

Training Program on the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting Central Framework and environment-related Sustainable Development Goals indicators for countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia

CONCEPT NOTE

The Training Program on the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting Central Framework and environment-related Sustainable Development Goal's (SDGs) indicators will launched in October 2017.

The program consists of a self-paced online training with webinar sessions, a workshop and follow-up country activities.

I. Background

The System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) Central Framework was adopted as the international statistical standard on environmental-economic accounts by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) at its 43rd session in March 2012. At its 45th Session in March 2014 the UNSC recognized SEEA as an important statistical framework for the post-2015 development agenda and the SDGs.

SEEA provides the concepts, definitions, classifications, accounting system and methodology to guide the data collection, compilation, and analysis for the measurement and a better understanding of environmental-economic interactions.

Countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA)¹ have requested training on SEEA and its links with environment-related SDG indicators several times. For example, the high-level participants (heads and deputy heads of NSOs) of the *Workshop on strengthening statistical and institutional capacities in the context of SDGs* (Paris, France, 26 April 2016) concluded that sub-regional and national capacity building activities are needed to enhance the capacity of NSOs in implementing environment statistics and SEEA, also in support of the SDGs.

Application of SEEA in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) requires significant capacity building efforts, including training of staff in National Statistical Offices. Several international organisations in the region have been launching a series of activities to strengthen environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting in EECCA countries. This includes sub-regional and national activities carried out by UNECE, UNESCAP, UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank.

This training program is complimentary with existing activities, and will be carried out by UNECE and UNSD in close cooperation with Statistics Netherlands. The training is also open for other interested countries, e.g. from South-Eastern Europe (SEE).

¹ Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan

II. Objectives

The objectives of the training program are

- a) to help participants acquire knowledge and skills to deepen their understanding of the accounting principles and basic data needs for compiling environmental-economic accounts according to the SEEA Central Framework;
- b) to understand the links between environment statistics, SEEA and environment-related SDG indicators;
- c) to facilitate experience sharing among EECCA countries; and
- d) to support countries to set up a strategy and work plan for the implementation and further development of environment statistics, SEEA and environment-related SDG indicators.

III. Participants

EECCA countries will be invited to nominate participants for the training course. Ideally, these participants would also serve as focal points for follow up in countries. The training is also open to participants from other countries (e.g. from SEE) who may attend at own cost.

The first phase of the training which consists of an online course can be attended by all who express an interest in attending the course. National Statistical Offices (NSOs) will be tasked with identifying relevant staff from within the NSO as well as relevant line ministries who would benefit from the online training. During the in-person phase (training workshop) two participants will be invited from each country: one from the NSO and one from a line ministry involved in compiling environment accounts and supporting statistics and policy-making on environmental issues (such as the ministry of environment, ministry of planning and other relevant government agencies).

Nominated participants should ideally have experience in SEEA and its implementation or advisory experience in fields related to environmental-economic accounts such as national accounts or environment statistics. Moreover, participants should have the implementation of the SEEA or underlying environment statistics in their country as part of their professional responsibilities.

IV. Organization

The training program is based on a blended learning format consisting of three phases: an online course, an in-person phase (sub-regional training workshop) and a follow up phase.

1. Online course (from October to December 2017):

The participants will attend an obligatory online course to assure a common level of technical knowledge on the SEEA. The online course will be facilitated by 1-2 SEEA-experts. The online course will be accessible via the UNSD website. The amount of time that participants will need to spend with the online course will be 6-8 hours per week up to a total of 64 hours in 8 weeks.

The training material will be available in Russian and English.

The online course consists of the following 5 modules:

- Module 1: Overview of the SEEA Central Framework and its applications in integrated policies (1 week).

- Module 2: Physical flow accounts. The module will cover the recording of physical flows and the structure of a physical supply and use table (2weeks).
- Module 3: Asset accounts. The module will focus on the recording of stocks and flows associated with environmental assets. It will discuss asset accounting in general terms with a particular focus on the measurement of the depletion of natural resources and valuation of environmental resources (2 weeks).
- Module 4: Environmental activity accounts. The module focuses on the identification of economic transactions within the SNA that may be considered as environmental, with a particular focus on the Environmental Expenditure Accounts and Environmental Goods and Services Sectors (2 weeks).
- Module 5: Combined presentations. The module will focus on the explanation of combined presentations of physical and monetary data and a range of examples of such presentations (1 week).

In addition, there will be 4 live online sessions (webinar) with SEEA experts. These sessions will be held in English only.

2. Sub-regional training workshop (probably 15-18 January 2018 in Minsk, Belarus)

During the 4 day long on-site training participants will further discuss the content of the online course and questions raised during the online course. Besides technical issues, participants are expected to share their experiences on how to prepare a national strategy and work plan for the implementation of the SEEA, and on how to conduct a national training workshop on SEEA. The on-site training may explore further technical issues related to the SEEA, including an overview of the *SEEA Applications and Extensions*, the *SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting*, and subsystems of the SEEA. The thematic focus of the training will take into consideration the demands expressed by participants during the online training phase, the results of the 2017 Global Assessment for Environmental Economic Accounting, and the outcomes of the Workshop on Environment Statistics for North and Central Asian Countries (15-17 November 2017 in Almaty, Kazakhstan).

The on-site training will be held with English – Russian interpretation.

3. Follow-up in countries (1st half of 2018)

Participating countries are expected to take follow up actions after the training program, such as (i) conducting a national training workshop on SEEA; (ii) formulating a national strategy and work plan for the implementation of SEEA; and (iii) if needed, requesting further technical assistance from the training organizers for the implementation of SEEA.

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