

National roundtable on Open Data and e-government for the environment

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**Environment Agency of the Republic of Moldova
Chişinău, Republic of Moldova**

MEETING MINUTES

Introduction

The “Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) Phase II East” Project (ENI SEIS II East), funded by the European Union, is set in the context of the Eastern Partnership. It contributes to the achievement of the targets jointly defined by the EU and the Eastern partner countries in the “20 Deliverables for 2020”. The project aims at further implementing the principles and practices of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS), which was agreed at political level by Ministers from EU Member States and the partner countries. The project builds on previous cooperation in this area.

The series of national roundtable discussions in EaP countries are part of a dedicated component under the framework of ENI SEIS II East, and implemented by the European Environment Agency with the support from PwC (and branches in ENI East countries) as a contractor. The project aims to assist in the future implementation of SEIS by improving the sharing and dissemination of environment information between various institutions at a national level and beyond, as defined also by the Aarhus Convention on access to environment information.

The open data component of the project aims to connect the current work with other environmental information sharing and dissemination activities both at national and European levels. In particular, it covers the thematic work undertaken within the ENI SEIS II East areas of work, activities overseen by the Aarhus Convention, as well as current initiatives taking place in the European Union on open data and streamlines the reporting on and the improvement of access to environment information.

The national roundtable discussions follow the first regional workshop held on 5-6 March 2019 in Kyiv, Ukraine. The regional workshop highlighted the need for the right governance model, legal and licensing framework, and interoperability mechanisms for enabling sharing and dissemination of environmental information on Open Data and “eco-” Portals. In addition, it pointed out the necessity to work on the development of environmental information systems, metadata and information/data sharing standards, while increasing awareness in both public institutions and among citizens. The presentations and minutes of the regional event are available here:

<https://eni-seis.eionet.europa.eu/east/areas-of-work/communication/events/project-related-events/regional-event-on-open-data-and-e-government-for-environment-in-the-eni-east-countries>



The second regional workshop is foreseen to take place during the second half of 2019, potentially back-to-back with the Aarhus Convention Task Force on Access to Information scheduled for the 2-4 October 2019 in Geneva.

Objective

The roundtable aimed to identify concrete steps to advance in terms of legal, organisational, technical conditions to ensure that environmental information is integrated with the national e-government and open data initiatives at country level in line with SEIS principles.

A key objective in this process was to raise awareness of the benefits of sharing environmental information and knowledge at all levels. For the implementation of this component, close links are needed, among others, with key international partners, such as UNECE WGEMA, Aarhus Convention/PRTR Protocol Secretariats, OSCE/Aarhus Centres, RECs, NGOs, etc. In this regard, the national roundtable audience consisted of a mix of environment, e-government, open data, and international experts.

The expected outcomes of the roundtables were:

- A finalised road-map/set of actions for improving the dissemination and sharing of environmental data through e-governance and open data initiatives that could be disseminated for further public consultations and approval;
- A set of measures for continuing the implementation of the Aarhus Convention, Protocol on PRTRs (as applicable), SEIS principles and other international commitments;
- Final remarks on the country maturity report are to be gathered during the discussions;
- Input on relevant processes impacting the further development of SEIS in the European Neighbourhood East region, the pan-European assessment processes based on SEIS or/and the Aarhus-related meetings, such as the Aarhus Convention Task Force on Access to Information;

It is expected that the actions emerging from the national and regional events will continue forward at national level within the implementation of the Aarhus Convention, Protocol on PRTRs (as applicable), SEIS principles and other international commitments.



Key outcomes from the sessions

Session 1: Opening and introduction

The first session started with welcoming remarks by Mr. Gheorge Radu, Deputy Director of the Environmental Agency of the Republic of Moldova. He emphasised the importance of the national roundtable and underlined the work done in the report by the European Environment Agency and PwC.

Daniela Cristiana Docan, from the European Environment Agency (EEA), presented the objective of the meeting and briefly introduced the work done within the scope of the project. The project page of ENI SEIS II East for the Republic of Moldova¹ was shown, mentioning the main contact points for the EEA at the national level (National Focal Points and National SEIS Assistant). In particular, the ENI SEIS II East project expected results and seven principles² of SEIS initiative were presented. In addition, the EEA presented the main policies related to data and information ([European Commission Digital \(Data\) Strategy](#), [DIR 2003/4/EC](#), [DIR 2007/2/EC](#), [DIR 2003/98/EC](#), [Aarhus Convention](#) and the Protocol on PRTRs), the “Fitness Check on Reporting and Monitoring³” and resulting [Actions for streamlining environmental reporting](#)⁴, the [European Open Data portal](#) and the overarching priorities that will guide the work of the EU over the next five years ([Strategic Agenda 2019-2024](#)⁵).

Maryna Yanush, from the UNECE Aarhus Convention Secretariat (remotely), highlighted the importance of using modern technologies for monitoring the state of the environment and fostering its protection. In particular, it was underlined that effective public access to public information – real-time where possible – is at the very heart of attaining sustainable goals. In this context, it is important to note the demand for accurate, geo-referenced and ready to reuse environmental data, and the need for the integration of environmental, geospatial, PRTRs, health, forestry and other related information systems in effective web portals and (mobile) applications. The implementation of SEIS principles support fully the implementation of the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs. In addition, Open Data can be used for 1) raising public awareness on environmental issues, 2) engaging citizens, 3) supporting decision making, 4) strengthening environmental legal enforcement, and 5) develop the economic activities.

PwC provided background information about the project, key objectives of the meeting, the methodology followed by the drafting of the draft maturity report, and the results of the meeting in Kyiv. In particular, the following points were highlighted:

- Governance: set up the right governance model and embed stakeholders from Open Data, e-government, health, statistics and the environment;
- Necessity to provide a single web-access point for environmental information;
- Necessity to develop/adopt metadata standards for environmental information;
- Necessity for licensing norms for Open Data and dissemination of environmental information;

¹ <https://eni-seis.eionet.europa.eu/east/areas-of-work/communication/events/project-related-events/open-data-and-e-governance-for-environment-national-roundtable-in-the-republic-of-moldova>

² <https://www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/what/shared-environmental-information-system-1>

³ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/legal/reporting/fc_overview_en.htm

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/legal/reporting/fc_actions_en.htm

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/future-europe_en



- Importance of interoperability between information systems for exchanging environmental information;
- Data governance: necessity to define environmental data quality from a monitoring and publication perspective, necessity to manage confidentiality and data privacy, and managing consistency of data published on various platforms;
- Necessity to define the granularity of environmental data published according to clear rules;
- Importance of considering user feedback and ad hoc request for information;
- Lack of "stories" to support environmental indicators (assessments).

PwC then presented the good practices report and highlighted the following points:

- The draft country maturity report is to be seen as a tool for representatives at the national level. It is the responsibility of the country to use it;
- Neither the maturity report nor the good practices report aim to provide an exhaustive view of environmental information sharing and dissemination in EaP countries. It focuses on key recommendations, which are detailed in the roadmap;
- It is expected that the representatives from the Republic of Moldova – in particular those present at the regional meeting and the national roundtables – should provide their comments on the maturity report.

Following this introduction about the scope, expectations and results of the project, PwC provided a series of good practices based on the main conclusions from the country maturity report. In particular:

- Defining metadata for environmental information as for Open Data;
- Categorisation of datasets, and highlighting environmental information;
- Publishing high quality datasets and fostering re-use;
- Access to geo-referenced information, example from the EEA website;
- Providing a story with indicators, example from the EEA website;
- Managing Open Data licences, example from the European Open Data Portal;
- Open Data quality measurement and impact assessment;
- Establishing a single access-point for sharing environmental information.

Session 2: Environmental data readiness and sharing in the Republic of Moldova

The second session was focused on sharing national initiatives on-going in the Republic of Moldova in the field of environmental information, as well as the project results, which were described in the draft country maturity report.

- 1) **Ms Tatiana TUGUI, Project Manager from the Environmental projects implementation unit (EPPO)** made a presentation on "Advancing collection and dissemination of environmental information in accordance with international commitments (PRTR)". The following points were highlighted:
 - A national framework for PRTRs was created, including specific normative acts;
 - The methodology and register for PRTRs could be improved if international support can be provided;
 - Trainings were provided to officials.



- 2) **Mr Igor BERCU, IT Product Manager from the E-Governance Agency** made a presentation on “Promoting dissemination of environmental information and interoperability”. The following points were highlighted:
- The project on modernization of public services is currently being implemented. By 2020, the objective is to have 100% of public services available as online services;
- Horizontal review – to audit all national public services;
 - The organisation of regular hackatons and the possibility to organise one for Open Data, and more particularly for environmental data;
 - The importance of machine-readable data;
 - The importance of the Law 142 on “Data sharing and interoperability” for exchanging data between public information systems.
- 3) **Ms Maria OVDII, Head Department Geodesy, Mapping and GIS Agency for the Land Relations and Cadastre** for the geospatial field, made a presentation over the latest geospatial initiatives in the Republic of Moldova. The following points were highlighted:
- The INSPIRE Directive has been transposed in the Law of the Republic of Moldova no. 254 on the National Space Data Infrastructure (NSDI). In addition, several normative acts have been drafted to complete the legal framework;
 - The geoportal is now available, but data still need to be published. The geoportal offers functionality to search, view download and transform data. (link: <http://www.geoportalinds.gov.md>);
 - The Metadata Catalog is under-going constant improvement;
 - Need for increasing institutional capacity to create, maintain and share spatial data; need for training, roundtables, seminars, etc.
 - Need for improving collaboration between the public, private sector and the sector academia and civil society;
 - International collaboration with some European countries for the implementation of the portal; international collaboration within UN GGIM, EuroGeographics, GSDI.
- 4) **Ms Iordanca-Rodica Iordanov, Executive Director from the EcoContact- Aarhus Centre Chisinau**, made a presentation over the user experience of environmental information in the Republic of Moldova. The following points were highlighted:
- Environmental information is not always easy to find and there are discrepancies between what public institutions believe to be available and what users find;
 - Need for better cooperation between public institutions, user group and NGOs in regards with the exchange of environmental information.
- 5) **PwC** presented the results from the draft maturity report and highlighted:
- E-government: much progress were made in the last years, and it is required to pursue the development of e-services and to foster interoperability, especially for Open Data, environmental, geospatial, health, transport, and energy information.
 - Open Data: the Republic of Moldova is well rated in terms of Open Data, and already have multiple datasets. Next steps will be ensuring high-quality metadata and continuing the fostering of the publication of environmental information on the Open Data portal. Besides, the support of user community is key for fostering Open Data.



- Environmental information: it is necessary to continue developing environmental indicators, ensure timely dissemination of environmental information, and also consider the possibility to develop a single web-access for environmental information.

Session 3: National road map and measures

The third session was dedicated to a discussion on the proposed national roadmap for the Republic of Moldova. Participants were split into five groups and had one hour to discuss the roadmap. After this, participants were invited to share their views on the roadmap and the draft country maturity report. It was reported that:

- The creation of a national register for all environmental information is being considered;
- Quality control mechanisms are delegated to each unit responsible for data quality. It is necessary to bring standardisation to ensure that quality control mechanisms are performed uniformly;
- It is necessary to strengthen material and human resources in monitoring centres, and also in institutions in order to be able to execute the measures in the roadmap;
- Additional funding and international assistance would be necessary in order to implement measures in the roadmap;
- Interoperability between systems and the provision of e-governance solutions are cornerstone for improving collaboration of institutions and sharing of environmental information. It is necessary to continue building interoperability of public institutions and information systems in the Republic of Moldova;
- It is required to review the legal framework in order to update the definition of public sector information which are considered as State secret;
- The licensing framework in the Republic of Moldova has to be reviewed;
- It is important to work on measures which will ensure timely availability of environmental information (data and reporting);
- The new legislation foresees the creation of new systems for reporting on waste and water.

In a nutshell, participants acknowledged the roadmap as adequate and relevant. No specific objections were made to the roadmap, although it was requested to update the country maturity report according to the presentations made. Participants also requested more time to reflect on the roadmap. Their comments should be provided by the end of June 2019.

The Deputy Director of the Environment Agency of the Republic of Moldova suggested to have a roundtable discussion to see if there is an EU practice (in EU Member States) where the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture are integrated into a single organisation – which is the case in the new attribution of responsibilities in the Republic of Moldova. He also underlined that the Environment Agency is independent and that its role is broader than the issuing of permissive acts. In particular, it is imperative for them to have actual authority in the field of environment, as they are the only authority at the national level for the implementation of the State policy on the environment.

Session 4: Way forward

The national roundtable was closed with an announcement regarding the next steps of the project. In particular, next steps will be:

- Reviewing the national draft report to integrate the results from the roundtable;
- Second regional workshop on Open Data and e-Government for the Environment (provisional date October 2019).



It was proposed that further discussions on the potential actions be discussed internally among partners in the Republic of Moldova, taking into account the suggested roadmap and the good practice report, and comments shared comments with PwC and the EEA **by end of June 2019.**

Meeting documents including presentations are available for download on the project page:

<https://eni-seis.eionet.europa.eu/east/areas-of-work/communication/events/project-related-events/open-data-and-e-governance-for-environment-national-roundtable-in-the-republic-of-moldova>

