European Environment Agency

NFP/Eionet group
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Subject: SEIS implementation in 2007-8 at Eionet level: priority setting process

This paper presents proposals for a process to identify priorities for implementation of SEIS in 2007-2008 at Eionet level. It builds on the inputs and outcome of the management board seminar of November 2006 and the paper on an SEIS operational timetable for 2007 presented earlier by EEA under Item 5. This paper should be considered in conjunction with these other outcomes.

Getting SEIS priorities to work through Eionet

The discussions on SEIS last year that culminated in the board seminar and decision, together with the replies by NFPs to the SEIS questionnaire, have provided a rich vein of information on which to base our considerations on next steps. EEA has analysed the board discussions and the questionnaire in particular and concluded that there are five aspects to keep in mind when considering priorities for SEIS implementation at Eionet level:

1. How to operationalise the ***guiding principles*** that underpin SEIS implementation at Eionet level?
2. Who are the ***clients*** for the information that will be contained in SEIS at Eionet level?
3. What ***types of information*** need to be managed in SEIS to meet these clients' needs?
4. Which of the ***current information flows*** and processes can be considered sufficiently mature to enable phased "quick wins" on SEIS implementation at Eionet level?
5. What is the process and timetable for a phased ***implementation plan*** of SEIS priorities at Eionet level 2007-2008?

Each of these aspects is addressed in the remainder of this paper with the analysis based on our (EEA/Eionet) experiences with information systems and management over the last 10 years.

1. The ***guiding principles*** result from interpretation by EEA of discussions at the September NFP/Eionet meeting, replies to the NFP questionnaire, and the outcome of the board seminar. There are five key ones:

- That information in SEIS should be managed as close as possible to its source

- That information is provided once and used for many purposes

- That information should be accessible to enable clients to make comparisons at the appropriate geographical scale (eg countries, cities, catchment areas)

- That SEIS information should be made available to the public after due consideration of the appropriate level of aggregation, given possible confidentiality constraints, and at national level in the national language(s)

- That European funding mechanisms should focus on delivering cost-effective analytical tools and services that allow coherent and comparable use of SEIS at the European level, between the European and Eionet levels and between Eionet countries.

2. The ***clients*** for SEIS information at Eionet level will primarily be users of environmental (and associated socio-economic) information in countries, but also users at the European level responsible for compiling the European picture (DGEnv, EEA, Estat), as well as users at the global level. Whatever the geographical level, we can discern four main types of client:

    - ***Technical experts*** working in Eionet (NRCs), on EU sponsored research projects (FP6 and FP7) and in EU (EEA, Estat, JRC) and international bodies (UNECE, UNEP) including those responsible for multi-lateral environmental agreements.

    - ***Political experts*** working in national ministries, agencies and parliaments, European Commission Directorates and European Parliament secretariats, as well as pan-European and global bodies (UNECE, UNEP) including again MEAs.

    - The ***informed public*** which can range from interested individuals to politicians, to secondary and tertiary education students and teachers, to the media, to NGOs and to industry trade associations.

3. The ***types of information*** that need to be managed in SEIS will largely be determined by the demands of clients across all geographical levels. In broad terms, we can discern from our experience so far five main types of information:

    - **Technical data**: made available through established databases, including metadata to help understand the sources (eg monitoring, modelling), methods and possible uses of these data (function, form, quality criteria).Main clients for data and metadata would be technical experts.

- **Tools**: analytical tools and services to enable clients to make use of the data for their own purposes. All clients would be users of analytical tools and services.

- **Trend analysis**: that provides clients with indicator-based graphics and text that explain observed trends for the environment and associated socio-economic phenomena, for the past, present and future. Main clients would be technical and political experts.

- **State of action analysis**: that helps provide clients with a broader context within which to understand the observed trends (ref. the country analysis approach of SOER2005) and provide a basis for undertaking analysis of the effectiveness of policies and actions. Main clients would be political experts first and technical experts second.

- **Summary key messages**: that synthesise and communicate both main outcomes of the above types of analysis and also both describe the issue/problem as well as options that different actors can take to "bend the trend" in a more favourable (sustainable) direction. Main clients would be the informed public.

4. The starting point for ***current information flows*** that provide the best opportunity for "quick wins" are those best established under the Eionet priority data flows. The approach would be to "open-up" these data flows and the Reportnet data and metadata tools that support them and build from there using experience gained with Eionet in recent years on indicators, country analysis and web-based communications. The quick wins can be categorised under two headings as follows:

   - **Mature**: under this category there are two priority areas, air emissions and air quality, where data coverage and quality are relatively high and where temporal trends are relatively long; much has also been achieved with respect to trend analysis and on state of action analysis. There is a third area, WISE, where the data and analytical challenges are much greater but where the opportunity must be taken now to move towards a distributed system at Eionet level that is in line with the SEIS guiding principles outlined above.

   - **Maturing**: under this category come integrated spatial data flows covering the European territory, namely, Corine Land Cover and the Common Database on Designated Areas. CLC is a mature data flow that is currently being updated to 2006 and therefore best to concentrate on that activity for now. The CDDA data flow needs to be considered alongside the forthcoming data flow for Natura 2000 under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive, which uses Reportnet tools. Associated to these data flows is the implementation, as appropriate, of a distributed Spatial Data Infrastructure at the Eionet of SEIS that is Inspire-compliant.

5. An ***implementation plan*** for SEIS at Eionet level would begin in July 2007, be programmed to start and finish a set of realistic priorities

within a 12-month period, and be phased by starting with mature data flows from July 2007, then proceeding to maturing data flows from July 2008 and so on. Subject to discussions at the February NFP/Eionet meeting, the next steps would be to produce implementation plans for each of the three mature data flow areas for discussion and agreement at the May NFP/Eionet meeting and then proceed with the implementation plan with relevant NRCs, ETCs and EEA staff.

Considerations and decisions at the February meeting

NFPs are invited to consider the proposals for the 2007 and 2008 implementation plans and contribute to discussions at the meeting that will provide the basis for a SEIS implementation plan at Eionet level 2007-2008 that will be taken forward to the March management board for approval as a follow-up to the board seminar decision of November 2006.

The NFPS are also asked in particular to consider the different types of information inherent in the implementation of SEIS and come with views on how these different types should be addressed through the phased implementation plans. One option could be to consider phased implementation in a mature area across the different information types eg to focus to begin with on technical data and tools and trend analysis.

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