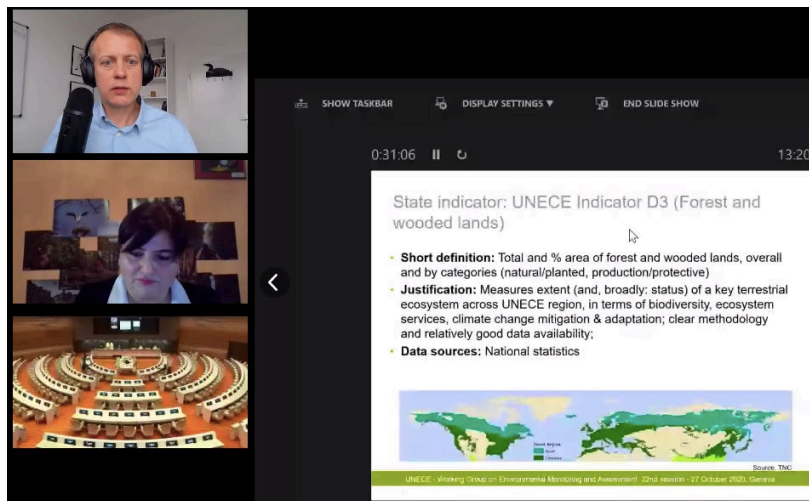


Issue 9, November 2020



## Newsletter for the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment



## 17<sup>th</sup> session of Joint Task Force

The 17<sup>th</sup> session of the Joint Task Force was held on 26 October 2020 and addressed two key substantive topics: the review of UNECE environmental indicators and data needs, statistics and indicators for the pandemic. Documentation is available at <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=53474>.

The Joint Task Force agreed with the general structure of the revised UNECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators as proposed by the secretariat, using the UN Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics as the overall framework and structure. It also noted the importance of harmonizing indicators with the European Environment Agency/Eionet indicator system.

The work on revising the guidelines, led by the secretariat, has resulted so far in metadata for 42 indicators, with 28 also in Russian, being stored in a bilingual database. The Joint Task Force decided to follow up with two parallel expert groups, one leading the continued review of the guidelines and the second possibly proposing new indicators. Member States are invited to volunteer to lead this second group.

On data needs, statistics and indicators on environment and health in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Joint Task Force heard WHO experts and then presentations by member States sharing their experiences in producing and sharing information on COVID-19 and its use for policymaking.

## 22<sup>nd</sup> session of Working Group

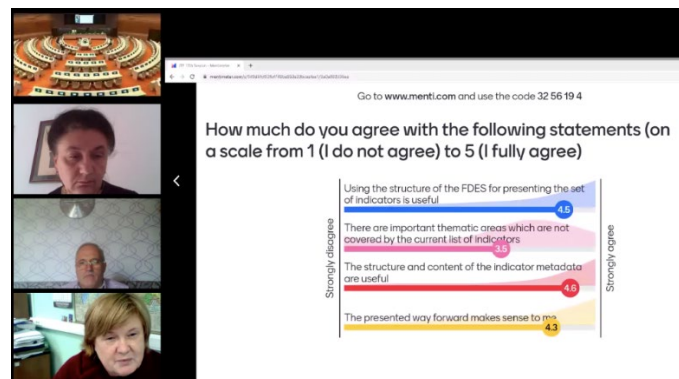
On 27 October, the 22<sup>nd</sup> session of the Working Group was held. Documents are available at <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=51963>. The Working

Group discussed two main substantive topics: reporting on the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) and the regular pan-European environmental assessment.

The final review of SEIS is addressing 22 data flows underlying 18 UNECE core environmental indicators and 9 environmental themes. Unfortunately, only 18 out of 53 member States in the pan-European region reported; 15 covered all 9 themes. This means that it is not possible to confirm full SEIS establishment in Europe and Central Asia. **The Working Group therefore requested all member States to submit their self-assessments by 15 December 2020 at the latest to the secretariat through use of the SEIS online tool.**

The secretariat provided an update on funding available for the next pan-European environmental assessment supported by SEIS. The Working Group welcomed the financial resources and then discussed and approved the outline of the 7<sup>th</sup> pan-European assessment, noting that it might not be possible to address all environmental themes listed, such as air, water and waste – or at least not at the same level of detail. In addition, themes need to be addressed in an integrated manner – themes need to be interlinked, especially with the two conference themes – and the pandemic should be taken into consideration in the assessment.

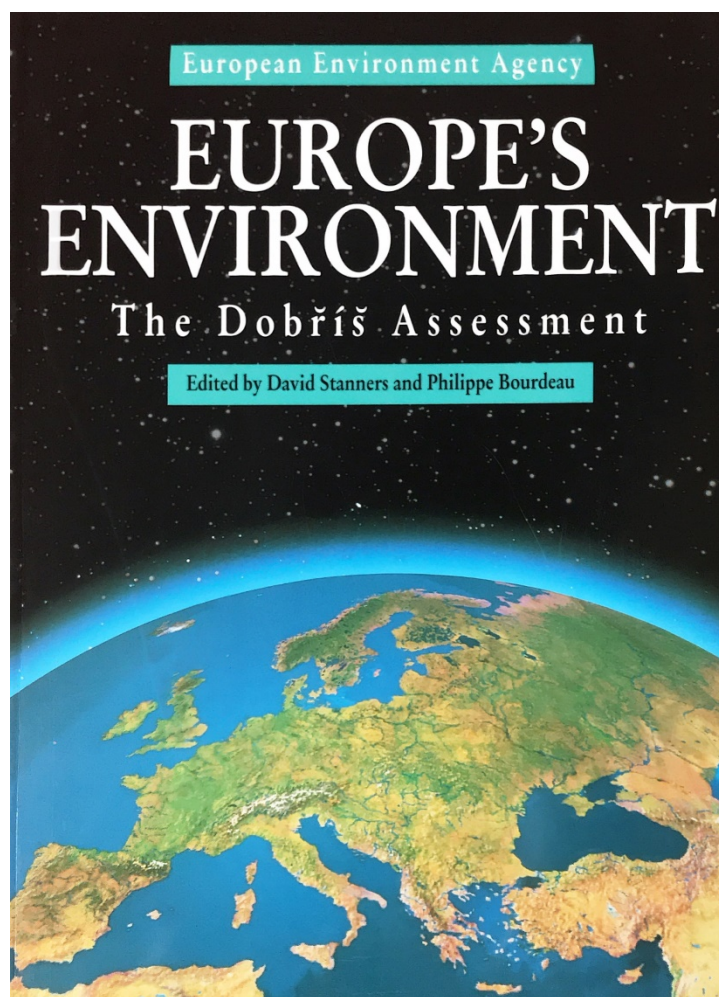
Finally, the Working Group reviewed work done on one environmental theme – biodiversity and ecosystems – which also serves as a pilot assessment.



# Pan-European Environmental Assessment

The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment has been tasked by the Committee on Environmental Policy with leading a process of consultation on the regular pan-European environmental assessment. As mentioned in the previous newsletter, UNECE has begun, in consultation with UNEP, to work on a limited indicator-based and thematic assessment, which would become the 7<sup>th</sup> pan-European environmental assessment under the Environment for Europe Ministerial Process.

The past, much more comprehensive, pan-European assessments are available on the UNECE website at <https://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/environmental-monitoring-and-assessment/areas-of-work/pan-european-assessment.html>. The first assessment is shown below.



At its October meeting, the Working Group requested its members to provide information on partners, indicators and case studies to the secretariat by 15 November 2020. The secretariat would continue to welcome suggestions after this date for experts and partners to invite to engage in the preparation of the assessment, for example in reviewing indicator choices and peer-reviewing draft text for the

environmental themes (air pollution and ozone depletion; climate change; fresh water; coastal waters; marine ecosystems and oceans; biodiversity and ecosystems; land and soil; chemicals and waste; and environmental financing) and the two themes for the 9<sup>th</sup> Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, now confirmed for 5–7 October 2022:

- Greening the economy in the pan-European region: working towards sustainable infrastructure
- Applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism

The secretariat will also be in contact to gather information, for example on your latest national state-of-the-environment report, if not readily found, and to fill gaps in indicator series.

## Measuring the Circular Economy

The previous newsletter (no. 8, September 2020) reported on an in-depth review of measuring the circular economy (ECE/CES/BUR/2020/OCT/2), which was examined by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians on 15 and 16 October 2020.

As the review notes, circular economy is an emerging topic of high political relevance, but there is no single or internationally agreed upon definition of a circular economy. Measuring the circular economy from a statistical point of view is still not possible in a comprehensive and fully internationally comparable manner.

The main recommendations of the review are:

- Strengthening coordination and communication of work of international organizations and their expert groups working on different issues related to measuring the circular economy.
- Drafting of practical guidelines, including clarification of key terms and definitions, presenting key statistics and indicators needed for policy, a description of the role of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting versus other data sources and a discussion on required institutional collaboration. It is proposed to set up a task force or expert group for this purpose.
- Providing platforms for exchange of experience and knowledge. For the UNECE and OECD regions it is recommended to discuss countries' work and activities of international organizations on circular economy at the annual "Joint OECD/UNECE Seminars for SEEA implementation".

The document is available at

[https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/bur/2020/October/02\\_In-depth\\_review\\_Circular\\_Economy\\_approved.pdf](https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/bur/2020/October/02_In-depth_review_Circular_Economy_approved.pdf).



## Upcoming relevant events (with all dates & formats subject to change)

### **7th meeting of Task Force on Access to Information under the Aarhus Convention**

16–17 November 2020,  
virtual meeting  
[https://www.unece.org/index.  
php?id=53318](https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=53318)

### **Workshop on Air Pollutant Emission Inventories**

4 December 2020,  
virtual meeting  
[https://www.unece.org/index.php  
?id=53867](https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=53867)

### **Working Group on Strategies and Review, Fifty-eighth session**

14, 15 & 17 December 2020,  
hybrid meeting, Geneva, Switzerland  
[https://www.unece.org/index.php?id  
=52975](https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=52975)

### **Workshop on Air Pollutant Emission Inventories**

21 December 2020,  
virtual meeting  
[https://www.unece.org/index.php?id  
=53865](https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=53865)

The **Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment** was established in 2000 by the Committee on Environmental Policy to serve as an instrument for UNECE member States to provide recommendations, propose action plans, and improve coordination of international initiatives concerned with environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting.

For more information on the Working Group please visit:

<https://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/environmental-monitoring-and-assessment/envema.html>

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