



NFP/Eionet group meeting  
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**Source:** Integrated Environmental Assessments / Governance and Networks

**Subject:** SOER 2010, Part C guidance for contributors in Eionet

**FOR DISCUSSION:**

This document's purpose is to provide countries with the first guidance to implement Part C of the SOER 2010 from March 2009. Inputs are invited on:

1. Vision and objectives
2. Proposals for diversity and commonality
3. Proposals from countries for regional collaborations under flexibility
4. Phased approach and interaction process

## 1. Purpose and background

This document's purpose is to provide countries with the first guidance to implement Part C of the SOER 2010 from March 2009.

Part C will be developed through a phased, iterative learning process as the project progresses over the next 15 months.

We foresee four phases, so that we can manage effectively available resources in Eionet and EEA and facilitate space for learning: Phase 1 March-June 2009; Phase 2 June-November 2009; Phase 3 November 2009-March 2010; Phase 4 March 2010-June 2010.

A full planning for all phases will be finalised by April. The overlap of phases is deliberate. Learning will be continuous via the SOER web portal and future NFP/Eionet meetings.

The following guidance is based on the outcomes of the country consultation in April 2008<sup>1</sup> and general approach towards the SOER 2010 report as agreed by the Management Board in June 2008. This approach includes all 32 EEA countries and those of the West Balkan in the report and provides wide support to the A-B-C structure of the report (A: integrated assessments in a global perspective focused on societal and science drivers; B: tracking progress with environmental commitments using SEIS compliant data and indicator flows; and C: comparative country-level analysis of environmental commonalities, diversities, flexibilities and responses). It further builds on the discussions at the NFP/NRC SoE workshop in September 2008, the Management Board Seminar in November 2008, the responses by countries asked for by the end of January 2009 (11 countries responded by 9 February), separate feedback from DG

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<sup>1</sup>[http://soer2010.ew.eea.europa.eu/consultation/planning\\_soer2010/questionnaire\\_view\\_report.html?report\\_id=full-report](http://soer2010.ew.eea.europa.eu/consultation/planning_soer2010/questionnaire_view_report.html?report_id=full-report)

Environment, as well as deliberations in the EEA. The processes are fully documented on the SOER portal at <http://soer2010.ew.eea.europa.eu/>

## 2. Vision

Our overall vision for the content of Part C is to get across the message of a **Europe of concerted national environmental effort**. We want to show through a combination of describing trends and highlighting solutions that Europe has, through the strong common environmental policy framework that distinguishes it from almost any other part of the world, worked to deliver environmental improvements for the benefit for its citizens.

This has been done in a unique collaboration process that recognizes national diversities. In this respect, there is an opportunity to inform the reader about the different circumstances that strongly influence policy implementation and the different, often additional, measures that countries take over and above those committed to under European Directives and multi-lateral environmental agreements.

To reach the citizens we want to establish a regular process of development, updating and communication of the analysis, and use the web primarily for this purpose rather than paper. At the same time we want to show that Eionet and EEA can provide a valuable contribution to Europe's environmental objectives by being policy relevant – eg in support of the 6<sup>th</sup> EAP - by streamlining information resources – by being the hub that links many types of ongoing country analysis under a common umbrella - and by being consistent in the impact such analysis has across all geographical scales.

## 3. Objectives

Part C is the opportunity for country-level situations and responses to be more systematically presented and compared as aspired to in the EEA Regulation Article 2. It is also the opportunity to set in train a continuous process of country analysis that can simultaneously support major EEA assessments (SOER), national SoE assessments, other European and regional demands (European Commission Annual Environmental Policy Review, Pan-European, Mediterranean, Arctic, etc) and global demands (GEO, Rio+20)

The first objective is to analyse the environmental situation and prospects in countries, based on a manageable number of **common** issues derived from previous consultations. Such issues are easily identifiable because they tend to be those targeted by country actions and investments, either under the environmental acquis (e.g. freshwater, climate change mitigation, air pollution mitigation, nature protection, waste), or by multi-lateral environmental agreements (CC mitigation, air pollution, transboundary wastes, marine pollution), by other policy agreements (e.g. halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010) or emerging policy objectives (CC adaptation around floods and droughts). The opportunity here is to provide insights on the innovations and the effectiveness of different policy responses – regulatory, market, technical, institutional. There is no desire to analyse compliance with legislative obligations; that is for the established processes run by the Commission with Member States.

This approach around common issues applies, with some differentiation, equally to all EEA member countries and those in the West Balkan. A list of common issues is given in section 4.

The second objective is to provide the context within which the reader can understand that the implementation of common issues at country level is not straightforward. We know that this is strongly dependent on the **diversity** of country realities and how these realities in turn influence the policy measures taken and progress made. The focus will be on seeking insights into the social, economic, geographical, cultural, legal and institutional trends and legacies that influence practical implementation of international agreements at national level. This section is also expected to shed light on possible future actions and provide new policy perspectives.

The third objective in Part C is to provide **flexibility** within which countries (or groups of countries) can highlight issues of particular interest to them. The opportunities here include providing a platform for communicating issues of particular concern/success, or bringing a regional perspective to the fore as has been mentioned in several country responses. Unlike for the above objectives, the EEA does not foresee itself providing strong guidance on what can be included here, but rather to leave it to individual countries or groups of countries to decide. What we would ask is that in deciding on such issues, links are made to the commonality and diversity assessments as appropriate. This would facilitate maximum integration across the country analysis and hopefully assist the reader in understanding linkages that might otherwise be missed.

The final objective of the Part C project is to look beyond the specificities of SOER 2010 and to consider how the project and Eionet can be seen as the “single vehicle” for putting in place a **streamlined** approach to country analysis within Europe and more globally. This seeks to fulfill the first principle of SEIS, namely to deliver information once and see it used for many purposes. This is an objective with many facets and some tricky hurdles to clear and therefore we see it as being one to achieve across the phases of the SOER 2010 timeframe and beyond. This provides also two major opportunities:

- a) for the oft-stated streamlining objective to work in practice, in this case for assessments, and
- b) for Eionet to be seen as the network that brings coherence to otherwise incoherent activities.

#### **4. Content – commonality, diversity and flexibility**

During discussions it has been suggested from several quarters that country contributions should take into account commonalities, diversity and flexibility. The EEA has decided to make these the three overall structural headings for steering the project’s contents. For phase 1, we would like to focus primarily on developing the first themes under commonality together with a first attempt at drafting the diversity section.

- **Commonality**

The aim here is to address common themes already identified as main priorities by countries either through the SOER consultations and/or via SEIS country visits. EEA is currently working on an analysis of SEIS country visits and it is striking, if not wholly surprising, to see the commonality of information system developments between countries and their strong links to key priorities of the *environmental acquis*. This observation is very helpful both for structuring the commonality section and for showing

the potential to link from country analysis to indicators to underlying databases using web-based approaches.

There are 8 themes that emerge from these various considerations:

1. Air pollution – urban and rural air quality, national and transboundary emissions
2. Climate change mitigation – GHG emissions trends and projections country analysis
3. Nature protection and biodiversity – protected areas, 2010 target
4. Land – CLC 1990-2006
5. Soil - soil country analysis
6. Freshwaters – surface and ground, quality and quantity
7. Marine waters – land-based pollutions loads, quality and fisheries
8. Waste – coverage of country factsheets

For each of the above themes we are developing templates so that they can be described in a comparable way and in line with a web-based approach to the development and dissemination of contents.

You will notice that for three of the eight topics – GHG emissions, soil and waste – we already have ongoing projects that will form the basis for the Part C contributions for these themes. We propose to work in the first half of this year on how each of these existing components can be re-engineered to best fit the Part C and then to implement them in the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the project.

For the first phase, we propose to focus on the **freshwater** and **air pollution** themes and for the former you will find attached a draft guidance template<sup>2</sup>. The template is designed in a way to facilitate comparability and also to allow for easy transfer to a web publication environment where the conventional wisdom is that for any element of analysis we should consider circa 500 words supported by links, graphics and multi-media. Following discussions at the meeting, templates will be developed for both themes. We will then ask all countries to deliver by the end of June 2009 first draft completed templates for these topics.

In addition to these eight themes, there would be value in looking at some more cross-cutting perspectives, as reflected in several parts of the ongoing Eionet review. Possible candidates here include: expanding land to cover a broader socio-economic/planning perspective, tax/fiscal reform, technology action plans, national “green new deals” in response to the financial crisis.

- **Diversity**

In contrast to the commonality section, where there is strong emphasis on comparability, fewer concrete requirements are necessary for the diversity section. Instead we are suggesting guidance in the form of questions, keywords and estimated number of words, together with indications of the opportunities for linking to more detailed information and multi-media opportunities. We would like to focus on delivering a first version of the diversity section during phase 1, that is, by end June 2009.

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<sup>2</sup> The template for air pollution data will be provided by 18 February.

The list of questions that we would like to use for framing the diversity analysis in a somewhat comparable way is:

**a) What are the factors that distinguish your country from many others?**

(**Length:** c 300-500 words. **Keywords:** climate, geography, size, population density, economic structure, governance, transformation from communist to democratic system. **Links:** country climate, geography, population maps, governance description, economic statistics, population statistics)

**b) What have been the major societal developments since 1980 compared with the period 1950-1980?**

(**Length:** c 300-500 words. **Keywords:** EU accession/enlargement, transformation from centrally planned economy to market economy, globalisation, urbanization, consumption/production, armed conflicts/war legacy, tourism. **Links:** published articles, media references, factual books)

**c) What are the main drivers of environmental pressures and how do these contribute to multiple impacts on people and the natural environment?**

(**Length:** c 500 words. **Keywords:** industrial production, agriculture, transport, energy, housing, food, tourism, multi-pollutant, multi-effect. **Links:** sectoral policy documents, sectoral statistics, landscape/cover/use maps)

**d) What are the foreseen main developments in coming decades that could be expected to contribute most to future environmental pressures?**

(**Length:** c 100-200 words. **Keywords:** demographics and economics forecasts, scenarios, strategic futures, 5-10 year development plans. **Links:** sectoral policy documents, private and public sector scenarios and strategic futures exercises, academic literature)

You will find in annex a worked up draft example of how the diversity example could be tackled, in this case for Ireland.

- **Flexibility**

We see flexibility as being an area where EEA guidance is not paramount and rather wish discussions within and between countries to determine the elements to address. For phase 1, we are not looking for first draft assessments as for the commonality and diversity sections. However, where countries/regions are motivated to do so we would welcome contributions in their own right and as a basis for shared learning with other countries/regions.

## **5. Benefits**

There will be many benefits to be gained from implementation of the Part C project. One will be a better basis for getting across the environment message in national media – witness the interest in Part C of the SOER2005. Secondly, it will support country benchmarking either within countries (national SoE reports), between countries/regions, across Europe or with respect to Europe in the world.

The Part C will also put flesh on the SEIS concept by delivering rich content in line with many of the SEIS principles. Breathing life into SERIS and the Core Set of Indicators will be two immediate offshoots of the work.

Arguably the greatest benefits of all will come from bringing a wide range of country analysis activities under one coherent umbrella in a streamlined approach. There are many processes that we can connect coherently including country analyses under – the Lisbon process, the Annual Environmental Policy Review of the Commission, thematic processes such as Biodiversity Action Plan and the Water Framework Directive, Environmental Policy Reviews by OECD and UNECE, country analysis by UNCSD, proposals in the pipeline for country analysis under the UNEP umbrella.

In this respect Part C is made for Eionet. It is the only network of its kind with responsibility for such a broad coverage of issues – see EEA Regulation and latest Eionet review proposals – and with the mandate to address information needs from one end of the spectrum to the other – the so-called Monitoring-Data-Information-Assessment-Knowledge chain – that has informed indicator, SEIS and other processes in the past.

By assuming this umbrella role, we can also start to address a further trend that is often incompatible with the objectives of the EEA Regulation – the curse of the consultants troubling busy officials or gathering “unofficial” information and using this as the basis for supporting “official” country analysis. This is a trend we see more and more frequently as more and more processes seek a country perspective in their work – from the United Nations to the European Commission, to private consultancies. There is a huge opportunity out there to bring order where disorder reigns and at the same time increase hugely the visibility and relevance of Eionet in many more eyes.

## **6. Resources**

This concerns as much the approach taken to the work as to the time needed. We do not envisage that Part C will be a major writing exercise rather an exercise in organizing existing information in such a way that enables us to achieve the objectives and benefits described previously. We already have many developed elements in place around commonality and we expect that you will use the web as the opportunity to link smartly to existing information sources (national SoEs, databases etc). You will have full degrees of freedom around flexibility issues and again we would foresee links being made to many existing information resources. Diversity arguably offers the biggest writing challenge but also the opportunity to put the common and flexible issues into the right context for the reader. More often than not, through the media the public are given a misrepresentative picture of a country’s performance in the EU context. The realities of diversity can help mitigate this and provide a truer reflection of why the environment is what it is.

With all this in mind, we at EEA will take responsibility for facilitating the comparability, integration and synthesis of country contributions. We will also assume a responsibility for translating the synthesis into all languages. Based on the Irish example in Annex C, we estimate that the workload for Part C will be an average 30 days per country across the lifetime of the SOER2010 project. Some countries will need more, some less, with factors such as size, governance, organisation of information being key determinants of where countries will sit around the average.

## **7. Process**

We propose to kick-off phase 1 of the process on Monday, 16 March with a formal project plan posted on the SOER 2010<sup>3</sup> portal including supporting documentation and tools. This will allow time for EEA to adapt proposals in the light of feedback at the 25-26 February NFP/Eionet meeting.

We will use the portal as the vehicle for keeping track of developments from both sides.

We will use future meetings with NFPs to monitor progress with the project and to facilitate shared learning. We will organize working sessions with NRCs as appropriate.

We will keep the Bureau and Management Board fully informed on progress and seek their advice on major points of strategic substance if and when they arise.

NFPs are requested to use the portal to inform the EEA (Milan Chrenko) by 16 March who are the contact persons in their country responsible for the overall coordination of the Part C analysis.

On our side, a list of EEA contact persons – those responsible for the SOER 2010 as well as country desk officers – will be posted on the portal by the same date.

### **Annexes:**

- A) Available data sources at European or international level
- B) Template and national example for the freshwater theme
- C) Irish example for diversity and flexibility (not addressing commonality part)
- D) Overview of country comments on part C
- E) Summary of responses to SOER2010 questionnaire in April 2008

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<sup>3</sup> <http://soer2010.ew.eea.europa.eu/>