

21 April 2023

Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

Twenty-fifth session

Geneva, 2 and 3 May 2023

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Implementing the mandate and terms of reference

Draft 5-year outline of activities for the period 2024–2028

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Committee on Environmental Policy, at its special session (Nicosia, 3–4 October 2022)^a, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Executive Committee, at its hundred and twenty-sixth session (Geneva, 13 January 2023), approved the extension of the mandate and terms of reference (2017–2021) of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment until the end of 2023 to allow the Working Group to present a new draft mandate and terms of reference to the Committee at its twenty-eighth session (Geneva, 1–3 November 2023). In addition, the Committee requested a more detailed outline of activities for the upcoming 5 years of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and the Joint Working Group on Environmental Statistics and Indicators. The terms of reference require the preparation of annual timetables of activities, taking into account the financial and human resources available.^b

The present document provides a draft outline of activities for 2024–2028 for consideration by the Working Group at its twenty-fifth session and is based on the new mandate and terms of reference. The outline will be submitted to the Committee on Environmental Policy as official document for consideration at its twenty-eighth session.

^a ECE/CEP/S/2022/6, para. 31 (a), available at <https://unece.org/environment/documents/2023/01/reports/report-committee-environmental-policy-its-special-session>.

^b ECE/CEP/2017/2, para. 32 (b), and annex II, para. 5.

Introduction

1. The present document sets out an outline of activities (see table below) to be carried out by the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment in the period 2024-2028. It will be complemented by more detailed annual workplans that will be presented to the Working Group at its annual sessions.
2. The outline is based on the proposed new mandate and terms of reference of the Working Group (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/3).
3. The Working Group will implement the activities in close collaboration with national and international governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, including youth organizations, research institutes and academia, and with other relevant United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) bodies, such as the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators and international and regional organizations.
4. With the assistance of the ECE secretariat, member States and organizations that agree to lead any of the activities outlined below will facilitate their implementation and report to the Working Group on the progress made and challenges faced.
5. Implementation of activities set out in this document is conditional on mobilization of the necessary (extrabudgetary) resources. To date, funds have been made available only by a limited number of UNECE member States including by Austria, Switzerland as well as the European Union. The Working Group will support the secretariat in its continuing efforts to mobilize resources and assistance from regional and international organizations and member States in order to enable the Working Group to operate fully.
6. Critical remaining resource requirements include funding for hybrid sessions for the annual meetings of the Working Group, in particular for remote simultaneous interpretation platforms to allow online participation and the travel and subsistence of experts participating in sessions of the Working Group in-person and members of the secretariat, totalling approximately \$50,000 per annum (1 participant per country for countries in transition). Resource requirements for activities and projects supporting the implementation of outcomes of the Nicosia conference depend on agreed specific activities and support but may amount to several hundred thousand of USD. Resources needed for consultancies including for the updating and review of the Guidelines on environmental monitoring and reporting and development of guidance for the use of geospatial information in environmental monitoring as well as for supporting the development of up to 3 national state of the environment reports are estimated with \$330,000. Capacity development and training workshops in a hybrid format for example on the revised ECE Environmental Indicators, the use of new technologies and geospatial information are estimated each with \$50,000 for a two-day workshop in hybrid format.
7. Considering the growing complexity and rising number of activities implemented under the programme, also additional staff resources are required to ensure continuous support to the servicing of the Working Group, support to the implementation of the outcomes of the Nicosia conference and the seventh pan-European environmental assessment, coordination and implementation of extrabudgetary projects to support the implementation of outcomes of the Nicosia conference, the pan-European environmental assessment, to support countries in enhancing their monitoring and environmental reporting systems and to implement capacity development activities on a regular basis including on emerging themes.
8. The resource requirements for development of a next pan-European environmental assessment will depend on its scope, nature and institutional arrangements. All of the financial resource requirements listed, which exclude the funding of secretariat staff time, are indicative and subject to standard United Nations programme support costs.

Outline of activities for 2024-2028

| <i>Main overall objective and activity</i> | <i>Priority</i> | <i>Task or event</i> | <i>Tentative timing in 2024 (Other relevant time period)</i> | <i>Available and required financial resources</i> | <i>Indicator of achievement</i> |
|--|-----------------|--|--|--|---|
| (a) Programme area 1. Support the development of environmental monitoring and information systems in support of regular environmental assessment and reporting, and their alignment with open data and the SEIS principles and pillars, and in particular: | | | | | |
| (i) Support institutional strengthening and legislative improvement | Medium | Provide recommendations on institutional strengthening and legislative improvement through showcasing good practice examples during annual Working Group sessions Provide support through dedicated projects ^a | Annual sessions of the Working Group 2024-2028 | Room and interpretation in room funded. Approximately \$35,000 per annum required to support travel and subsistence of eligible experts (1 participant per country in transition) as well as remote simultaneous interpretation platform for online participation Approximately \$100,000 to provide legal support for up to 5–7 countries through a dedicated project | Recommendations provided during annual session of Working Group Number of dedicated projects ^a |
| (ii) Promote use of new technologies and tools (e.g. big data, the Internet of Things and artificial intelligence) and integration of official statistics and administrative data with both environmental data from new sources, including from Earth observation and geospatial data and data for other sectors, including health and transport | High | Promote use of new technologies and integration of environmental data and statistics through showcasing good practice examples during annual Working Group sessions | Annual sessions of the Working Group 2024-2028 | See above under Programme area 1 (i) regarding annual sessions of the Working Group | Annual session of Working Group held and new technologies promoted Number of good practice examples provided |
| | | Develop guidance on use of Earth observation data and geospatial information in national environmental monitoring and assessment systems ^a | 2024-2025 | Approximately \$50,000 for consultancy, organization of an expert review, publication and translation | Guidance drafted ^a |

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| (iii) Regularly evaluate performance of environmental monitoring and information systems in line with principles and pillars of open data and SEIS and provide recommendations on how environmental monitoring and information systems can be further strengthened. | High | Compile completed questionnaires on progress in environmental monitoring at national level, production of selected revised indicators and status of SEIS, and provide recommendations and include an item on this topic in agenda of annual sessions of Working Group | 2024–2028 | See above under Programme area 1 (i) regarding annual sessions of the Working Group | Completed questionnaires Progress report by member States and annual session of Working Group held, and progress presented and discussed |
| | | Prepare progress report(s) for Committee on Environmental Policy on implementation of national information systems in line with open data and principles and pillars of SEIS | 2024–2028) | - | Progress report prepared for and welcomed by Committee members |
| (iv) Contribute to process of implementing main environmental monitoring- and assessment- related outcomes of Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in 2024–2027 including those related to a green and circular economy and sustainable infrastructure and tourism | High | Bring policy and science together to develop and implement appropriate and standardized pan-European methods and systems for monitoring and information management at annual sessions of Working Group or other mechanism to implement relevant outcomes | 2024–2028 | See above under Programme area 1 (i) regarding annual sessions of the Working Group | Annual session of Working Group held, providing platform for knowledge exchange Reports of Working Group and Committee on Environmental Policy |
| | | Promote use of ECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators | Throughout 2024–2028 | See above under Programme area 1 (i) regarding annual sessions of the Working Group Approximately \$50,000 per 2-day capacity development workshop on specific environmental indicator themes and categories required to support travel and subsistence of eligible experts (1 | ECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental indicators promoted at annual session of Working Group, thematic workshops and capacity development activities |

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| | | | | participant per country in transition) as well as remote simultaneous interpretation platform for online participation and consultancies | Use of indicators in national reports and assessments |
| | | Promote use of appropriate and standardized methods for monitoring pollution, including for air emissions, and information systems for public availability of monitoring data in the region by showcasing good practices and training ^a | 2024–2028 | See above under Programme area 1 (i) regarding annual sessions of the Working Group Approximately \$50,000 per 2-day capacity development workshop on specific environmental monitoring themes required to support travel and subsistence of eligible experts (1 participant per country in transition) as well as remote simultaneous interpretation platform for online participation and consultancies | Annual session of Working Group held Capacity development activities held ^a |
| | | Support strengthening of cooperation and promote national investment to fill monitoring gaps by including an item on this topic in agenda of annual sessions of Working Group to showcase good practices | 2025–2028 | See above under Programme area 1 (i) regarding annual sessions of the Working Group | Annual session of Working Group held |
| | | Promote and support development of bankable projects and project proposals to support investments in data collection, information processing and information systems ^a | 2025–2028 | See above under programme area 1 (i) regarding annual sessions of the Working Group Approximately \$15,000 for consultancies for proposal and project development | Annual session of Working Group held, and development of proposals supported ^a |
| | | Support establishment of a region-wide chemicals- and | 2025–2028 | Approximately \$80,000 for consultancies for conducting a | Discussions on a region-wide chemicals- |

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|--|-----------------|--|--|---|---|
| | | waste-impact-oriented monitoring scheme in order to build up a better picture and address the adverse impacts of chemicals on human health and the environment (see also activity programme area 3) ^a | | detailed gap analysis study, the development of options to address challenges, the holding of a regional workshop and a roadmap for implementation | and waste-impact-oriented monitoring scheme initiated Options explored ^a Support provided ^a |
| | | Improve data-collection systems on environmental financing, for example, on environmental expenditures, throughout the region to clarify and report on which entities spend money on the environment, how much they spend and in pursuit of what objectives and who finances these expenditures ^a | 2025–2028 | Approximately \$50,000 per 2-day capacity development workshop on improving data-collection systems on environmental financing required to support travel and subsistence of eligible experts (1 participant per country in transition) as well as remote simultaneous interpretation platform for online participation and consultancies | Development of Data-collection systems on environmental financing promoted ^a |
| | | Support development of common definitions, for example, of the term “sustainable infrastructure”, to allow quantifying of progress ^a | 2024–2026 | Approximately \$30,000 for travel and participation in interagency-expert group meetings, consultancies and publication. | Options to develop common definitions explored (e.g., by suggesting and supporting establishment of task forces, consultancies, etc.) and support provided ^a |
| | | Support revision of ECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators (e.g., by suggesting updates or new indicators including on sustainable tourism or other | 2024–2028 | - | Input on policy needs etc. provided to review process |

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| | | emerging themes) and support production thereof | | | |
| | | Assist countries to fully implement principles and pillars of SEIS and full production and sharing of all data flows associated with ECE environmental indicators and employ, as appropriate, updated Recommendations on the more effective use of electronic information tools developed under the auspices of the Aarhus Convention (see also programme area 1, activity (iii)) ^a | 2024–2028 | see also programme area 1, activity (iii and iv) | Capacity development activities held and advisory services provided ^a |
| | | Explore options on implementing pollutant release and transfer registers and SEIS in synergy ^a | 2026–2028 | See above under programme area 1 (i) regarding annual sessions of the Working Group Approximately \$20,000 for consultancies to explore possibilities and options to integrate pollutant release and transfer registers in national information systems. Approximately \$50,000 per 2-day capacity development workshop (1 participant per country in transition) as well as remote simultaneous interpretation platform for online participation | Holding of annual session of the Working Group and report with possible options suggested by Working Group described Capacity development activities held ^a |
| | | Enhance synergies and interoperability between national and international systems in order | 2024–2028 | See above under programme area 1 (i) regarding annual sessions of the Working Group | Progress described in reports of annual |

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| | | to streamline environmental monitoring and reporting, reduce reporting requirements for countries and improve readability and efficiency, from indicator methodologies to data flow reporting (see programme area 2) | | | sessions of Working Group |
| | | Support continued digitization of environmental monitoring systems and use of new technologies for enhanced high-quality data production (see programme area 1), for example, through showcasing good practices ^a | 2024–2028 | Approximately \$30,000 for consultancies to conduct a review on the state of digitization in the environmental area in the ECE region and provision of advisory services | Advisory services provided ^a |
| (v) Contribute to closure of monitoring gaps (e.g. for example as identified in seventh pan-European environmental assessment) in Europe and Central Asia, including in areas of biodiversity and ecosystems; air and climate change; fresh water; chemicals and waste; land and soil; coastal waters, marine ecosystems and seas, as well as monitoring of sustainable infrastructure, monitoring circular economy and sustainable tourism, monitoring of environmental financing; and environmental reporting; and support development and use of standardized methods and guidance on environmental monitoring | High | Share good practices and provide capacity development to contribute to closure of monitoring gaps, promote and support development of bankable projects and project proposals and bring policy, science and other relevant stakeholders together to support closure of monitoring gaps (see also programme area 1 (iv)) ^a | 2024–2028 | See above under programme area 1 (i) regarding annual sessions of the Working Group Approximately \$50,000 per 2-day capacity development workshop on selected themes and consultancies For consultancies see also under programme area 1 (iv) | Annual session of Working Group held Capacity development activities held, experience exchanged and proposal development supported ^a |
| | | Review and update guidelines on environmental monitoring and reporting and promote use of developed guidance ^a | 2024–2028 | Approximately \$30,000 for consultancies, development of the publication and consultation | Updated guidelines published |

(b) Programme area 2. Support the development of regular pan-European environmental assessments and regular state-of-the-environment reporting, to assist the transition to sustainable development and a green and circular economy and in particular:

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| (i) Bring together experts from partner organizations and other interested parties to discuss and oversee eighth pan-European environmental assessment | Medium (for 2024) | Include relevant agenda item in annual sessions of Working Group | 2025–2028 | Approx. \$30,000 for participation of up to 4 experts in the annual sessions of the Working Group Up to \$200,000 for the development of an indicator-based assessment | Annual session of Working Group held |
| (ii) Discuss and support state-of-the-environment reporting and detail regional priorities concerning streamlining of regular state-of-the-environment reporting, also involving other thematic networks, including those under multilateral environmental agreements, in the discussion | High | Include relevant agenda item in annual sessions of Working Group Promote and support development of regular state-of-the-environment reports ^a | 2024–2028 | See above under Programme area 1 (i) regarding annual sessions of the Working Group Approx. \$300,000 to support development of 2–3 state-of-the-environment reports | Annual session of Working Group held Progress in 2-3 state of the environment reports in the region ^a Regional priorities described in report on Working Group session |
| (iii) Oversee implementation of proposed recommendations and guidance provided by seventh pan-European environmental assessment and streamlining of regular state-of-the-environment reporting | High | Include relevant agenda item in annual sessions of Working Group Support implementation of recommendations, including through providing guidance and advisory services ^a (see also programme area 1 (iv) and (v)) | 2024–2028 | See above under Programme area 1 (i) regarding annual sessions of the Working Group Approx. \$100,000 for consultancy and projects to support implementation of selected recommendations (e.g., for roadmap development, setting-up and servicing of ad-hoc task forces and meetings, advisory services) | Annual session of Working Group held Progress in implementation of recommendations reflected in report of Working Group session ^a |
| (iv) Oversee assessment, where possible, of overall achievement of commitments made in last 3-5 pan-European declarations | Medium | Include relevant agenda item in annual sessions of the Working Group | 2025–2028 | See above under Programme area 1 (i) regarding annual sessions of the Working Group | Annual session of the Working Group held |

(c) Programme area 3. Continue process of consultation between ECE member States, partner organizations and other institutions and networks, including secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements, international financial institutions and private sector, with relevant expertise in the area. Provide inclusive platform

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| for countries to discuss recent developments in the area of monitoring and assessment and integration of environmental, economic and social information and data with regard to implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, a green and circular economy and other related areas of work. In addition: | | | | | |
| (i) Cooperate with Joint Task Force and other relevant bodies under other ECE sectoral subprogrammes, including those on Housing and Land Management, Population, Sustainable Energy and Transport, to ensure that activities are synergetic and streamlined | Medium | Include relevant agenda item in annual sessions of Working Group and Joint Task Force | 2024–2028 | See above under Programme area 1 (i) regarding annual sessions of the Working Group | Progress on streamlining of activities including on environmental statistics and indicators described in report of Working Group session |
| (ii) Engage with other communities and networks to discuss how environmental, social and economic information and data can be integrated and utilized in decision-making and how best to use new technologies and geospatial information | Medium | Include relevant agenda item in annual sessions of Working Group | 2024–2028 | See above under Programme area 1 (i) regarding annual sessions of the Working Group | Progress on data integration and use thereof in reports and assessments described in report of the Working Group session Participation by other communities and networks described in report of Working Group session |
| (iii) Publish outcomes from Working Group’s collaborative activities (e.g., good practices, guidelines and lessons learned) to share outputs and guide future activities in the area | Medium | Publish other guidelines, as appropriate ^a | 2024–2028 | Approx. \$60,000 to support development, translation and publishing of as well as training on guidelines | Guidelines issued ^a |
| (d) Programme area 4. Engage in capacity development assistance addressing specific challenges at regional, subregional and national levels related to environmental monitoring and assessment and environmental knowledge. The specific challenges to be addressed will depend on regional and national capacity gaps | | | | | |

| <i>Main overall objective and activity</i> | <i>Priority</i> | <i>Task or event</i> | <i>Tentative timing in 2024 (Other relevant time period)</i> | <i>Available and required financial resources</i> | <i>Indicator of achievement</i> |
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| and be defined by the Working Group members. The implementation of capacity development activities will depend on the mobilization of resources. Such activities might include: | | | | | |
| (i) Detailing regional and national capacity gaps in environmental monitoring, information and reporting and data needed for producing environmental indicators. This will involve identifying institutional, legal, monitoring, data and information gaps in target countries | Medium | Assess gaps in environmental monitoring, information and reporting and data needed for producing environmental indicators ^a | 2026–2028 | Approx. \$20,000 for consultancy to support gap analysis | Gap analysis reviews developed and recommendations provided on how to enhance environmental monitoring, information and reporting systems ^a |
| (ii) Supporting countries, in collaboration with Joint Task Force, in development, implementation and use of regional and national indicator frameworks to monitor relevant environmental policy developments and activities to support their implementation, including review and establishment of national reporting mechanisms, procedures and methodological approaches associated with the indicators in all ECE countries | High | Support to application of revised ECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators and other indicator frameworks by member States through training | 2024–2028 | | Training on revised ECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators delivered |
| (iii) Engaging and liaising directly with other relevant knowledge-sharing actors working on capacity development in related areas of work | High | Include relevant agenda item in annual sessions of Working Group Organize joint capacity development workshops and activities ^a ECE secretariat engage with other actors, for example, EEA, ESA, ITU, OECD, UNEP or WHO | 2024–2028 | See above under Programme area 1 (i) regarding annual sessions of the Working Group Approximately \$50,000 per 2-day capacity development workshop required to support travel and subsistence of eligible experts (1 participant per country in transition) as well as remote simultaneous interpretation | Annual session of Working Group held Holding of capacity development workshops or sessions ^a Participation and engagement by other communities and networks described in report on Working |

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|---|----------------------|---|--|---|---|
| | | | | platform for online participation and consultancies | Group session and workshops Joint capacity development activities held ^a |
| (iv) Implementing capacity-development activities to provide assistance in accordance with priority areas of action identified for targeted ECE countries at regional, subregional or national level. | Medium | Include relevant agenda item in annual sessions of Working Group, including capacity development | 2024–2028 | See above under Programme area 1 (i) regarding annual sessions of the Working Group | Annual session of Working Group held Description of capacity development activities in report on session |
| | | Capacity development activities on environmental monitoring, including on new technologies, assessment and reporting ^a | 2024–2028 | Approximately \$50,000 per 2-day capacity development workshop required to support travel and subsistence of eligible experts (1 participant per country in transition) as well as remote simultaneous interpretation platform for online participation and consultancies | Number of capacity development activities held ^a |
| | | Maintain and enhance regional knowledge-sharing platform ^a | 2024–2028 | Approximately \$20,000 for consultancies | Regional knowledge-sharing platform up to date ^a |
| Cross-cutting activities | High | Include relevant agenda item in annual session of Working Group, including capacity development | 2024–2028 | See above under Programme area 1 (i) regarding annual sessions of the Working Group | Annual session of Working Group held Report on session and capacity development described |
| | Low (for 2024) | Undertake a mid-term review in 2025 to assess progress in implementation of relevant | 2025 | | Mid-term review undertaken |

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|--|----------------------|---|--|---|---|
| | | outcomes of Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. | | | |
| | Low | Draft new mandate and ToR for the Working Group for 2029–2033 | 2027–2028 | | New mandate, ToR and timetable approved by Working Group in 2028 |
| | High | Draft annual timetable of activities | 2025–2028 | | Annual timetable approved by Working Group |
| | Low (for 2024) | Evaluate the performance and activities of the Working Group as required | As required | Approximately \$10,000 | Evaluation report issued |
| | Medium | Mainstream gender into activities of Working Group, for example, in dedicated capacity development events or sessions, election of chairs, participation in events, and strengthen collection and use of disaggregated data | 2024–2028 | | Report of annual sessions of Working Group and/or outcomes of capacity development activities |
| | High | Mobilize resources to ensure that Working Group can implement all needed tasks to effectively support transition to a green and circular economy and implementation of 2030 Agenda | 2024–2028 | | Additional resources mobilized (amount and number of contributions) |
| | High | Present outcomes and relevant documents of Working Group (annual timetables, ToR, progress reports, etc.) at sessions of Committee on Environmental Policy | 2024–2028 | | Mandate and ToR of Working Group for 2029–2033 approved by Committee |

Note: ^a Activities and their achievement that are subject to the availability of additional resources.

Abbreviations: EEA, European Environment Agency; ESA, European Space Agency; ITU, International Telecommunication Union; OECD, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; SEIS, Shared Environmental Information System; ToR, terms of reference; UNEP, United Nations Environment Programme; WHO, World Health Organization.
