroelectric* power generation: Unlike water accounts, abstractions for hydroelectric power generation are not counted in JQ-IW; they are considered in-situ uses
2. *Other sources of water*: Water accounts include sources of water (e.g. soil water) that are not considered in the questionnaire (where only surface water and groundwater are distinguished).
3. In water accounts, *all inland water resources* (including brackish and non-fresh water) are considered. The questionnaire focuses on freshwater resources and related abstractions to identify the level of exploitation of natural renewable freshwater resources. Other sources of water are considered in the tables on water available for use and water use by supply categories.
4. Unlike water accounts, JQ-IW does not consider *cooling water* to be wastewater.

5

### Differences with accounts that are addressed through amendments:

1. Water accounts do not define *abstraction from groundwater* as the difference between water abstracted and that artificially recharged into the aquifer (as is the case in JQ-IW). The accounts record these flows separately. They consider the artificial recharge of water into the aquifer as a flow from the economy to the environment, hence it is recorded as a return flow. Proposal: align with accounting and treat the artificial recharge into the aquifer as a return flow.
2. In JQ-IW *reused water* is defined as water that has undergone wastewater treatment and that is delivered as reclaimed wastewater to a user. In water accounts reused water also includes wastewater delivered without treatment to a user. Proposal: align with accounting
3. Other small adjustments to definitions, such as (i) including “glaciers, snow and ice” in the definition of fresh surface water; (ii) replace “river runoff” with “runoff” in the definition of internal flow; (iii) replace “rivers” with “surface water” in all definitions; (iv) drop the word “actual” in the label of a number of variables (e.g. actual external inflow)

6



7




- We do not expect opposition from countries and we do not expect significant changes to the data provided (e.g. no break in series).
- We hope to come up with fully-aligned questionnaires with UNSD by the next data collection, as well as to progressively align definitions with FAO.
- We also hope to be able to provide more and better data for SDG reporting.

# THANK YOU

8