1st ENI SEIS II East Steering Committee Meeting

MINUTES

29–30 November 2016, Brussels, Belgium

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This document was approved through a written procedure and integrates comments from the Steering Committee members. The agenda, list of participants, presentations and other relevant documents are available at the following link: http://eni-seis.eionet.europa.eu/east/governance/steering/1st-eni-seis-ii-east-steering-committee-meeting. An Action list from the meeting is included at the end of the minutes.

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Highlights

The First Steering Committee of the "Implementation of the Shared Environmental Information System principles and practices in the Eastern Partnership countries – SEIS II East" Project aimed to operationalise priorities identified over the inception phase. The meeting took place in Brussels, Belgium on the 29-30 November 2016. It was attended by the National Focal Points from the six partner countries, the European Commission (DG NEAR, DG ENV and Eurostat), the EU Slovak Presidency, as well as representatives of OECD, UNECE, UNEP, Zoi Environment Network, REC Caucasus, Eco Forum and EEA.

The Steering Committee:

- Acknowledged the need to put a strong emphasis on implementation, in particular in the context of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) Riga Summit priorities and the EaP Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change adopted in October 2016;
- Took note of the outcomes of kick-off missions in five EaP countries and activities implemented by projects that have synergies with SEIS II East;
- Discussed and endorsed national and regional priorities and plans for 2017;
- Stressed the need to define and agree upon targets and deliverables for the SEIS II project versus a broader objective of having SEIS established by 2021;
- Discussed relevant logistical issues and agreed to pursue the establishment of the SEIS National Implementation Teams (NIT), where not yet done, in order facilitate communication between relevant institutions and promote project's outputs;
- Endorsed the communication plan and agreed to be actively involved in its implementation;
- Agreed to meet in November 2017 in one of the EaP countries.

Project background

As part of the European Union's regional cooperation efforts with the EaP framework, the European Environment Agency (EEA) started implementing phase II of the SEIS project in February 2016. The project covers all six EaP countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) and will be carried out over four years. The project aims to help the countries in defining and putting in practice solutions that would enable compliance with regional / international commitments related to environmental reporting. This includes a better management and use environmental information to support a regular process of environmental assessment and evidence-based decision-making. At national level, the project is coordinated by two National Focal Points (NFP), representing the Ministry of Environment and the National Bureau of Statistics respectively.

Meeting objectives

The objectives of the 1ˢᵗ ENI SEIS II East Steering Committee meeting were as follows:
- To agree on the regional priorities to be addressed by the project – the thematic clusters with associated objectives/approaches;
- To take stock of the findings and country-level discussions during the project inception phase;
- To discuss the proposed elements of the national work plans and activities to be initiated in 2017, on one hand, and further within the project implementation (i.e. by 2020); and
- To ensure synergies with other relevant regional and national projects/initiatives, supported by EU Delegations, UN bodies or bilateral programmes.

The meeting was structured in four sessions over 1 and ½ days. Each session was co-chaired by two representatives from the European Commission, the EEA and a representative of the partner countries.

A background note outlining the meeting's objectives, structure and focus of the sessions, as well as a set of guiding questions to prepare the countries' interventions was circulated to the participants in advance of the meeting.

Session 1. Political context and latest developments

1.1 Cooperation in the field of environment with the EaP countries

The meeting was opened by Ms. Diana Jablonska, Deputy Head of Unit - Neighbourhood East cooperation in the European Commission DG NEAR, who welcomed the participants and highlighted the **Eastern Partnership's focus on results for citizens.** In this context, work is conducted to identify specific results and develop a vision of achieving them coherently across **four priorities** established at the EaP Riga Summit. As a result, twenty areas with specific deliverables and milestones were identified in the Joint Staff Working Document "EaP – Focusing on key priorities and deliverables". Ms. Jablonska underlined the **political commitment of the Eastern Partnership countries** to be part of the further cooperation on Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) as declared at the Environment and Climate Change Ministerial meeting in October 2016 and the pan-European Ministerial Conference in June 2016.

Ms. Angela Bularga, Programme Manager Neighbourhood East in DG NEAR, highlighted that the next step in implementing the EaP Ministerial Declaration will be the development of an Action Plan, through the **Eastern Partnership Panel on Environment and Climate Change** convening next on 2-3 March 2017. The Steering Committee members were invited to reflect on the project's contribution to the Panel and consequently the Action Plan. She also informed the meeting that the next **Summit of the Eastern Partnership** was being planned for November 2017, by when results from the SEIS cooperation should be showcased – in particular on how improved access to, and transparency around, the

management and use of environmental data for evidence-based policy making, have also reached the citizens.

Ms. Bularga made a brief overview of the other **ongoing regional EU-funded projects** under the environment and climate change portfolio that should be linked to SEIS II project activities. The SEIS II East and Steering Committee members were invited to systematically address **coordination needs**, as there are several projects and initiatives implemented with **synergetic objectives** including:

- Greening Economies in the Eastern Neighbourhood (EaP GREEN),
- EU Water Initiative Plus (EUWI+) for Eastern Partnership,
- Improving Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea (EMBLAS II),
- Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG II),
- Emerald Network of Nature Protection Sites (Emerald II),
- Improving Capacities to Eliminate and Prevent Recurrence of Obsolete Pesticides, and
- Support to Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation (ClimaEast).

The participants were informed that the first regional steering committee meeting of the EUWI+ Programme would take place in April/May 2017, and results from the 2016 monitoring surveys under EMBLAS II would be presented in Tbilisi in February 2017.

In his intervention, Mr. Patrick Wegerdt, Policy Officer - Bilateral & Regional Environmental Cooperation in DG ENV, underlined the importance of **further cooperation on SEIS** that is **aligned to the priorities of the Eastern Partnership framework**. Referring to the four major pillars of cooperation as decided at the Riga Summit of Heads of States in 2015, the second phase of SEIS cooperation should consider:

- strengthening institutions and good governance;
- enhancing mobility and contacts between people;
- developing market opportunities by improving the business environment and legal certainty in Eastern Europe and focusing on the digital economy field;
- ensuring energy security and improving the interconnections for energy & transport.

The challenge and importance monitoring progress under the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** was raised with expectations to see a strong link between the implementation of SEIS and the monitoring under the SDGs.

The Steering Committee members took note of the information shared by the European Commission. They acknowledged the need for **systematic coordination** among different activities given the cross-cutting nature of SEIS II objectives and activities.

1.2   EaP in the focus of the Slovak Presidency in the Council of the EU

A priority of the Slovak Presidency in the Council of the EU (1 July 2016 – 31 December 2016) has been to promote an effective **European neighbourhood policy**, with the objective of stabilising the neighbourhood and developing relationships with partners based on common interests and needs, with due regard for the principle of enhanced differentiation. Reflections from Mr. Miroslav Beriac from the Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU highlighted the achievement of having organised **the first formal Ministerial meeting on Environment and Climate Change** in the history of the Eastern Partnership in October 2016 that led to the adoption of the Declaration on Cooperation on Environment and Climate Change (http://ec.europa.eu/environment/international_issues/ pdf/declaration_on_cooperation_eastern_partnership.pdf).

The Steering Committee members took note of the achievements under the Slovak Presidency and welcomed the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration.

1.3   The EEA and latest developments within Eionet

Mr. David Stanners, Head of the Partnerships and Networks Programme (EEA), provided an overview of the **working modalities** of the EEA and within the European environment information and observation network (Eionet), referring also to the **developing policy frameworks** extending to different timeframes, i.e. 2020, 2030 and 2050. The networking model of Eionet, with European Topic Centres (ETCs) and National Reference Centres (NRCs) were described to showcase how these existing structures will support the knowledge transfer and capacity building in the further SEIS cooperation in the European Neighbourhood. The recent review of the **Eionet "core data flows"**, and the use of "Reportnet" as **Eionet's common reporting infrastructure**, are two examples to demonstrate how the streamlining of reporting is being addressed at European level.

Final remarks were on the **approach to assessments**, describing how the period leading to the European Environment State and Outlook Report in 2015 (SOER2015) had focused on understanding systemic challenges and the need for transitions ("problem-focused"), while the 2016-2020 period will be more "**solution-oriented**" by identifying knowledge, skills and governance approaches for transitions. As developments on the approach and structure of the SOER2020 advance in EEA, including also tools and procedures to facilitate production and communication, these will be communicated and shared as appropriate in an effort to build on the vast experience of Eionet.

The main points raised during the session related to the need of ensuring:

-   **Identification of targets and deliverables for SEIS II project** versus the targets to "have SEIS established by 2021" (as stated in the Batumi Declaration), considering also the wider framework of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relevant for all the countries;
-   **Links between different indicator processes,** covering, for example, the UNECE Environmental Indicators, the OECD Green Growth Indicators and the SDGs, etc.

In relation to the question from Moldova on the possibility to include ENI East partner countries in the SOER2020, the EEA responded that the process will be closely followed during the project and the outcome designed as close as possible.

Session 2. Regional Dimension of SEIS II

2.1   Summary of key activities and results during the inception phase

Ms. Galina Georgieva, Head of Group, summarised key activities and results of the inception phase: regional events and country visits, the **status on the dialogue with the partner countries** for the elaboration of the work plans, administrative issues including recruitment, and communication and visibility-related aspects. National consultations in the countries took place in Moldova, Belarus, Armenia, Ukraine and Georgia, while the first country visit to Azerbaijan was postponed to early 2017. The findings are captured in the draft Inception Report that is a project deliverable to be made available after DG NEAR approval. The Steering Committee members took note of the presentation.

2.2   The regional plan of activities under the SEIS II East project

The regional dimension of project activities is addressing the common elements across the six partner countries. The SEIS II project activities were presented in the context of the wider regional cooperation initiatives and efforts to measure progress on SEIS across the region. To that end, at the 8th Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in Batumi, June 2016, a first ***Report on progress in establishing the Shared Environmental Information System in support of regular reporting in the pan-European region***[1] was presented as a first step to develop a regional evaluation of "performance" in developing SEIS based on five criteria. This first reporting exercise on progress would be the baseline for future reviews – the implementation of SEIS and measurement of progress reflecting all three "SEIS pillars", namely **cooperation, common content and infrastructure**. This was defined in earlier efforts (2014) to develop ***Targets and performance indicators for measuring progress in developing the Shared Environmental Information System across the pan-European region***[2]. In the Logical Framework of the project, some of the indicators[3] of achievement are directly linked to these common targets for monitoring progress for each of the three SEIS pillars.

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[1] http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2016/ece/ece.batumi.conf.2016.8.e.pdf - outcome from the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (WGEMA)

[2] http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2016/ece/ece.batumi.conf.2016.inf.16.e.pdf

[3] For the EEA and within Eionet, an "indicator", as defined in EEA's Indicator Management System includes several parts: key messages, visualization in the form of graphs, diagrams and maps, the indicator specification and metadata (i.e. methodology), some assessment including the environmental context, policy context and targets, and data services/sources to the underpinning data with associated technical details. This experience, and the experience gained by developing the tools and methodologies for the European Environment State and Outlook 2015 (SOER2015), will serve to structure capacity building actions and expert support on assessments. Having such commonly structured environmental information systems, including indicators, within the countries will help to improve evidence-based policy making at national level, while contributing to meeting regional and global reporting obligations (including SDGs). The objective is to establish a comprehensive knowledge base in the countries to support a regular process

Under this session, the EEA project team (with input from Mr. Johannes Mayer) presented the key elements and overall approach for the regional cooperation envisaged.

- To address the "*cooperation*" dimension, the establishment of the "SEIS National Implementation Teams (NIT)" is seen as key. The team will facilitate the communication between the institutions and promote the project's outputs. A priority area will be to ensure that adequate **data policies and inter-institutional agreements** are in place to allow the full operationalisation of the **national integrated information systems**. In this context, the **European Interoperability Framework for European public services**[4], will also help guide this work. The EEA's data policy and sharing of experiences from Eionet countries in developing a data policy for establishing their national environmental information system will be also central.

- The targets for the "*content*" dimension are towards the **production of the full set of agreed environmental indicators**[5] (also reflected in the Batumi Ministerial Declaration reiterating that "SEIS should be in place by 2021"). Two conclusions from the earlier report on progress in establishing SEIS are that 1) more effort are needed to **harmonise methodologies to those applied within Eionet and at the EEA**, and 2) should be better aligned to the requirements of the **United Nations System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA)** and the and **United Nations Framework for the Development of Environmental Statistics (FDES)**. The proposed focus thematically is with emphasis on **water area** (water quantity & water quality), **biodiversity** (particular linked to the establishment of the Emerald Network)**, air** (primarily linked to the EU Air Quality Directive and other synergy activities[6])**,** and a common pilot project on **land mapping** (implementing the CORINE land cover methodology and land cover change for six urban areas).

- With respect to the "*infrastructure*" element, and based on the above thematic entry points is to use the concepts behind some of the European environmental knowledge platforms, such as the **Water Information System for Europe (WISE)** and the **Biodiversity Information System for Europe (BISE)** to develop regional and national actions leading to similar types of systems at the country level. It is important to recognize that knowledge platforms such as WISE and BISE are at the same time a **partnership** (among several stakeholders), a **portal** (to provide data, environmental statistics, indicators, information on policies etc.) and a **process** (providing services to meet reporting obligations).

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of environmental assessment, by among other things, enhance capacities for producing indicator-based assessments.

[4] http://ec.europa.eu/isa/

[5] https://www.unece.org/env/indicators.html

[6] With the "Batumi Action for Cleaner Air (2016–2021)" and national interest to showcase the benefits of SEIS in the field of environmental health, dialogue is ongoing with the WHO Regional Office for Europe and its European Centre for Environment and Health to identify opportunities to join efforts.

Considering the proposed thematic focus at regional level, the project will support the further development of the **environmental information systems** to enable the production of the **indicators**, and based on these indicators develop **assessment capacity** building on EEA's and Eionet's experience and methodologies.

The Steering Committee Members endorsed actions proposed under the regional dimension of SEIS II, subject to further written feedback when a detailed regional plan, with clear responsibilities for implementation is developed. The project's Logical Framework will be updated accordingly in order to provide for specific targets and thus a progress monitoring tool. The participants highlighted the need to ensure sustainability of achievements, where governments' role is crucial, and the crucial role of open, effective cooperation between the Ministries of Environment and Statistical Services at national level – with the principle of re-using data as key.

The steering Committee members agreed to:
- Continue the implementation of the common pilot project on **land mapping** (implementing the CORINE land cover methodology and land cover change for six urban areas).
- In the field of **biodiversity**, define and establish the working modalities with the Council of Europe regarding further support towards the establishment of the Emerald Network of protected areas, and related data reporting aspects;
- Explore to possibility to organise a regional training (under the auspice of the EEA Academy) on **environment assessment** (Q3/Q4 of 2017, tbc)

2.3   Synergies and joint activities with relevant partners

UN Environment

Mr. Matt Billot, UN Environment, Regional Coordinator, Science Division, UN Environment, Europe provided an outline of some new projects and activities supporting the implementation of SEIS worldwide and in the pan-European region, including:

- "**Capacity building for environmental data sharing and reporting in support of a shared environmental information system**", which is funded by the European Union and implemented in 20 countries in three regions (Central Asia, Africa and Asia-Pacific).
- a new UNEP-UNECE joint project (environment and statistical divisions), funded through UNDA, which will **build capacity for producing environmental statistics to support the SDGs** (covering five countries for capacity building and two country case studies).

Depending on needs and priorities, UNEP will provide countries with access to a variety of data sharing and visualization tools, methods and technologies for the establishment and/or improvement of online SoER web-platforms and online portals on environmental indicators (i.e. UNEP's Indicator Reporting Information System IRIS, links to UNEPLive).

UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

Mr. Filip Aggestam from the Environment Division described the UNECE contribution in working towards SEIS in the pan-European region. In practice, much of the work was done through the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (WGEMA) and Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators (JTFESI), leading to the **Batumi Ministerial Declaration and the Ministerial decision on further establishing SEIS by 2021**. Emphasis was put on the importance for the UNECE, UNEP and EEA to develop a common approach for developing a regular reporting process building on past joint activities including the GEO-6 preparation process, UNEA, SEIS progress reporting, and the previous ENPI-SEIS project (2010-2015). The strong link between SEIS and monitoring progress under the SDGs stressed, such as the possibilities to work more closely with the UNECE's **five multilateral environmental conventions** (and 12 protocols).

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (*OECD)*

Ms. Mikaela Rambali, Policy Analyst, presented the status of the **Green Growth Indicators** work conducted under the EaP GREEN project. In Armenia, the first report on green growth indicators is to be published in 2017. In Azerbaijan, the recently established working group on green growth indicators will meet for the first time in December 2016 to support the publication of a green growth indicators report to be released in 2017. A national meeting was just held in Chisinau to discuss the list of green growth indicators for Moldova. Ukraine has just published a report on [Green Transformation in Ukraine](#). Ms. Rambali recalled the outcomes of the [Regional workshop on Shared environmental information system and green growth](#) (March 2015) and welcome the possibility of further having joint events and actions to better streamline the indicator work under the SEIS project and OECD's Green Growth Indicators (in addition to the OECD's participation in the UNECE joint task force on environmental indicators). She also pointed out that the data management component of EUWI+ explicitly stipulates the need to ensure compliance with SEIS, as a mechanism to foster collaboration between various initiatives.

WHO – the Regional Office for Europe and its European Centre for Environment and Health (WHO ECEH, Bonn)

No representative from the WHO could participate at the meeting, but a note was provided to input to the discussion. Opportunities and potential benefits of WHO/health sector involvement in ENI SESI II East project include:

- building on a common interest at the country level, 'air quality and health' (as discussed in Georgia) can be considered as a potential case study for cooperation under the ENI SEIS II East project. This could become a show case for working with other sectors, which are potential users of environmental data, information, and knowledge, which is generated, gathered and made accessible using the SEIS principles;

- contribution to the information and awareness raising campaigns related to the implementation of the ENI SEIS II East project on health aspects, but also for other environmental issues, if needed. this would also be an opportunity to strengthen the existing cooperation with other partners involved in the ENI SEIS II East project, namely the UNECE (in particular in relation to CLRTAP, to which WHO ECEH is hosting a Chair of the Task Force on health) and UNEP;

- experiences from the implementation of that component of the project could be brought to the attention of the upcoming **Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health**, for example, in the form of the side event; this could well link to the joint side event on 'Clean air for life' organized at the occasion of the EfE Ministerial Conference in Batumi, GEO in 2016.

The Steering Committee Members took note of the presentations by international partners. The main points raised during the roundtable discussion of this session include the need to:

- Ensure **links with the green growth indicators** where the SEIS II project should opt to have more joint events with the relevant partners (e.g. follow up to the March 2015 SEIS/OECD joint workshop);

- Undertake concerted efforts to **harmonise and streamline relevant processes** to the benefit of the partner countries;

- Carry out a **continued dialogue to develop long-term targets for SEIS,** based on the project's achievements, is important;

- Evaluate and better **understand at national level the processes that contribute to SEIS**. Understanding how SEIS can help anchor processes at national level so that they become sustainable.

- Identify **upcoming key meetings**, and decide on engagement/visibility (e.g. UNECE CEP, Eastern Partnership Panel on Environment and Climate Change, 1st Steering Committee of EUWI+, 6th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, Summit of the Eastern Partnership).

- Ensure **close dialogue with the countries and the UNECE and other partners** in preparation for the 2017 Sessions of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators (June), Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (June) and Seminar on the Implementation of SEEA (October);

- Coordinate the input and showcasing of SEIS best practices at the **Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (June 2017)** and **Summit of the Eastern Partnership (November 2017 - tbc).**

Session 3. National work plan of activities for 2017 and beyond

3.1 Mechanisms to support national-level implementation

Under the financial mechanisms to support the implementation of the ENI SEIS II East project at national level, Mr. Tommi Multala, Resource Officer (EEA), presented key elements of the project budget, financial instruments to be deployed by EEA, as well as the funding opportunities to operationalise the cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries. Among these were mentioned the following possibilities:

- EEA direct contribution towards gross salary of regional assistants / coordinators as employees in one of the institutions in the National Implementation Team;
- Co-financing of SEIS capacity building activities (training, workshops, events);
- Coverage of experts' travel arrangements related to SEIS activities (expert visits, study tours);
- Co-financing of country specific pilot projects whenever feasible following the related EU finance and procurement regulations;
- Cooperation with UN bodies in the region (e.g. UNECE).

The participants took note of the presentation. The following points were raised:

- Need to confirm the process with countries and adapt draft **Letters of Intent**, establishing the modalities of cooperation, in order to formalise this the process with the each country, as applicable;
- Address the issue of project "**registration**" as applicable, i.e. in Belarus;
- Coordinate with each country the necessary process to formalise the establishment of the "**SEIS National Implementation Teams**";
- Provide guidance/communication from EEA to trigger bilateral dialogue on the need for "**local assistant/coordinator**" (covering the process and the list of expected tasks and competences);
- Identify **concrete examples of national practices/pilots** to be replicated.

3.2 Country perspective

A background note for the meeting provides a summary of the country priorities identified during the inception phase. The partner countries interventions during this session addressed primarily two aspects:

(1) The model proposed and/or already in place to establish a "**national SEIS implementation team (NIT)**" (how is it structured, and how has its mandate been defined), and

(2) The proposed **national case to demonstrate SEIS in practice** (pilot project).

Moldova

On point 1:   The inter-agency working group established under the EaPGreen project will serve as the model to establish the SEIS NIT, to be formalised through a Ministerial Decree. The EaPGreen WG will end next year, but until, may serve as the platform to discuss SEIS before the formalisation of the SEIS group. A decision on how to proceed with the formalities should be taken before the end of 2016.

On point 2:   Building capacity to assess impact to the environment at the household level (including in rural areas), with particular focus on water abstraction/consumption, waste, air pollution, and continue to build capacity on developing environmental accounts (building on support provided by Sweden ending in 2017).

Belarus

On point 1:   There are no such groups currently in place to coordinate SEIS specifically, although there are other inter-institutional groups around climate change and environmental accounts. Cooperation between the Ministry of Natural resources and Environmental protection and the National Statistical Committee is good.

On point 2:   Being able to further develop environmental accounts is judged to be very important. Consider the 2016 3rd UNECE Environmental Performance review for Belarus to address the recommendations, in particular those in line with its obligations under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention).

Armenia

On point 1:   A new committee will be established on environmental data management. Drafting of the ToR of this committee is ongoing. There will also be a new task force associated to the committee to set-up the administrative registries and improve technical capacities (accessibility, working with data producers and users).

On point 2:   The need to develop a case to make use of the newly developed Information System for Lake Sevan to better demonstrate the benefits of SEIS, extend the thematic coverage to include biodiversity-related data, formalize the governance of the system (i.e. hand over to the Ministry of Nature Protection) – to serve as a basis to develop a national portal. The development of shared environmental information system/ecoportal of Armenia remains the key interest and objective for the upcoming work under the project.

Ukraine

On point 1: An NIT has already been established (signed) although not yet operationalised.

On point 2: To further develop and maintain the SEIS Ukraine information portal (http://seis-ukraine.org/) to disseminate environmental data/indicators/assessments – where in 2017, all available are added, in 2018, have the portal as the base for a national State of the Environment report, and in 2019 develop educational materials (awareness raising) to different target groups.

Georgia

On point 1: In early 2017, an SEIS NIT will be established (currently ongoing changes within government).

On point 2: Establish a Water Information System for Georgia (WISE-Georgia), including water quality and quantity data and information, and build capacity to assess the water are based on the available indicators. Also the interest to build a case to showcase the benefits of SEIS in the area of "air quality and health".

Azerbaijan

On point 1: In October 2016, a National Coordination Council on Sustainable Development was created. The Council aims to determine national priorities in accordance to the global targets and prepare annual reports on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The council may involve local and foreign experts, specialists, international organizations and scientific institutions, as well as create Working Groups on separate directions.

On point 2: Improving capacities around indicator-based reporting in view of preparing a SoE national report, considering also developing capacity on environmental accounting.

The EEA will consider all the input gathered throughout the inception phase and communicated at the Steering Committee meeting to make proposals by end of January 2017 on how to approach the national priorities identified, based on the points raised on policy and governance.

At the national level, the approach proposed is to focus on thematic area(s), and consequently thematic "portals" and/or information systems, as sub-components of a "national integrated environmental information system". This will help benefit from the concepts behind some of the European environmental knowledge platforms, such as the **Water Information System for Europe (WISE) and the Biodiversity Information System for Europe (BISE)** to develop regional and national actions leading to similar types of systems at the country level. It is very important to recognize that knowledge platforms such as WISE and BISE are at the same time a **partnership** (among several stakeholders), a **portal** (to provide data, environmental statistics, indicators, information on policies etc.) and a **process** (providing services to meet reporting obligations).

3.3 Next steps in the waste statistics project and country-level activities

Mr. Wim Van Breusegem, Team Leader for the Eurostat-led project component on waste, presented the approach to advance with the activity. Points to be further discussed with the countries include:

- Specific needs and priorities with respect to waste statistics;
- Appointment of a National Waste Statistics Coordinator;
- The planning of the country visits: constraints or preferences;
- UNSD questionnaire: main issues and progress.

The NFPs took note that separate communication on the above aspects will be addressed to them in due time. They agreed to provide timely input to this activity.

Session 4. Next steps

4.1 Communication and visibility

Ms. Victoria Goncharova, Project Officer for communication, visibility and networking, presented the project communication plan. She emphasised that communication is everyone's responsibility in the project. Target audiences need to be identified for the relevant activities together with the NITs. Different tools and channels will be used such as national campaigns, portals, websites, published materials and local media, as well as involvement of Non State Actors. EEA will support NFPs in this process.

The NFPs agreed to share news on relevant developments in their countries, as well as to inform EEA team of possibilities to enhance project's visibility at national level.

4.2 Conclusions and closure

Based on the discussions during the two-day meeting, the Steering Committee agreed on a number of action points, captured in the enclosed Action List to the minutes.

In closing, the **NFPs have been invited to consider the possibility of hosting the next project Steering Committee in November 2017** (tentative dates 15-16 November – place to be confirmed), as well as to indicate their interest in organising project events in their countries.

Annex: Action list from the 1st ENI SEIS II East Steering Committee meeting

Action	Timing	Lead	Comments
Gather inputs to document and coordinate with countries the status to establish the SEIS **National Implementation Teams (NIT)**. Review and communicate expected ToR	Dec-Jan	EEA	UA has formalised process (need to get a copy/details).
Provide guidance/message/instructions to trigger bilateral dialogue on the need for "**local assistant/coordinator**" (process + list of expected tasks and competences).	Dec-Jan	EEA (Moldova)	Moldova has agreed to share with the EEA the ToR for existing local assistants, e.g. under the EaPGreen project.
Confirm process with countries and adapt draft **Letters of Intent** for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova	31 Jan	EEA/countries	For BY, in the context of the project registration. UA already has draft for their review. Az to discuss also during visit in early 2017.
Follow-up with Belarus the project **registration** issue (potentially also Azerbaijan)	31 Jan	EEA	Important to keep the EU Delegation in the loop.
Ensure **website** maintenance and include materials from SC meeting	continuous	EEA	Project website structure in place
Gather input and develop the 1st ENI SEIS II East project **Newsletter**	31 Jan	EEA	The project was also invited to contribute to UNECE WGEMA's 2nd Newsletter by 2 Dec.
Regional activites: Document the process to develop, structure and communicate regional work plan/activites for 2017	31 Dec	EEA	See Regional work plan develop
National support: Review case-by-case each country priorities as identidied during inception phase/at SC to develop country-specific proposals/response to trigger dialogue on national pilots/support (the framework for national support)	Jan-Feb	EEA/countries	Key link to the "local assistant" in the countries National work plan to be circulated to the countries
Gather and coordinate input for upcoming **UNECE CEP meeting** (e.g. papers on mandate/vision for WGEMA, reporting mechanism for SEIS, etc).	20 Jan	EEA/Eionet/EC /Partners	
Coordinate with DG NEAR/ENV re: timeline of key 2017 events to consider for project input/activities (incl. side events); **EaP panel on Env/CC March**, any upcoming high-level EU-country bilaterals	1 Mar	EEA/DG NEAR/DG ENV	Expectations for the project to contribute to the "Action Plan" to operationalise the October Declaration.
Coordinate a first visit to **Azerbaijan (with CLC seminar)**	Dec/Jan	EEA/Azerbaijan	

Action	Timing	Lead	Comments
Ensure follow-up as needed with **Eurostat** e.g. re: contact points and national visits	January	Eurostat	Regional meeting planned for 11-12 October 2017
Corine Land Cover: Coordinate first visits (identification of partners, modalities) to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Moldova	31 January	EEA/countries	Get proposals of suitable dates by end of January 2017
Corine Land Cover: Develop Technical Specifications for implementaiton of training/mapping activity (contract with ETC/ULS)	31 January	EEA/Copernicus team	Need to reply to UA's request for several pilot sites
EUWI+: Ensure all necessary communication and input ready for 1st regional Steering Committee in April/May 2017	EEA/DG NEAR/EU WI+ team	March	
EMBLAS II project (Black Sea): Results of 1st monitoring campaigns/surveysto be presented in Tbilisi in February 2017. To discuss/include tasks linked to marine indicators in national workplans as appropriate	February	EEA/DG NEAR	
EaPGreen: Get calendar of events for 2017 (mainly re: indicator work) – for possible synergies/joint events	January	DG NEAR/ EaPGreen team	