

EEA framework for international engagement



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Introduction

This framework for international engagement serves as an operational complement to the EEA International Strategy included in the Agency's Multiannual Work Programme. It provides a structure to support the planning and carrying out of EEA's international activities, specifying the orientation of EEA work in the variety of international contexts described. On the basis of the provisions of the EEA's founding Regulation (EC) 401/2009 (EEA Regulation⁽¹⁾), the paper aims to clarify the objectives of EEA's Multiannual Work Programme

in this regard, supporting the core aim of delivering data, information and knowledge for sound policymaking. Applying this framework will help avoid duplications of effort and improve consistency. Part A describes the basis and motivation for this and outlines the main outcomes and priorities for EEA's international engagements. Part B explains the structuring and framing used, identifying four clusters of engagements. Part C outlines the orientation of EEA's international engagements in each of the four clusters.

⁽¹⁾ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32009R0401>.

Part A Basis, outcomes and priorities

A.1 Basis and motivation

The EEA and the Eionet Regulation foresees active cooperation of an international character around core areas of EEA work to support EU engagement in international contexts to create synergies and avoid duplications of effort (Article 15.4). The tasks of the EEA, described in Article 2 include promoting the incorporation of European environmental information into international environmental monitoring programmes (Article 2g), cooperating with regional/ international bodies and programmes such as OECD and UNEP (Article 15.2) and cooperating with institutions in non-EU member countries (Article 15.3). Article 3 describes the principal areas of activity and priority work areas which includes furnishing information covering transfrontier, plurinational and global phenomena (Article 3.2).

This is the basis for EEA engagements with countries, regions and organisations extending beyond EEA's geographical membership.

In line with the common approach on EU decentralised agencies ^(?), EEA's Multiannual Work Programme (MAWP) for 2014–2020 has embedded in it EEA's International Strategy. It describes the key strategic dimensions of its international engagements as follows:

- Thematic data and expertise to support the involvement of EEA member and cooperating countries in international conventions and related activities, as described in many areas under SA1 and SA2.
- Expertise, data, and assessments to ensure European contributions to global and UN activities, including to UNEP (Global Environmental Outlook, UNEP-Live) and the post-2015 activities (in particular on the Sustainable Development Goals, described under SA3.1).
- Expertise and capacity-building in networking and information partnerships. This is based on Eionet ^(?) and SEIS ⁽⁴⁾ approaches, particularly towards cooperating countries and the European Neighbourhood (described under SA3.7) and towards countries and regions following

EU priorities. Involvement in the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEO/GEOSS) and the Eye on Earth Network (mentioned under SA3) are included here.

(MAWP 2014–2020 p. 14)

In essence this means: helping EEA member countries contribute to international activities; providing European contributions to global work; and supporting networking and partnerships by promoting Eionet and SEIS approaches outside Europe.

Such activities, of both a thematic and crosscutting nature, have been carried out for many years by the EEA and are embedded in the MAWP. In particular, and in line with the various requirements of the 7th Environment Action Programme (7EAP), the EEA provides data, information, assessments and expertise to support the EU and Eionet partners in the implementation of international conventions and related thematic activities, and in ensuring EU contributions to regional and global processes of a crosscutting nature. In addition, the 7EAP recognises three regional priorities: the Arctic region, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

In the crosscutting area of ensuring information accessibility and contributing to integrated assessments, the focus of EEA engagements is on sharing EEA/ Eionet approaches and SEIS principles with regions and organisations to support the strengthening of the knowledge-policy interface and of global environmental governance in general. These areas described form part of the core work of the Agency.

A.2 Outcomes and contributions

EEA has three potential roles in international engagements, as a:

- **producer** of, for example, data services, information products and assessments;
- **facilitator** by, for example, convening networking meetings, facilitating and supporting national and regional contributions to regional and global levels; and

^(?) Especially the provisions of Article 25 concerning Agencies' international relations.

^(?) Eionet: European Environment Information and Observation Network.

⁽⁴⁾ SEIS: Shared Environmental Information System.

- as an **influencer**, sticking to its mandate outside the policymaking field, by bringing to bear its expertise and capacity-building in networking and information partnerships in non-European and global settings.

Each of these roles, either separately or together, can provide valuable contributions to international cooperation activities either alone or in concert with others, especially with other EU bodies (such as DG ENV, DG CLIMA, JRC and Eurostat), but also with international organisations such as regional and global bodies of the UN.

As to be expected, outcomes from thematic activities (such as from engagements with Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) where EEA acts mainly as a producer and facilitator) are far more tangible than those arising from engagements of a crosscutting nature (where EEA acts mainly as facilitator and influencer). The former activities result in actual data and information deliverables. The latter work focuses on sharing EEA/Eionet approaches and SEIS principles with regional and global bodies to increase access to data and information and to promote consistency and help strengthen the knowledge-policy interface. Both types of engagements are highly appreciated not only by the recipients and Eionet but also by DG Environment, DG Clima and others who encourage the EEA to maintain its important role and high profile in such processes.

A.3 Prioritisation

The potential scope for collaboration across the different geographic and geo-political configurations is vast. The limits on core resources means that not everything that can be justified can be carried out to the same level of ambition. Careful prioritisation is therefore needed⁽⁵⁾. Internal and external expectations must be managed wisely so as not to over-promise but at the same time not to miss opportunities to influence processes and activities with an international dimension within the remit of EEA's mandate which require only modest investments from the EEA. Therefore activities that aim at streamlining and rationalising international reporting and assessment should be prioritised.

Some interactions are already an integral part of regular existing activities and are recognised as such in the MAWP. Others are not, and have to be dealt with on a more ad hoc basis and in support to the EU and EEA member countries. This work must be managed

and guided strategically, following some key principles and objectives.

A number of general principles are therefore identified to help guide prioritisation of EEA core work with an international dimension. First and foremost, activities must of course be in line with the EEA and the Eionet Regulation, they must follow and contribute to EU priorities, as identified in the 7EAP or otherwise communicated to the EEA, and/or be in line with the MAWP (in particular, sharing EEA/Eionet approaches and SEIS principles).

More specifically, activities should fall into at least one of the following categories:

Contributing directly to regular processes

(as opposed to ad hoc processes), and in line with regional and international commitments, to ensure consistency and to improve overall mainstreaming and streamlining of work. This includes tasks where EEA is the data/information handler on behalf of member countries, either following legal commitments or formal agreements, and also contributions in form of support to the development and implementation of methodologies and approaches followed by EEA and Eionet.

Representing or acting as a bridge for Eionet

partners to facilitate their contributions to regional and international processes which would be challenging to fulfil without EEA support. This includes assessing the 'Eionet interest' in processes, identifying synergies with Eionet countries and their activities, and finding the balance between European and country interests.

Based on a regional approach to create synergies and maximise impacts. This includes support to regional and global bodies (such as the UN) taking into consideration an assessment of links to EEA areas of expertise, relevance for EU and EEA member countries, assessment of uniqueness of EEA's potential contribution, possible contributions from other organisations/programmes, and the perceived effectiveness of the process in question.

A.4 Working arrangements

In line with the common approach on EU decentralised agencies, working arrangements are being prepared with the EEA's partner Directorate General (DG Environment) in order to ensure integration of the Agency's international work within the existing institutional framework.

⁽⁵⁾ Such prioritisation is not to be confused with the distinction between core and non-core activities explained in footnote 9 below.

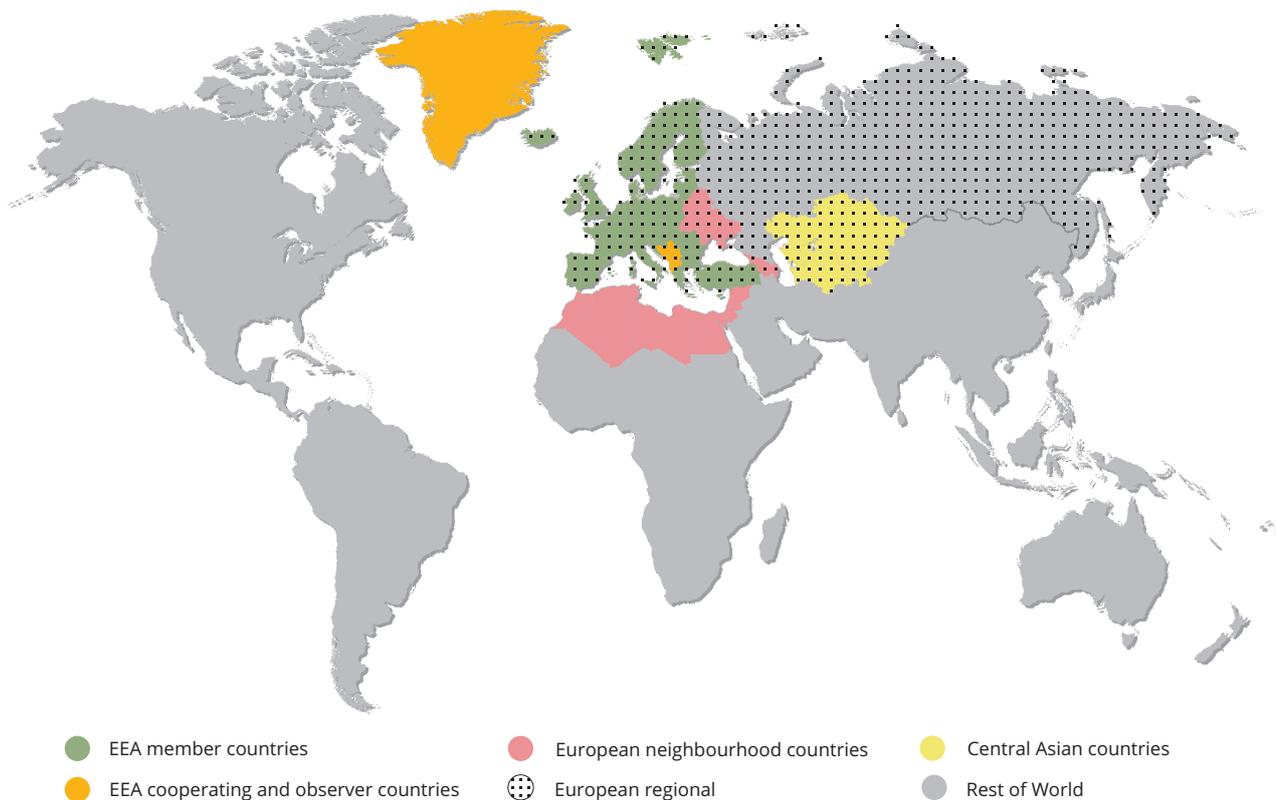
Part B Structuring and framing international engagements

EEA's international engagements extend across a wide range of processes and activities and involve relationships with a large number of partners from EEA's closest neighbours to bodies at wider regional and global levels.

The map below illustrates the geographical scope of EEA engagements with Eionet, with the EU neighbourhood, with bordering areas, as well as globally. The figure exemplifies this further in a schematic fashion and illustrates how, depending on

the activity or project concerned, EEA involvement varies in intensity and can take place within or across different geographical levels, within specific thematic perspectives, or contribute to multiple themes at the same time requiring cross-programme coordination. For many activities there is both a member country and an international dimension, so that it is difficult to say that one activity is only international and another is only country based, with consequences for the way activities are managed and coordinated.

Differentiated geographical scope of EEA engagements



The EEA is only one actor among many within this complex mix of international engagements. Most often the Agency has to respond to initiatives from actors at different geographical levels and from the different thematic areas without an overall guiding framework to help ensure a consistent course and avoid overlaps. This framework offers a structuring and framing of this context to support the planning of such EEA engagements that can help avoid duplications of effort and improve consistency.

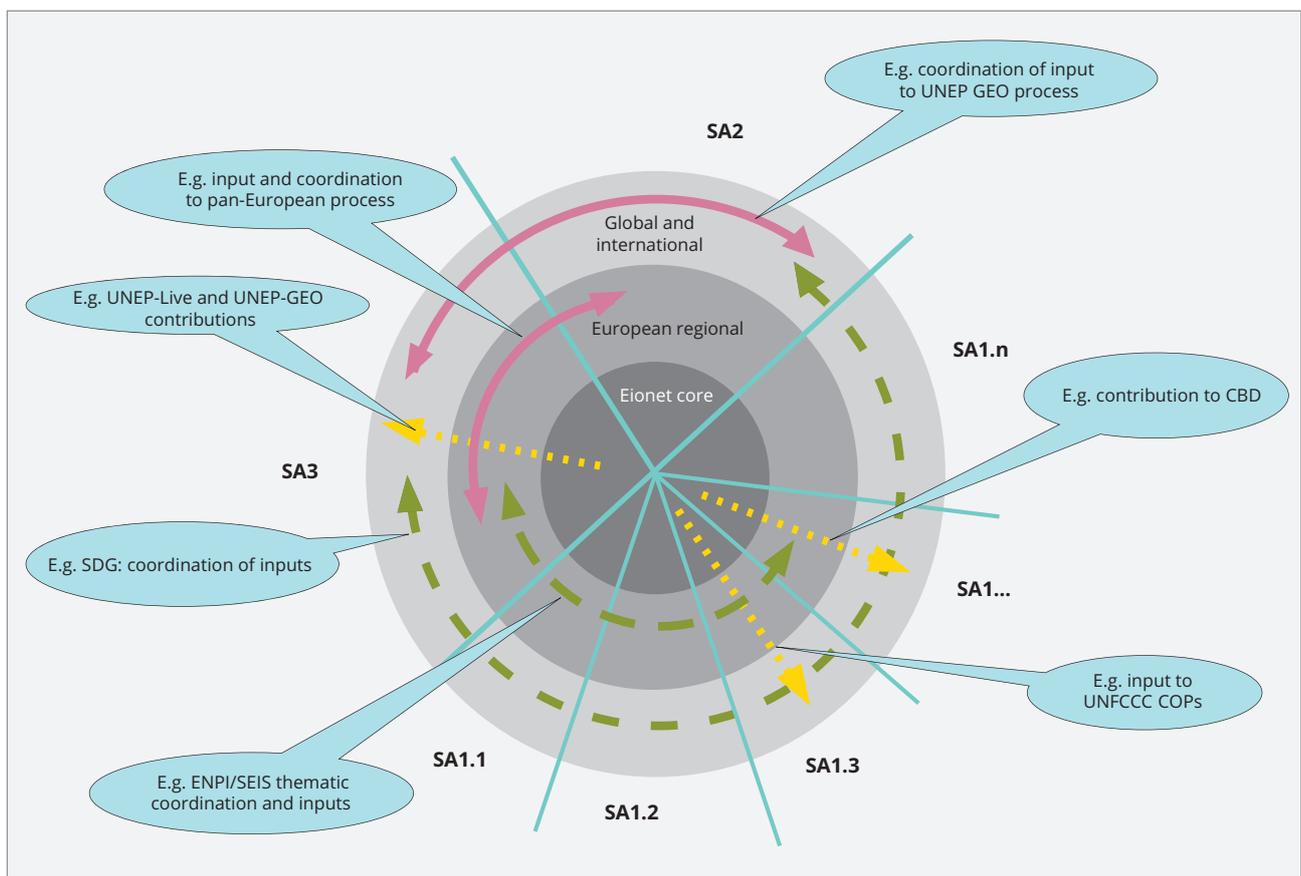
To support planning purposes, EEA's international engagements can be usefully structured into four clusters which share commonalities in terms of objectives and operations related to the specific geographic and/or geo-political character of the relationships involved. These cover:

1. Eionet relationships;
2. European regional relationships including the EU neighbourhood;
3. Relationships with international organisations, UN bodies and global conventions;
4. Relationships with non-European countries and regions.

Work in these four clusters is strongly interconnected as illustrated in the figure below.

Eionet relationships are at the core of EEA work (centre of the figure). While Eionet as such is not the subject of EEA's International Strategy, it is the anchor

Schematic representation of the EEA's framework for international engagements



Note: The figure illustrates how, depending on the activity or project concerned, EEA involvement can take place either: within different geographical levels (solid and dashed arrows following the concentric rings representing the different geographical spaces); or within specific thematic perspectives across geographical levels (dotted arrows in the 'pizza slices' representing the different Strategic Areas (SAs) of the MAWP); or contributing to multiple themes at the same time (dashed arrows across the pizza slices).

to the framework and acts as the key reference and source of knowledge when engaging regionally and internationally. For these reasons Eionet is included here. Moreover, the Eionet extensions to the West Balkans and Greenland ⁽⁶⁾ already provide linkages to regions not directly covered by the EEA. This provides an additional source of knowledge that can be of strategic importance when engaging in regional activities in related geographies. *[See especially Articles 1, 4, 19 of the EEA and the Eionet Regulation.]*

Regional relationships across Europe and bordering areas are anchored in the first concentric ring in the figure and cover those engagements which involve specific geographical, bio-geographical or ecosystem-based entities often with a geo-political character including with European Neighbourhood countries ⁽⁷⁾. Work here has consequences for Eionet (especially because of direct country involvement) as well as for the global/international level (due to overlapping jurisdictions and to the contributions that regional activities can make to global process). *[See especially Articles 3.2-3 and 15.4 of the EEA and the Eionet Regulation.]*

The third cluster of relationships with international organisations, UN bodies and global conventions, cover activities that straddle the two outer concentric rings of the figure. Work with the organisations here has the potential to frame and mediate regional-to-global and global-to-regional flows of knowledge, information and data and the supply of the associated expertise and knowhow. *[See especially Articles 15.2-4 of the EEA Regulation.]*

The fourth cluster of relationships is anchored in the outer concentric ring of the figure covering engagements with international organisations and UN bodies at the global level and with institutions in non-European countries and regions. Again, such relationships are not isolated from work at the other levels and can potentially be both a source of knowledge as well as a recipient of EEA/Eionet knowhow and influence. *[See especially Articles 15.2-4 of the EEA and the Eionet Regulation.]*

⁽⁶⁾ Six West Balkan states (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia) are cooperating countries under IPA funding, while Greenland has a status as observer in Eionet.

⁽⁷⁾ The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) supports political and economic reforms in 15 of Europe's neighbouring countries and implementation of the political initiatives shaping the ENP, covering the Eastern Partnership (six partner countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) and the Union for the Mediterranean (with nine partners, i.e. Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia). EU Regulation No. 232/2014 of 11 March 2014 establishes the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) to further support ENP activities (following the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument, ENPI, launched in 2004).

Part C Orientation of EEA's international activities

Following the framework described in Part B, the orientation of EEA's activities with an international dimension is outlined below. Focus is given to clarifying the function of EEA activities in the different contexts covering the following categories of activities:

- Support to data and information provision (led by SA1);
- Development of indicators and assessments (anchored in SA2);
- Networking and information partnership to support data, information and knowledge sharing (coordinated by SA3).

In elucidating the four clusters of the framework below, examples are given in the text ⁽⁸⁾. For the main part, these relate to core-funded EEA activities. Where applicable non-core funded work is also described ⁽⁹⁾.

C.1 Eionet relationships

While the focus of Eionet is the EEA member countries, the EEA and the Eionet Regulation was forward-looking in that it provided for cooperation with '*...those institutions in countries which are not members of the Community which can provide data, information and expertise...*' (Article 15(3)). This provision has enabled non-EU countries first to participate in Eionet activities and then to join the EEA as members. The membership fees from these countries are an integral part of the EEA core budget.

Strictly, Eionet only encompasses EEA member countries. However, in practice, Eionet includes the well-established cooperation with the West Balkan countries and, at a much more provisional level, links with Greenland.

Various EU funding instruments have supported cooperation with the West Balkan countries since the start of this cooperation in 1997. Since that time, these countries have become genuine 'EEA cooperating

countries', fully participating in EEA's regular data flow, indicator and assessment processes. The number of West Balkan countries participating in Eionet activities has grown over the years, and some have applied for EEA membership. Croatia's experience as an EEA cooperating country has been invaluable in enabling its smooth transition to EEA membership. This cooperation is still dependent on non-core funds. However, as the West Balkan countries have EU pre-accession status (with therefore a perspective to join the EEA), they are considered as part of the Eionet cluster of activities (and not together with the European Neighbourhood countries which have different prospects towards the EU and EEA). Thus the aim is to ensure 'technical readiness for EEA membership' by fully integrating them into all areas of Eionet activities.

Greenland has the status as observer in Eionet, with limited practical involvement so far. The strategic potential of this relationship lies in the prospect of strengthening EEA's knowledge concerning the Arctic environment and enhancing support of EEA/Eionet approaches in the Arctic process (see Section C.2.3 below).

C.2 European regional relationships including the EU neighbourhood

The EEA has a long track record of thematic and crosscutting cooperation with various regional processes and bodies covering geographical areas beyond Eionet countries that have close or transboundary geographic/geo-political links to the EU and where there are well-defined EU policies. In this context, focus is given to the EU neighbourhood, including the Mediterranean and Arctic regions.

Activities here support the necessary contributions of EEA member countries of the Eionet to relevant processes, such as data and indicators required by regional conventions and MEAs, and for relevant integrated assessments. To underpin this, EEA promotes regional level networking and information partnerships following Eionet and SEIS approaches.

⁽⁸⁾ This document does not attempt to list all examples of EEA international engagements. The examples mentioned here are included to aid understanding.

⁽⁹⁾ 'Core-funded' EEA activities refer to work covered by EEA resources in the EEA work programme. 'Non-core funded' activities are those carried out with additional earmarked funding (such as under Copernicus and the European Neighbourhood Instrument), also referred to as 'externally funded projects'.

In some cases EEA supports the actual development of indicators and some assessments, especially in the EU neighbourhood, with EU project-based funding and/or donor support. Consolidating European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) countries' input (East and South), in particular through capacity building for the implementation of SEIS, is a priority.

More generally, EEA provides guidance and advice on possible supporting activities to improve the exchange of knowhow and sharing of data, information and assessments across the region. This contributes to a better understanding of trans-boundary issues, in line with the EEA and the Eionet Regulation Article 3(2) on trans-frontier, pluri-national and global phenomena.

All these activities are conducted in close cooperation with the European Commission and with the main relevant regional bodies, such as UNECE, UNEP's Regional Office for Europe, WHO's Regional Office for Europe, and the Council of Europe.

The specific orientations of the EEA towards the multiple processes and sub-regions under this cluster are outlined below under the following headings:

1. Regional European conventions and processes
2. Mediterranean and Southern neighbourhood
3. Arctic
4. Black Sea
5. Eastern neighbourhood.

C.2.1 Regional European conventions and processes

The focus of EEA core-funded work in a regional European context is to contribute to environmental information and assessment activities under various conventions and other processes. Depending upon the

needs of the different areas, EEA contributions range from data and information sharing to assessment related inputs, as well as fostering networking and information partnerships.

A significant area of EEA work here is the support given to countries and the European Commission in reporting to UNECE conventions: the UNECE Air Convention ⁽¹⁰⁾; the UNECE Water Convention ⁽¹¹⁾; and the PRTR Protocol under the UNECE Aarhus Convention.

In some cases, EEA has been entrusted with specific tasks (for example, coordinating assessment activities with the Regional Seas Conventions (RSC) such as HELCOM, OSPAR, UNEP/MAP and the Black Sea in the context of the Common Implementation Strategy of the EU marine legislation, MFSD).

In other cases activities EEA facilitates more effective and efficient reporting processes for EEA countries and the European Commission (for example under cooperation with the Alpine and Carpathian Conventions ⁽¹²⁾). EEA also provides support in reporting to other regional and sub-regional conventions, such as the Council of Europe Berne Convention on Biodiversity and Protected areas. In these cases EEA facilitates data reporting via Reportnet and other tools.

The 'Environment for Europe' (EfE) process, conducted under the auspices of the UNECE, has for more than 20 years provided an opportunity for EEA and member countries to share environmental information and regularly assess the state of the environment across the pan-European region ⁽¹³⁾.

The EEA is instrumental in reforming the EfE framework of environmental information and assessment activities by promoting the uptake of EEA/Eionet approaches and SEIS principles and methodologies ⁽¹⁴⁾. The EEA thereby also contributes to the development of a regular environment assessment process across the pan-European region that is compatible with and based on the EU framework.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP): For many years EEA has closely supported CLRTAP activities and its scientific body EMEP. This support is primarily provided through participation in relevant CLRTAP task forces, including EEA's longstanding role as co-chair of the Task Force on Emission Inventories and Projections. EEA also continues to play a central role in developing emission reporting guidelines under the Convention, providing guidance to countries by publishing the EMEP/EEA Guidebook (including facilitating the development of Russian language versions) and contributing annually to review activities aimed at improving the quality of information reported by countries.

⁽¹¹⁾ Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

⁽¹²⁾ Similarly, EEA assists other legal instruments and processes such as the Caspian Convention, the Pyrenees Working Community, 'Forest Europe' under UNECE/FAO and the UNECE/WHO 'Environment and Health' process.

⁽¹³⁾ The first state of environment report published by the EEA in 1995 was pan-European. This, taken together with the Report for the Review of the Fifth Environment Action Programme, constituted EEA's first 5-year report on the environment required by EEA's founding Regulation. The 2007 Belgrade report was the fourth and last pan-European assessment that the EEA conducted with significant core resources, also supported at that time from EU TACIS and donor funds.

⁽¹⁴⁾ As a result of the UNECE reform in 2009, the EEA input to the last Ministerial conference consisted in an 'Assessment of Assessment' product building on the available literature in the region rather than on ad hoc data collection.

To help accomplish this, a common approach has been developed (2015) between EEA, UNECE and UNEP's Regional office for Europe to support regular national, regional and global reporting on the state of the environment in Europe. The aim of this is enable each organisation to carry out its mandate and responsibilities in a coordinated fashion to contribute to agreed common objectives. EEA contributes to this with its knowledge on the state of the environment across the Eionet countries (currently with SOER 2015 as a primary contribution) as well as with its knowhow and experience more generally on environmental information networking and integrated assessment.

C.2.2 *Mediterranean and Southern neighbourhood*

The focus of EEA's core-funded work in the Mediterranean region is to contribute to the ENP environmental objectives by supporting the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)'s flagship initiative (Horizon 2020 for a cleaner Mediterranean by the year 2020) in close cooperation with DG Environment and DG NEAR. In particular this involves the EEA co-chairing the Review and Monitoring Group of the Horizon 2020 initiative and building capacities in the Southern neighbourhood for the implementation of the SEIS principles and preparation of SOERs for the H2020 Mediterranean report. SEIS work in the Southern neighbourhood is supported via additional external financing (DG NEAR), i.e. the ENPI-SEIS project (2010–2015), the InSEIS project (2014–2015) for those countries who wish to deepen their relation with the EEA, and the new ENI-SEIS (South) project (2015–2019) ⁽¹⁷⁾. This is a reflection of the UfM countries' commitment to implement SEIS at the UfM Ministerial on Environment and Climate Change in May 2014 and the ENP Action Plans between the EU and the Southern Neighbourhood countries.

The EC is also a main donor and contracting party to the Barcelona Convention (Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean) and thus to UNEP-MAP, which work on the alignment to EU standards (e.g. MFSD, Waste/Biodiversity strategies). In this context, EEA works in close cooperation with the countries and UNEP-MAP.

C.2.3 *Arctic*

Cooperation focuses on the Arctic Council and its working groups as prioritised by the EU Arctic policy (2016). EEA objectives here are three-fold: to assess European Arctic issues, recognising that the Arctic is a part of the EU and that five of the eight members of the Arctic Council ⁽¹⁵⁾ are EEA members; second, to help the EU and the EEA Arctic states to contribute to Arctic assessment processes; and thirdly, to influence the circumpolar Arctic processes by promoting EEA/Eionet approaches and SEIS principles, including in SAON ⁽¹⁶⁾.

C.2.4 *Black Sea*

The EC is supporting the work under the Bucharest Convention (three of the six countries are EEA members) on the Protection of the Black Sea, the agenda of which is gradually being better aligned with the MFSD. The regional fiche on the environmental challenges of the Black Sea, prepared for SOER 2015, is complemented by an inventory of monitoring initiatives and systems in the region. The Black Sea is shared by EEA members, by ENP East countries and Russia. Due to the political tensions between Russia and Ukraine, tied to Crimea and East Ukraine, it is uncertain how EU and EEA's cooperation with this region will evolve in the coming years.

C.2.5 *Eastern neighbourhood*

The focus of EEA's work in the Eastern Neighbourhood ⁽¹⁷⁾ is to contribute to the ENP environmental objectives in particular the Eastern Partnership's Flagship Environmental Governance and Climate Change Prevention. As with the Southern Neighbourhood, EEA's work focuses on building the capacity of Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries to implement SEIS principles and methodologies. This activity is supported by external funding, i.e. ENPI SEIS and InSEIS. EEA also contributes thereby to the EaP countries input into UNECE activities. This engagement is in line with the commitments at international level within the Eastern Partnership by Heads of State and government.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Seven further EEA members are observers in the Arctic Council (France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom), while the applications from Greece, Switzerland, Turkey and the EU will be addressed at the next Arctic Council ministerial meeting in 2017.

⁽¹⁶⁾ SAON — the Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks process.

⁽¹⁷⁾ <https://eni-seis.eionet.europa.eu>

C.3 Relationships with international organisations, UN bodies and global conventions and processes

The EEA/Eionet Regulation states that the EEA should 'cooperate actively' with the UN, its specialised agencies and other bodies, in particular taking into account of 'the need to avoid any duplication of effort' (Article 15(4)).

To these ends, relationships have been established, and are maintained, with a wide variety of bodies, covering both thematic areas (e.g. with the secretariats of the three Rio Conventions [UNFCCC, CBD, UNCCD], WHO, FAO, Council of Europe, ESA, IEA, WMO, IAEA) as well as crosscutting cooperation (e.g. with UNEP, UNSD, OECD). In the thematic context, the EEA provides data and expertise to support the EU and member countries in their involvement in international conventions and related activities, as well as in UN global assessment platforms such as the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and UN World Ocean Assessment. Crosscutting work focuses on sharing EEA/Eionet approaches and SEIS principles to support the strengthening of the knowledge-policy interface. This work aims to promote consistency and comparability of efforts leading to improved efficiency, effectiveness and impacts.

In both thematic and crosscutting activities, the Agency functions as a direct partner of such bodies, providing expertise to on-going processes, as well as in support of the EU and member countries, fulfilling reporting requirements, providing assessments, and (co-) developing EU positions. Work in support of the EU and member countries is carried out around major political processes. One such example is the UNFCCC, where the EEA plays an active role in supporting measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) activities on climate change mitigation by compiling on behalf of the EU the annual GHG emission inventory submission to UNFCCC, and participating in annual reviews of national greenhouse gas inventories and in expert workshops. Another example is UNEA, where the EEA is lead expert for the EU on all science-policy interface issues. In addition, the EEA has thematic and crosscutting direct cooperation with a number of MEA and convention secretariats, divisions and regional sea conventions under the UNEP umbrella.

After the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the framework for follow up and review is being made more concrete, at national, regional and global level. The EEA has a particular role to play at regional level in contributing to the monitoring and review work. This work is carried out in close cooperation with the European Commission and EU Member States.

Engagements are ongoing with the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) and with the UN initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM).

C.4 Relationships with non-European countries and regions

Article 15(3) of the EEA and the Eionet Regulation allows the Agency to cooperate in areas of common interest with institutions in non-European countries where this can benefit EEA's work. Over the years, the EEA has shared its expertise, experiences and approaches with various non-European national and regional bodies and fora, for example, with the US EPA, and with bodies in South Korea, India, China, Canada and Australia, as well as regionally with Asia (especially with the ENVforum of the Asia-Europe Foundation, ASEM, and with ASEAN), with Africa (AfricaEIN: the Africa Environment Information Network), and with South America (with partners in SIAM: the Mercosur Environment Information System).

The five Central Asian countries are involved in several international processes, some of them EU funded, where EEA alongside other organisations, such as UNECE and CAREC, cooperate. As part of core work, the EEA confines its involvement with these countries to acting in an advisory capacity (advisory boards or similar) to externally-funded regional activities in the countries (e.g. to the EU funded FLERMONECA and AWARE projects in Central Asia, 2012–2015) to promote the uptake of SEIS principles in support to regular assessment and reporting.

How such engagements evolve in the future will depend on many factors. For example, while the focus of these engagements has in the past been on sharing EEA/Eionet approaches and SEIS principles and related knowhow, these interactions can open possibilities for exchanging information and knowledge which contributes more directly to the strengthening of the knowledge-policy interface across leading global actors. This may include joint events with non-European actors on respective assessments and state of environment reports. While some of this work is opportunistic and ad hoc in nature, taking advantage of existing projects and processes, with consequently low resource impacts, there is scope for prioritising more systematic engagements with some key players, such as has been developed over past years with the US EPA (Ecoinformatics initiative) and with ASEM's ENVforum.

Abbreviations and acronyms

7EAP	7th Environment Action Programme
ASEF	Asia-Europe Foundation
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CAREC	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CLRTAP	Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution
DG CLIMA	Directorate-General for Climate Action
DG ENV	Directorate-General for Environment
EEA	European Environment Agency
Eionet	European Environment Information and Observation Network.
ENPI/SEIS	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument/Shared Environmental Information System
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ESA	European Space Agency
EU TACIS	Technical assistance programme stimulating partnerships between the EU and the Community of Independent States
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GEO/GEOSS	Group on Earth Observations/Global Earth Observation System of Systems
IEA	International Energy Agency
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
JRC	Joint Research Centre
MAWP	Multiannual Work Programme
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MSFD	Marine Strategy Framework Directive
SA	Strategic Area
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEIS	Shared Environmental Information System
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN	United Nations
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP GEO	United Nations Environment Programme Global Environment Outlook
UNEP MAP	United Nations Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
US EPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
WHO	World Health Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

European Environment Agency

EEA framework for international engagement

A framework to implement the EEA international strategy

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