EEA methodology to assess the outlook of meeting the 2030 targets of the 8th EAP monitoring communication of the European Commission

The methodology is specific to the 8th EAP headline indicators and the corresponding 2030 8th EAP targets, which were published in the 8th EAP monitoring framework communication ([1]) of the European Commission. It does not assess progress towards the priority objectives as such of the 8th EAP Decision ([2]).

This methodology addresses only how to assess the outlook of meeting the 8th EAP monitoring targets by 2030 and not how to assess the past trends of the 8th EAP headline indicators ([i]).

Key principles

1. The assessment is done at the level of each of the 8th EAP headline indicators and of their corresponding 8th EAP monitoring target that should be met by 2030 – see list of indicators and targets in pages 5-8 of the 8th EAP monitoring framework communication.

2. The methodology assumes correlation between the trend of the indicator with the prospects of meeting the corresponding target.

3. The methodology can assess progress towards both quantitative and qualitative objectives. 70% of the targets in the 8th EAP monitoring framework communication are qualitative.

4. The methodology allows a choice of methods to reflect the best available evidence as well as combining methods.

Outlook assessment methodology

5. In general, the assessment of the outlook of meeting one of the 28 8th EAP targets outlined in the 8th EAP monitoring framework communication by 2030 is based on some combination of:

- **Modelled estimates of future developments (if available).** This method takes precedence over any other method if the projections are officially reported (e.g. legally binding official national projections) and reflect the current policy landscape, and the scope and timeframe accurately match those of the indicator.

([i]) For the assessment of past trends, the method used was ordinary least squares regression with testing of the slope. The full time series was used for each of the indicators. The direction of the past trend was estimated depending on the slope being significantly different from zero, in either positive or negative direction. Significance was determined according to the 95% confidence interval of the regression slope (interval covering zero or not), provided that the P-value of the regression was below 0.05 for accuracy. The results were compared with the results of other assessment methods (percentage change and compound annual growth rate) and were found to be consistent with the assessment done by the EEA indicator experts. The statistical methods used are all established methods for trend assessment of indicators. For more information on such methods, please consult the 2014 publication by Eurostat Getting messages across using indicators.

Often these conditions are not fully met, in which case such information is not used alone but combined with other methods.

- **Indicator-based trends observed over the previous years.** Indicator past trends do not reflect the current and foreseeable economic and policy context; they only reflect the past context. This method is therefore usually used in combination with other methods. As we move closer to 2030 (i.e. in future 8th EAP monitoring reports) the more this method will weigh in since significant changes in the context will be less likely.

- **'Distance to target' assessments (if available).** If a required path is already included in a directive, as in the old renewable energy directive (which prescribed the expected biannual increase of the share of renewable energy sources in gross energy consumption), the distance from that path at a given year determines the assessment of the prospects. It is unclear if any upcoming legislation will prescribe such pathways. More generally, if there is a quantitative target, the comparison of the annual observed growth rate of the latest 10 years (e.g. 2011-2021) and of the required annual growth rate of the remaining years (e.g. 2021-2030) to achieve the target by 2030 will inform the assessment alone or in combination with other relevant information.

- **Expert consideration of available knowledge, information and methods.** Expert consideration is used to:

    - determine the method or combination of methods, if in doubt;

    - determine the strength of evidence;

    - use additional evidence and information, for instance from studies, impact assessments, national plans and programmes, modelling, results from other relevant monitoring mechanisms (such as zero pollution, circular economy, climate and energy, biodiversity) and interpret this in context of the assessment's scope and timeframe;

    - take into account EU policy developments and, if appropriate, the geopolitical and socio-economic context. The methodology errs on the side of caution when it comes to such considerations. For instance, only EU policy developments that reached adoption and for which there is evidence of an expected outcome by 2030 are usually taken into account.

6. Each indicator assessment is quality assured through a **consultation process**. The process is specific to each indicator and involves in all cases the following experts and networks:

- **EEA experts** – several EEA experts review the assessment.

- **Eionet** – each indicator is reviewed by the relevant Eionet group(s).

- **European Commission and EU agencies** – each indicator is reviewed by the relevant European Commission services and EU agencies.

Assessment result

7. On the basis of points 1-6 above, the EEA assesses the outlook of meeting the 28 8th EAP targets published in the 8th EAP monitoring framework communication by 2030, by assigning the outlook to one of the following five classes:

If it is very likely that the objective will be met	i.e. it answers 'yes' with a high degree of confidence to the question: Is the target on track to be met by 2030?
If it is likely but uncertain	i.e. it answers 'maybe yes' to that question
If it is unlikely but uncertain	i.e. it answers 'maybe no'
If it is very unlikely	i.e. it answers 'no' with a high degree of confidence
If it is unclear	i.e. the prospects cannot be determined (e.g. insufficient data/evidence, no correlation between indicator and selected objective)

Assigning dark green or dark red means there is high degree of certainty over the expected outcome by 2030, i.e. a different outcome would be considered surprising. It requires robust, well-established evidence, preferably numerical, and/or consensus to substantiate the assessment outcome. Examples of such robust evidence include official projections (e.g. legally binding national projections) and results of well-accepted studies that can be interpreted in context of the indicator's scope and timeframe.

Assigning light green or orange indicates that the balance of evidence points to a certain direction but with some uncertainty. The methodology errs on the side of caution — i.e. if the level of confidence in the outcome is not very high, light colours are assigned.

References

1. EC, 2022, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the monitoring framework for the 8th Environment Action Programme: Measuring progress towards the attainment of the Programme's 2030 and 2050 priority objectives (COM(2022) 357 final) (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0357) accessed 27 November 2023.

2. EU, 2022, Decision (EU) 2022/591 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 April 2022 on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2030 (OJ L 114, 12.4.2022, p. 22–36) (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32022D0591) accessed 27 November 2023.