

Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators

Agenda item 5: Review of the Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators

Lessons learned and gaps from the pan-European environmental assessment

Nineteenth session
3 – 4 November 2022
Palais des Nations, Geneva



Background



The assessment was launched at the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference on 5 October 2022 in Nicosia

Summary for policymakers with key messages and policy recommendations and the full **pan-European environmental assessment publication** available at:

https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/ECE_NICOSIA.CONF_2022_9_E.pdf and

<https://unece.org/info/Environment-Policy/Environmental-Monitoring-and-Assessment/pub/370327>

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Europe's Environment

The Seventh Pan-European Environmental Assessment

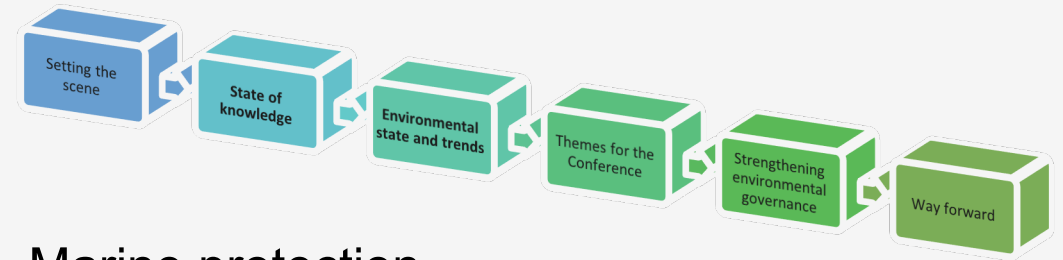


Key messages & recommendations



Key messages and policy recommendations available for all main thematic sections of the assessment covering areas of:

- Air quality
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Decarbonization
- Fresh water quantity and quality
- Fresh water – financing
- IWRM & transboundary water cooperation
- Ecosystems
- Protected areas
- Land use & soil



- Marine protection
- Waste management
- Chemicals
- Minerals
- Disaster risk reduction
- Finance
- Sustainable infrastructure
- Sustainable tourism & circular economy
- Environmental governance
- **Monitoring & information management**

Key messages



Seventh pan-European environmental assessment reports: Progress has been achieved in environmental protection in certain areas, but

Significant shortcomings remain and pose a threat to the health of both people and the environment in the pan-European region



Gaps & lessons learned relevant for JTF



- The assessment revealed data gaps across the region in almost all areas, with data available for some countries but not others or no recent data available.
- Data for some indicators needed for this assessment are not routinely collected, in particular those for emerging policies, incl. for sustainable infrastructure and circular economy in tourism.
- **A common set of policy relevant indicators produced by all countries in the pan-European region crucial to keep the pan-European environment under review → Further data harmonization needed**
- Monitoring gaps, in terms of both data availability and quality, were identified during the assessment for the region. Examples include:
 - **Air and climate change:** Gaps in measurement and analysis of PM2.5. Data quality varies widely for emissions and data sets on GHG emissions remain incomplete for some countries.

MONITORING AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Availability and access to information and knowledge to support Government decision-makers, industry and the public taking impact-oriented choices is improving but continues to be challenging in some sectors more than in others

Gaps & lessons learned relevant for JTF



- **Noise:** Due to lack of data on noise across the pan-European region the assessment does not address noise → to be addressed in next assessment (health relevance)
- **Fresh water:** The use of GIS to be strengthened esp. at transboundary level and water statistics need to be enhanced. Capacity development on ecological water quality assessment and identification of hydromorphological pressures needed in the region. The monitoring of emerging contaminants requires more attention in the region. Monitoring and data are incomplete for production of certain indicators
- **Coastal waters, marine ecosystems and seas:** Challenges remain regarding the spatial and temporal data coverage and data gaps remain, for example, for the amounts, composition and sources of beach and marine litter in parts of the region
- **Biodiversity, ecosystems and land:** Data gaps remain for the production of certain indicators, including the ECE indicators “Terrestrial protected areas” and “Land uptake”, in particular for countries outside the European Union. Comparability of data is another issue that was noted



Gaps & lessons learned relevant for JTF



- **Chemicals and waste:** No set of impact-oriented chemical indicators is regularly monitored across the region. There is also a lack of information regarding the impact of chemicals on the efficiency and economic viability of circular economy schemes. Gaps remain regarding capacities and data availability for certain indicators, including “Total waste generation per capita”, “E-waste generation per capita” and “Recycling rate of municipal solid waste”;
- **Environmental financing:** There is a severe lack of quantitative data on environmental financing for countries of Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe and there is an urgent need to improve data-collection systems;
- **Sustainable infrastructure:** Significant data gaps have been identified, both in the social, environmental, institutional, economic and financial indicators proposed and when quantifying the contribution (positive or negative) of infrastructure development based on the indicators. A common definition of the term “sustainable infrastructure” is lacking, with implications for quantifying progress in the region;



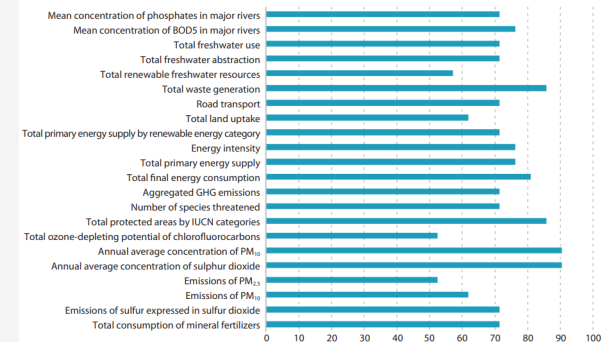
Gaps & lessons learned relevant for JTF



- **Circular economy and sustainable tourism:** There are currently no indicators across the region that give explicit information on tourism's uptake of circular economy principles and practices and, for several general circularity aspects, classification definitions differ between States, though the UNWTO Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (SF-MST) should help. Even mainstream tourism statistics tend to suffer from a lack of availability of data and being highly context sensitive, while detailed statistics needed for accurate circularity monitoring are absent;
- **Shared Environmental Information System:** While SEIS has been established, national systems vary in form and regularity regarding their updates and content. Gaps remain that need to be addressed, including regarding the full establishment of the SEIS in line with all its principles and pillars and for the full production and sharing of all data flows associated with the revised ECE environmental indicators and other indicator frameworks, including the Sustainable Development Goal indicators.



Figure 3 Ready online availability and accessibility of data flows on a national platform, data flows with reply "yes" (Percentage)



Key messages & recommendations



Governments in the pan-European region among others should:

(a) Bring policy and science together to develop and implement appropriate and standardized pan-European methods and systems for monitoring and information management, including through the application of new technologies, to fill data gaps for improved decision-making and ensure timely availability of information for the public;

(b) Employ the ECE Revised Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators (for completed parts, see ECE/CEP–CES/GE.1/2021/4), provide the ECE set of environmental indicators in accordance with the principles and pillars of the SEIS and adopt indicators to cover noise and emerging policymaking themes of importance;

(c) Promote the use of appropriate and standardized methods for monitoring air pollution emissions and the public availability of monitoring data in the pan-European region, while also strengthening cooperation and national investment to fill monitoring gaps in countries with economies in transition;

(d) Invest in data collection and information processing, as knowledge is instrumental for decision-making and water policy design (e.g. water accounts, ecosystem assessment and indicators). The continuous improvement of monitoring and communication technologies is a top priority in terms of a water information system for the pan-European region;

Key messages & recommendations



Governments in the pan-European region among others should:

- (e) Increase efforts to complement inventories of the number of items of beach and marine litter with information on composition and sources of litter to enable the design of more effective measures. Joint efforts should be taken where subregional monitoring measures are deemed necessary;
- (f) Establish a region-wide chemicals- and waste-impact-oriented monitoring scheme, as a part of cooperation between science and policy, in order to build up a better picture and address the adverse impacts of chemicals on human health and the environment;
- (g) 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;
- (h) Develop a common definition of the term “sustainable infrastructure” in the pan-European region. This would enable reporting on and quantifying of progress across countries and subregions;

Key messages & recommendations



Governments in the pan-European region among others should:

- (i) Select some specific key-impact tourism indicators to be included in ECE statistical databases. Indicators for circular economy in tourism should be aligned with those being developed for the monitoring of sustainable development in tourism (particularly with those that are most promising) and be compatible with Sustainable Development Goals. Circular economy indicator development could follow the approach adopted by the UNWTO initiative towards a Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism and data and statistics should be produced according to statistical standards by the various data producers involved;
- (j) Assist countries to fully implement the SEIS principles and pillars and the full production and sharing of all data flows associated with the ECE environmental indicators and employ, as appropriate, the updated Recommendations on the more effective use of electronic information tools developed under the auspices of the Aarhus Convention;
- (k) Enhance synergies and interoperability between national and international systems in order to streamline environmental monitoring and reporting, reduce reporting requirements for countries and improve readability and efficiency, from indicator methodologies to data-flow reporting;
- (l) Continue digitization of environmental monitoring systems and use of new technologies for enhanced high-quality data production in support of regular assessments and policymaking;
- (m) Consider implementing pollutant release and transfer registers and the SEIS in synergy.

Questions and Discussion



Questions:

- How do you see the role of the Joint Task Force in addressing gaps identified in the seventh pan-European assessment ?
- Which themes and indicators should the JTFESI prioritize to implement the recommendations from the assessment?
- Are there any other adjustments needed in the Indicator Guidelines to reflect the findings from the assessment?

Thank you!

