

Eionet connects

Sharing environmental information in Europe





Contents

Eionet origins.....	3
Eionet evolution and structure.....	4
Eionet structure	5
Eionet — a success story	8
Eionet — institutional cooperation.....	9
Some Eionet voices.....	10
Eionet — common content.....	11
Eionet — shared infrastructure	12
Shared Environmental Information System — SEIS	13
Eionet connects.....	14
Institutions of the NFPs	15



Eionet origins



Eionet mission

The European environment information and observation network (Eionet) aims to provide timely and quality-assured data, information and expertise for assessing both the state of the environment in Europe and the pressures and driving forces acting upon it. This enables policymakers to decide on appropriate measures for protecting the environment at national and European level and to monitor the effectiveness of existing policies and measures.

The **European Environment Agency (EEA)** is an agency of the European Union, whose task is to provide sound, independent information on the environment. The EEA is a major information source for those involved in developing, adopting, implementing and evaluating environmental policy as well as for business and civil society.

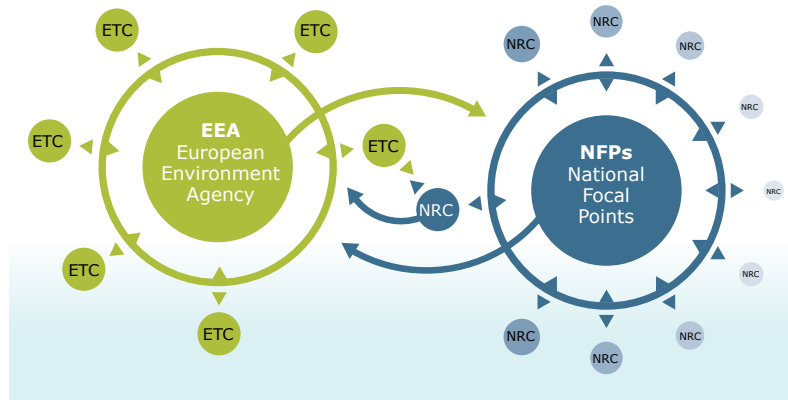
Eionet is a partnership network of the EEA and its member and cooperating countries. It consists of the EEA itself, a number of European Topic Centres (ETCs) and a network of around 1 500 experts from 39 countries in up to 400 national bodies dealing with environmental information. These experts are designated as National Focal Points (NFPs) and National Reference Centres (NRCs).

Through Eionet, the EEA brings together environmental

information from individual countries concentrating on the delivery of timely, nationally validated, high-quality data. This knowledge is made widely available through the EEA website and forms the basis of both thematic and integrated environmental assessments. This information serves to support environmental management processes, environmental policymaking and assessment,

as well as citizen participation at national, European and global levels.

Coupled with feedback and information coming through citizen science activities and lay, local and traditional knowledge, as well as from the business community, this provides a powerful evidence base for decision makers and for public participation.

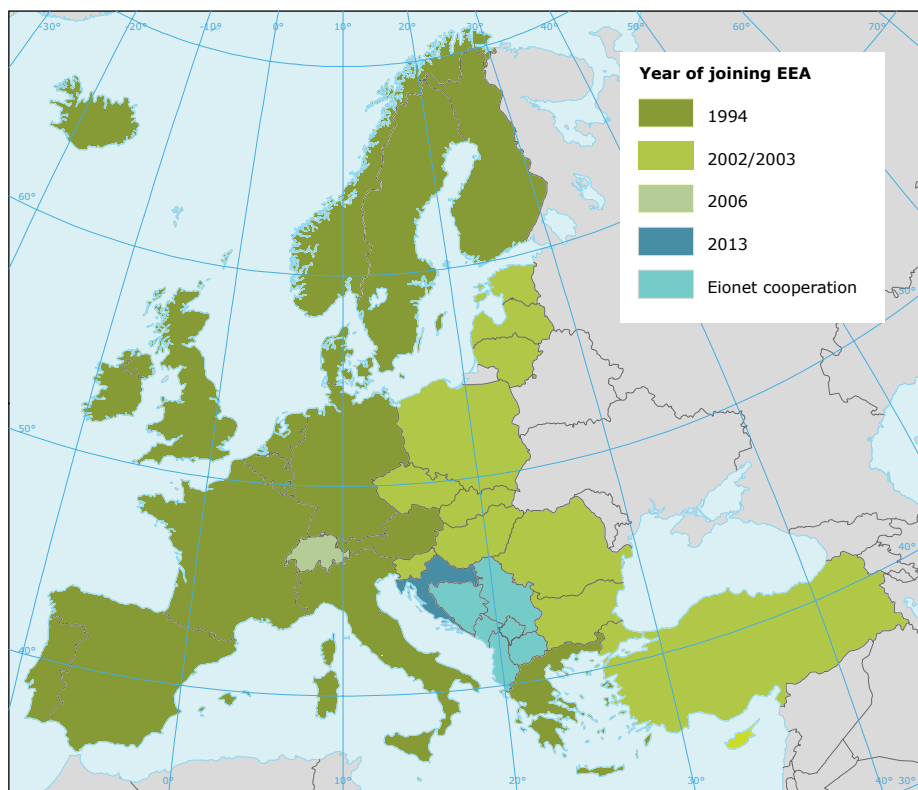


Eionet evolution and structure



Eionet has grown as the EEA has enlarged

Eionet was established in 1994 in accordance with the Council Regulation (EEC) No 1210/90 of 7 May 1990 on the establishment of the EEA. Eionet has become a model for the provision of high-quality data, information and assessments on the state of the environment and the pressures and driving forces acting upon it. As the number of EEA member and cooperating countries has increased, so Eionet has grown.





Eionet structure



Tasks of a European Topic Centre – example biodiversity

The **ETC on Biological Diversity** is a European consortium of nine organisations working with the European Environment Agency under a framework partnership agreement with an additional financial contribution from the French Ministry in charge of the environment. It is coordinated by the National Museum of Natural History in Paris through a 'core team', which involves 12 people from seven European countries.

The main tasks of the ETC/BD are:

- to support the EEA indicator-based assessment work by addressing the state and trends of biodiversity and ecosystems in Europe;
- to provide relevant information in support of implementation of environmental and sustainable development policies in Europe, in particular for EU nature and biodiversity policies and strategies and for the Bern Convention;
- to build capacity for reporting on biodiversity in Europe, mainly through Eionet;
- to support the EEA in the development of the European Biodiversity Data Centre and the European portal for Biodiversity, BISE (Biodiversity Information System for Europe).

ETC/BD website: <http://bd.eionet.europa.eu>.

European Topic Centre (ETC)

A consortium of organisations from EEA member countries with expertise in a specific environmental area and contracted by the EEA to support the EEA work programme.

ETCs are centres of thematic expertise contracted by the EEA to carry out specific tasks identified in the EEA strategy (five-year work programme) and the annual work programmes. They are designated by the EEA Management Board following a Europe-wide competitive selection process and work as extensions of the EEA in specific topic areas. Each ETC consists of a lead organisation and specialist partner organisations from the environmental research and information community, which combine their resources in their particular areas of expertise.

The ETCs, working together with Eionet countries, facilitate the provision of data and information from the countries and deliver reports and other services to the EEA and Eionet.

There are currently (2012) six ETCs:

- Air Pollution and Climate Change Mitigation (ETC/ACM)
- Climate Change Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation (ETC/CCA)
- Biological Diversity (ETC/BD)
- Inland, Coastal and Marine Waters (ETC/ICM)
- Spatial Information and Analysis (ETC/SIA)
- Sustainable Consumption and Production (ETC/SCP).



Eionet structure



National Focal Point (NFP)

An expert or group of experts in a national environmental organisation nominated and funded by the country and authorised to be the main contact point for the EEA, other Eionet members, and relevant actors. The NFP coordinates the national network consisting of numerous National Reference Centres (NRCs) in order to support the implementation of the EEA work programme.

NFPs are the main contact points for the EEA in the member and cooperating countries. They are in charge of cooperation with the EEA and the ETCs and organise national coordination of activities related to the EEA strategy and work programme. In order to promote key EEA publications, many NFPs organise launch events and issue press releases.

NFP working methods differ from country to country. This partly reflects the diverse nature of the national environmental systems within which they are based. For example, some NFPs are located in environment agencies, others are part of the environment ministry; some are in centralised national administrations, whereas others operate in decentralised, sometimes federal, systems.

In addition, NFPs act as advisers to their EEA Management Board members and develop contacts to other relevant networks.

The work of an NFP — example Norway

'An ordinary week in my job as the NFP for Norway includes a lot of reading. I receive, read, rate and forward many documents from the EEA and the national Eionet network: assessments, reports, policy documents, reviews, requests. Part of my work is to ensure that the right people receive important information in time and to follow up and remind "my" network regarding reporting obligations and input to the EEA's work. Daily work routines include visiting the Eionet forum, contacting NRCs or primary contact points (PCPs), forwarding e-mails, invitations and requests, preparing meetings, writing feedback and ensuring that various ongoing processes in the EEA are followed up and supported by the Norwegian network. The main goal is to make sure that the information flow between the EEA and the Norwegian Eionet keeps running.'





Eionet structure



Working with NRCs – case study

The development of resource efficiency policy fact sheets

In spring 2010, the EU adopted a growth strategy *Europe 2020*, designating resource efficiency as one of its flagship initiatives.

Anticipating the need for countries to respond to this, the EEA initiated a survey of resource efficiency policies and instruments in Eionet countries, with two main objectives:

- to support policymaking by broadening the knowledge base on resource efficiency through collecting, analysing and disseminating information about national experiences in resource efficiency policies;
- to facilitate sharing of information and good practices across the Eionet.

In November 2010, NRCs for Sustainable Consumption and Production and Resource Use in Eionet countries were invited to provide details using a standard set of questions.

Despite tight deadlines, the majority of countries provided contributions and the report was published in October 2011. It has since been put to use by policymakers at national and European levels.

This joint EEA/Eionet effort is just one example of how timely, national-level input can be provided to a key European policy process building on the combined strength and expertise of the network.

Further information about resource efficiency policies, including the 31 detailed country profiles, are available on the EEA website: <http://www.eea.europa.eu/resource-efficiency>.

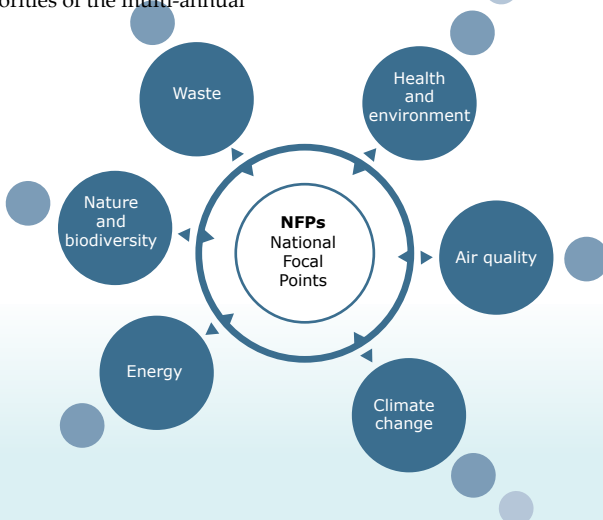
National Reference Centre (NRC)

An individual or group with relevant expertise in a national environmental organisation nominated and funded by the country to work with the EEA and relevant ETCs in specific environmental areas related to the EEA work programme.

NRCs are nominated by Eionet member and cooperating countries. NRCs are established in specific environmental areas, for example air quality, health and environment, climate change, waste, nature and biodiversity, energy and many more. They play a key role in coordinating these topics and in providing relevant data and expertise. The NRC structure varies in accordance with the requirements and priorities of the multi-annual

EEA strategy. The focus of work of NRCs differs according to the particular topic being dealt with, but all work with the EEA in fulfilling the work programme.

NRCs are located in organisations which are regular collectors or suppliers of environmental data at the national level and/or possess relevant knowledge regarding various environmental issues, monitoring or modelling.



Eionet — a success story

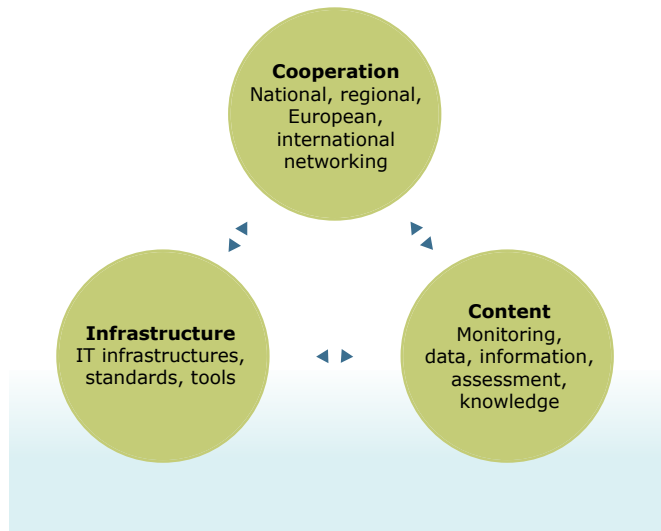


Eionet — a mature, flexible network

Taking up its work in 1994, Eionet has become a well-known and trusted provider of high-quality data, information and assessments for Europe.

The concept of Eionet encompasses the following defining elements:

- Strong institutional cooperation across several levels (national, regional, European, international) as well as partnerships with civil society, facilitated by a coordinating entity
- Agreed common content — data, information, indicators, analyses
- Shared infrastructures, standards and tools.





Eionet — institutional cooperation



Eionet — a people network

Institutional cooperation and the commitment of individuals from the national institutions are at the heart of Eionet, which is essentially a people network.

The NFP/Eionet group — consisting of NFPs, ETC managers, representatives of the European Commission and relevant EEA staff — meets three times a year. The results of these discussions are fed into EEA Management Board meetings and in this way provide direct support to the strategic development of the EEA.

The extensive online communication and cooperation between the EEA, ETCs and NRCs are underpinned by regular NRC workshops where the results of EEA/ETC activities are presented, national experiences shared and the way forward discussed. These workshops help to maintain and strengthen good contacts between the EEA, ETCs and NRCs and between the countries themselves.

Countries have benefited from sharing advice, expertise and experience in developing national capabilities, particularly in the areas of data collection and management and in the production and dissemination of policy-relevant information and assessments.

The extensive communication between NRCs and ETCs has improved the quality of data

and information at national and European levels and, for many countries, has helped to strengthen capacities in the existing monitoring and reporting systems. For the new EU Member States, early EEA and Eionet membership has raised the profile of environmental issues and influenced the nature and extent of national monitoring and information systems.

Streamlining reporting across Europe

Data which countries are obliged to report to the European level are collected and analysed in a transparent way by the EEA and ETCs to give an overview of Europe's environment. In this way, it also becomes possible to benchmark the environmental performance of countries. Furthermore, Eionet countries are encouraged to develop their national networks in ways which assure compatibility with EU and international reporting requirements.

Some Eionet voices



“ Norway’s cooperation with the European Environment Agency helps us to paint a better picture of the state of environment in Norway and how it develops than we could do by ourselves.”

Johnny Auestad/Climate and Pollution Agency Norway

“ The most important thing with this knowledge is that it is translated into the language of environmental policy and that it is used not only at the European level, but also at the national level.”

Liutauras Stoskus/Lithuanian Environmental Protection Agency

“ For us it is very important that we can secure access to the Eionet. As a non-EU Member State it was a very important point. Why? Because now we are able to share comparable data.”

Nicolas Perritaz/Federal Office for the Environment Switzerland

“ ...our main goal was to learn something from European experience ... and to implement that at national level...”

Dejan Lekic/Serbian Environmental Protection Agency

“ We can no longer imagine working only on a national scale. Environmental problems must be approached at a European level, or even further. What interests us most about the EEA is that it is essentially a place of exchange of knowledge and information.”

Jacques Thorette/Institut Français de l'Environnement

“ ...all this creates many opportunities for us to respond to European policy, to improve ourselves, to see what others do and to compare, and to be much more active.”

Mata Aravantinou/former Greek Ministry for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works

Eionet — common content



Tackling environmental issues needs a concerted European approach. Eionet has played a leading role in achieving a level of cooperation vital to this effort based on sharing environmental data and information across Europe.

Very early on, the EEA and Eionet partners identified a set of priority data flows. As far as possible, data and information which are already being reported by the countries in the framework of EU or international reporting obligations are used within Eionet. This means that data collected once at national level can be made accessible to many

recipients and used for many purposes at national, regional and international level. It also enables countries to focus resources on fulfilling legal and moral reporting obligations.

The data and information shared within Eionet are used in the EEA's Europe-wide analyses and assessments. They also underpin the EEA 'core set of

indicators'. A yearly progress report ⁽¹⁾ is produced by the EEA on country performance (timeliness, completeness, quality) in providing these data. This exercise is a useful tool to benchmark country performances and to encourage countries to improve their responses.

The European environment: state and outlook — country assessments

In recent years, Eionet has established a country assessment process, which is built on a common approach but which also embraces 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 legislation and multi-lateral environmental agreements. Country assessment contributions are fully web-based. They cover various thematic areas and are structured according to well-defined guiding questions.

SOER 2010 country assessments: www.eea.europa.eu/soer/countries.



⁽¹⁾ <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/eionet-priority-data-flows-may-2>.

Eionet — shared infrastructure

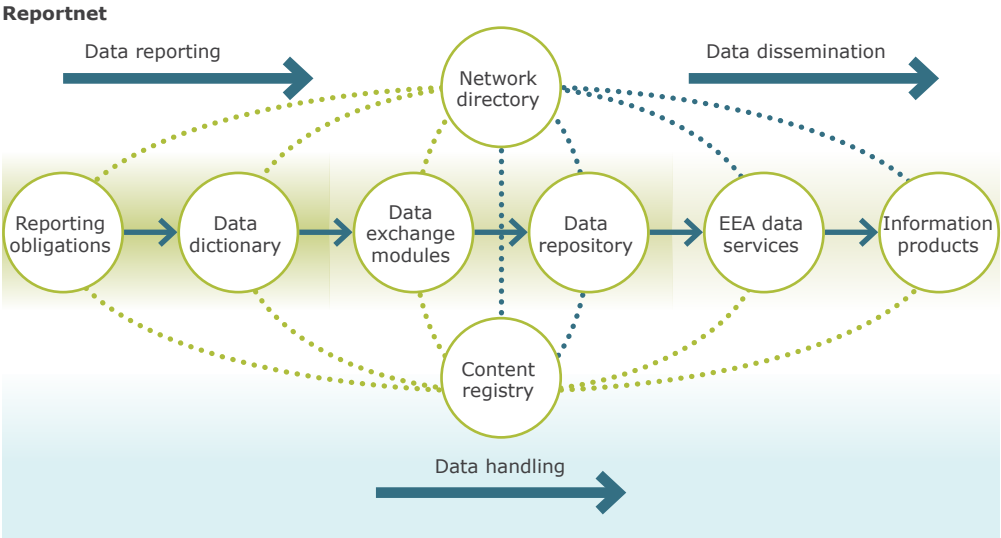


From the beginning, the EEA and Eionet have always taken advantage of the latest technological developments, using open, transparent infrastructures and tools and establishing and making use of common standards.

For more than 10 years, Eionet countries have been using the reporting infrastructure Reportnet (?) to provide data and information to the European and international level. Reportnet is a suite of web-based tools and applications enabling countries to deliver data and information.

The system integrates various web services and allows for distributed responsibilities. Reportnet was initially used for streamlining the reporting of environmental data and information to the EEA and ultimately to the European Commission. Deliveries to

all national, regional and international organisations are now more transparent. Some countries now use Reportnet for almost all their regional and international reporting obligations including those towards UN bodies.



(?) <http://www.eionet.europa.eu/reportnet>.



Shared Environmental Information System – SEIS



Through Eionet, EEA member and cooperating countries are working towards the vision of a more streamlined and integrated approach to environmental information in Europe.

Building on Eionet experiences, the SEIS (Shared Environmental Information System) concept has been established. SEIS is a collaborative initiative of the European Commission, the EEA and Eionet partners. It aims to further improve the collection, exchange and use of environmental data and

information across Europe and to create a decentralised, but integrated, web-enabled, interoperable, Europe-wide environmental information system by simplifying and modernising existing systems and processes. SEIS is based on a set of principles which underpin most EEA/Eionet processes.

SEIS in practice – example Eye on Earth ⁽³⁾

One example for implementing the principles of SEIS is the development of Eye on Earth, a 'global public information service' for creating and sharing information. In the coming years, Eionet will use Eye on Earth to support its expanding role as an agent of change that facilitates information sharing, and to strengthen its effectiveness and efficiency in collecting and providing environmental information.

SEIS principles in practice

1. Manage information as close to its source as possible
2. Collect information once and share and use often
3. Help public authorities with their legal reporting obligations
4. Help public authorities to assess the state of the environment and environmental policy effectiveness, and to design new environmental policy if needed
5. Help make geographical comparisons of the environment
6. Help citizens to participate in the development and implementation of environmental policy, while making information fully available to them
7. Use open standards

⁽³⁾ <http://eyeonearth.org>.

Eionet connects



Supporting environmental policy assessment and development through partnerships and shared information, as exemplified by Eionet, is a successful model that can be exported to and help connect other parts of the globe.

Effective environmental governance at all levels is crucial for finding solutions to environmental threats in a globalised world of interconnected nations, economies and people.

An essential part of improved governance is the creation of a credible, legitimate, relevant and accessible evidence base to ensure that policymakers are basing their decisions on sound information. Sharing environmental data and information at national, regional and global levels — underpinned by networking structures such as Eionet — is crucial for strengthening the science-policy interface.

Eionet — a model for other regions

The European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI) provides funding to strengthen cooperation between the EU and its eastern and southern neighbours. ENPI is the framework for the implementation of a series of activities that aim to strengthen existing environmental monitoring, data and information management in line with the SEIS principles. Eionet is an invaluable foundation in carrying out this work.

Eionet has also been identified as a building block in the establishment of SAON (Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks). The aim of SAON is to enhance Arctic-wide observing activities by facilitating partnerships and synergies among existing observing and data networks and promoting the sharing of data and information.

In the global context, Eionet, with its unique structure of institutional cooperation, common content and shared IT infrastructures and tools, has been taken up as a concept to support UNEP's efforts to establish a networking structure and web-based platform to facilitate data, information and assessment sharing.



Institutions of the NFPs

Albania	Agency of Environment and Forestry (AEF)
Austria	Umweltbundesamt – <i>Environment Agency Austria</i>
Belgium	Interregional Cell for the Environment (IRCEL-CELINE)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Federal Ministry for Environment and Tourism of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bulgaria	Executive Environment Agency (BEEA)
Croatia	Agencija za zaštitu okoliša – <i>Croatian Environment Agency (CEA)</i>
Cyprus	Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment
Czech Republic	CENIA, Česká informační agentura životního prostředí <i>CENIA, Czech Environmental Information Agency</i>
Denmark	Danish Nature Agency
Estonia	Keskkonnateabe Keskus (KTK) – <i>Estonian Environment Information Centre (EEIC)</i>
Finland	Suomen ympäristökeskus (SYKE) – <i>Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)</i>
France	Ministère de l'Écologie, du Développement durable, des Transports et du Logement (MEDDTL) – <i>Ministry for Ecology, Sustainable Development, Transport and Housing</i>
Germany	Umweltbundesamt (UBA) – <i>Federal Environment Agency</i>
Greece	Υπουργείο Περιβάλλοντος, Ενέργειας και Κλιματικής Αλλαγής – <i>Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Climate Change</i>
Hungary	Ministry of Rural Development
Iceland	Environment Agency of Iceland
Ireland	Environmental Protection Agency
Italy	Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e Ricerca Ambientale (ISPRA) – <i>Institute for Environmental Protection and Research.</i>
Kosovo under UNSCR 1244/99	Environmental Protection Agency
Latvia	Latvijas Vides, ģeoloģijas un meteoroloģijas centrs (LVGMC) – <i>Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre (LEGMC)</i>
Liechtenstein	National Office for Forests, Nature and Land Management
Lithuania	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Luxembourg	Ministère du Développement durable et des Infrastructures – <i>Ministerium für nachhaltige Entwicklung und Infrastruktur – Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructure</i>
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Министерство за животна средина и просторно планирање, Македонски информативен центар за животна средина – <i>Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, Macedonian Environmental Information Center</i>
Malta	Malta Environment and Planning Authority
Montenegro	Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism
Netherlands	Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving (PBL) – <i>PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency</i>
Norway	Klima- og forurensningsdirektoratet (Klif) – <i>Climate and Pollution Agency (Klif)</i>
Poland	Główny Inspektorat Ochrony Środowiska – <i>Chief Inspectorate for Environmental Protection</i>
Portugal	Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente, I.P. (APA, I.P.) – <i>Portuguese Environment Agency</i>
Romania	Ministry of Environment and Forestry
Serbia	Serbian Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)
Slovakia	Slovenská agentúra životného prostredia (SAŽP) – <i>Slovak Environmental Agency (SEA)</i>
Slovenia	Agencija Republike Slovenije za okolje – <i>Slovenian Environment Agency</i>
Spain	Ministerio de Agricultura, Alimentación y Medio Ambiente – <i>Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment</i>
Sweden	Naturvårdsverket – <i>Swedish Environmental Protection Agency</i>
Switzerland	Bundesamt für Umwelt (BAFU) – Office fédéral de l'environnement (OFEV) – Ufficio federale dell'ambiente (UFAM) – Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN)
Turkey	Çevre ve Şehircilik Bakanlığı – <i>Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation</i>
United Kingdom	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

България Belgique/België Bosna i Hercegovina Česká republika Crna Gora/Црна Гора Danmark
Deutschland Eesti Ελλάδα España France Hrvatska Ireland Ísland Italia Kosovo under UNSCR
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Österreich Polska поранешна југословенска Република Македонија Portugal Romania Shqipe
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Confederazione Svizzera/Confederaziun svizra Suomí/Finland Sverige Türkiye United Kingdom
България Belgique/België Bosna i Hercegovina Česká republika Crna Gora/Црна Гора Danmark
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Slovenija Slovenská republika Србија Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft/Confédération suisse/

Where to go for more information

EEA:

www.eea.europa.eu

List of NFPs and ETCs:

eea.europa.eu/about-us/countries-and-eionet/list-of-members-of-the-nfp-eionet-group

Eionet infrastructure and tools:

www.eionet.europa.eu

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