



SEIS Task Force meeting

29 September 2008, Brussels, Room Beaulieu 25 (BU25), 0/S1

Final meeting record

Notes: The meeting was chaired by Ian Clark, The Participants lists is attached as Annex 1 to the minutes.

1. Welcome and introduction, Approval of the Agenda (AOB)

Timo Makela, Director, Environment Directorate General, European Commission (COM) welcomed the meeting of the SEIS Task Force and highlighted that following adoption of the Communication on SEIS the focus of activity would be the development of a legal instrument addressing the overall principles and streamlining of the EU reporting mechanism. In parallel work to develop a practical and stepwise implementation plan is being launched.

2. Task Force Objectives and Meeting Objectives

The Commission explained that the task force has a dual role: firstly to assist the Commission in forming policy proposals, and secondly to bring all relevant stakeholders together. Specific objectives included (i) to devise an EU-wide SEIS implementation plan, (ii) to advise and support the Commission and EEA, (iii) to discuss early drafts of Commission proposals, (iv) to allow Member States to bring experiences and contributions, (v) to provide a platform with all relevant stakeholders. COM informed the meeting on the intention to make an open call for non-governmental stakeholders in order to create this platform. Technical sub-groups could be envisaged to provide guidance and support on specific issues. The Commission is considering giving the group a more formal status (such as an expert group), including interpretation, although this had not been possible for this first meeting.

The objectives of this first meeting were the following:

- to discuss the outline of the legal instrument (timetable for adoption of the Commission proposal is March 2009);
- to have a first discussion on a SEIS implementation plan, complementing the legal instrument, with the target of having a more detailed plan for the next meeting;
- to discuss what technical groups, if any, were needed.

In answer to a question from Belgium about the confidentiality of documents the Commission indicated that the meeting documents can be disseminated and minutes outlining the broad lines of the discussion would be placed on the web-site.

3. Commission Communication on SEIS and Follow Up by Commission and EEA

The Commission made a brief introduction on the SEIS Commission Communication and its follow-up (see slide presentation) and explained that any discussion on it will be made under agenda items 4 and 5. This was followed by a summary of the EEA's country visits

Finland asked about discussions of the Communication in Council and the Czech Republic informed the meeting that the CZ Presidency in the first 2009 semester intends to issue Council Conclusions on SEIS and is preparing a conference TOWARDS eENVIRONMENT ¹.

4. SEIS Implementation: Revision of the Standardised Reporting Directive (91/962/EC)

The Commission introduced the outline of the legal instrument that it was circulated prior to the TF meeting (see slides). It clarified that the objectives and scope of the legal instrument are the following:

- Embody legal commitment to SEIS principles
- Modernise existing reporting mechanisms
- Ensure timely availability of information and data
- Repeal/streamline obsolete/overlapping requirements
- Exploit opportunities offered by ICT and maximise cost-effectiveness of information-related investments
- Scope: information provided by Member States under Community environmental legislation

COM summarised the following outstanding issues:

- Further clarity on what to streamline (content)
- Further clarity on periodicity / criteria for timeliness
- Use of comitology
- Quantification of costs / benefits
- Public access...link with Aarhus directive
- Are we on the right track?

In the discussion questions were raised concerning the following:

¹ (Opportunities of SEIS and SISE: Integrating Environmental Knowledge in Europe), to contribute to this end (March 25-27, 2009 in Prague (www.e-envi2009.org))

Difficulty of including SEIS principles in legislation – Germany and Greece – Greece suggested inclusion in a recital; Germany would also like a debate on the principles themselves.

Focus the instrument on cutting reporting requirements – Germany, Netherlands,

Belgium asked whether the current proposed outline focussing on streamlining of "low-hanging fruit", would be followed by another, more comprehensive instrument later aimed at the other SEIS objectives–

Take a stepwise approach in implementing the legal instrument to allow time for national systems to adapt - Netherlands

SEIS registers – several Member States indicated that national registers are already being created – Belgium, Finland, Estonia – It was highlighted however the need of consistency between especially if the aim is for the same system to contribute to the streamlining of the EU reporting mechanism towards international conventions. An EU SEIS Technical Group should propose SEIS (eReporting) technical specifications that will allow consistency between the registers.

Use of the EEA Reportnet and Reporting Obligations Data base in building the new reporting system – support from Austria and Germany. Greece was of the view that use of the Reportnet tools should be made to the extent possible since the Reportnet is a centralized tool while SEIS is a “close to the source” and access providing mechanism. There is a need to find out the necessary compromise between these 2 concepts. A SEIS technical group under the auspices of the SEIS Task Force should address these issues. There is a general recognition that these tools would need considerable improvement to be useful for a future reporting system based on the SEIS concept.

Using comitology for implementing decisions – several Member States indicated that they see it being appropriate for technical decisions (and possibly the periodicity of reporting) but more precision is necessary on the scope of these decisions.

A request for more clarity on the type of information to be made available via a new reporting system was made by Denmark and Finland– raw or aggregated data and accompanying assessments? Denmark suggested that data and assessment reports to be made available for a better interpretation of data especially if the same system will be used to actively inform the public. Finland was of the view that if the SEIS registers will not allow the actual content of the reporting obligations to be accessible and retrievable at item level and are only catalogues of content (resources) where to find a document and a report, it will be of limited added value as most countries have already such catalogues. It is hard to see what will be the added value for the citizens as well.

Support for the using a SEIS legal instrument to help streamline reporting to international conventions – Belgium, Norway

Suggestion to attach a roadmap in the legal instrument with a priority list on the reporting content that the national registers should make available – Switzerland, Netherlands.

Overall support for SEIS in general and the need for it to be underpinned by a legal instrument was expressed by a number of Member States including Austria, Belgium, Greece and Sweden.

Concluding remarks on agenda item 4

The Commission thanked the meeting for their suggestions and recommendations which offer good food for thought to further advance the drafting of the legal instrument and concluded the discussion under agenda item 4 as follows:

- *The meeting seems to support the view of the EEA/EIONET National Focal Points that a legal instrument is needed to further advance SEIS and streamline the EU eReporting mechanism. There is a general support for the scope of the current legal instrument to streamline the EU reporting mechanism towards an EU eReporting system based on the SEIS and the approach suggested in the current outline.*
- *MSs are invited provide further suggestions and recommendations in written on the legal proposal outline by 24th October 2008 and nominate experts for a dedicated meeting by the end of October to progress further the drafting of the legal instrument on the basis of the collected inputs.*

5. SEIS Implementation Plan

Outline and Future Development

COM introduced the point by referring to the paper provided, which needed to be fleshed out in more detail. The paper was the result of close collaboration with EEA and contributions from JRC and ESTAT.

The paper sets out the issues that the Communication identified as requiring specific action. (see slides presented)

In the discussion that followed several Member States expressed support for the focus on the legal instrument – Austria, Belgium, Germany and the Czech Republic with Germany repeating the need for this to concentrate on streamlining and repealing reporting obligations. Belgium argued that it should be clear that the proposed legal instrument would only cover part of SEIS.

Denmark, Finland and Greece felt that in order to get more political commitment it was necessary to be clearer on the scope and the costs and benefits of SEIS. Greece however is of the view that the SEIS system is unavoidable due to the needs of modern technology and evolutions in environment. There was a need to clarify what is mandatory, and what is voluntary. Existing legislation is based on in-situ data sitting in fragmented information systems, which is why technical innovations are coming so slowly. France asked for clarification of the type of data to be covered by SEIS and the role of local governments in its implementation.

Belgium suggested that there was a potential duplication of work between the GMES in-situ working group and SEIS. At least some connection needed to be made, or alternatively the same group could serve both purposes. It was felt that there was a lack of understanding, or even interest, within GMES concerning the real needs of users of environmental information.

Several countries including Finland, Belgium, Czech Republic and Greece called for technical issues to be a second priority action and to be supported by a specific technical sub-group.

The discussion was followed by a short presentation by the EEA on the sixteen SEIS quick win projects. For many of the projects there was a need to revise objectives as understanding of SEIS evolves. There were now assessing each of the projects against around seven potential benefits. One of the main obstacles was to communicate to people what it means to apply SEIS principles, and to change mind-sets.

Concluding remarks on agenda item 5a

The Commission thanked the meeting for a fruitful discussion and offered the following conclusions:

- *The meeting suggests that the SEIS Implementation Plan should focus on the elaboration and preparations for implementation of the legal proposal in the next couple of years.*
- *Technical issues are needed to be addressed and that a specific group may be necessary.*
- *Efficient links between INSPIRE, GMES and SEIS need to be established and this suggest for improved co-ordination between them at both national and EU levels². Other related areas also need to be brought in: e-government, Aarhus, SISE, PSI and these activities need to be seen in a wide perspective. COM (ENV) will keep the SEIS Task Force informed about developments in these sectors and recommended the Task Force to be pro-active and build their national SEIS networks including these stakeholders.*
- *A debate on national SEIS programmes (exchange of good practice) would be useful in future and this can be done using the SEIS Task Force platform.*

The 'Harmon' Study – Assessing Environmental Monitoring

The Commission presented the item and informed the meeting that this project is suggested to contribute in the improving the comparability and quality of data, the lack of which had been highlighted in the SEIS Communication together with a Commission's commitment to address this issue.

The expected outcomes of the study are:

- holistic view of evidence needs, who does what;

² An example of the result of the close collaboration between DG ENR and DG ENR is the recently adopted (12/11/2008) GMES Commission Communication "Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) - we Care for a Safer Planet"

The **SEIS** is mentioned in 3 instances (pages 4, 5 and 8) in the following way offering a good basis for closer collaboration and co-ordination with the GMES activity (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0748:FIN:EN:PDF>)

- list of contacts and programmes (updated and maintained)
- comparative assessment
- analysis of comparability as basis for policy options (EU+MS)
- shared knowledge, better re-use of existing information;
- development of a network of practitioners addressing similar problems.

The support of the SEIS task force was sought in helping to identify sources of information. It was intended to pilot a subset of policy areas in two to three countries. Volunteers were requested. The terms of reference for the study could be made available.

Denmark commented that the study could be useful but there was a risk that it would become a one-off study. To avoid this, close collaboration with EIONET and especially WISE was needed. Germany and Finland suggested that more information is needed on the purpose and design of the study and on what type of support was sought from them in order to be able to subscribe to the study.

The Commission proposed to distribute the description of the work together with contact points that members of the Task Force could contact in case they would like to participate.

6. For information - Communicating SEIS - establishing an eEnvironment Community

The Commission summarised the current SEIS communication activities, which are mainly focused on the SEIS Europa website (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/seis/index.htm>).

Recently, a contract had been awarded covering, inter alia, maintenance and continuous enrichment of the site's content. Participants were invited to contribute actively to this process by providing concrete ideas for topics and content that could be added. Besides this classical activity, a more modern interactive form of communication is being setup under the epractice portal using Web 2.0 technologies.

During the discussion participants acknowledged the importance of effective, collaborative communication on SEIS. Some participants indicated that it would be helpful to receive more precise information on what types of contributions would be expected. COM agreed to do so together with an outline of plans and tools to increase the SEIS communication.

7. Conclusion

The Commission concluded the meeting summarising the short term follow-up actions (which were also sent to the SEIS TF the day after the meeting):

- *Member States to propose participants, issues to address for a technical group meeting on the SEIS legislative proposal as soon as possible - meeting to be organised by Commission end October*
- *Comments and drafting suggestions on the legislative proposal - Member States as soon as possible in the course by 24 October*

- *Suggestions for new pages on SEIS Europa Website and nomination of an active member of the SEISnet Community under ePractice (<http://www.epractice.eu/community/seisnet>) - Member States by end October*
- *Suggestions of issues to be addressed by a technical group on the technological aspects of SEIS - Member States by mid November - meeting to be organised by Commission - January 2009*
- *Monitoring Assessment study 'Harmon' - Commission to send terms of reference by 10 October; Member States to propose participants by mid November?*
- *SEIS Communication strategy - Commission to send short description by 10 October*

Annex 1 – Participants list

1st SEIS Task Force Meeting, Brussels, 29 September 2008			
<i>Av. de Beaulieu 25 (BU-25) – Meeting Room 0 / S1</i>			
Austria	Mr. MAYER Johannes	Austrian Environment Agency Spittelauer Lände 5 1090 Wien, Austria	johannes.mayer@umweltbundesamt.at
Austria	Ms. STUBENRAUCH Margareta	Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management Stubenbastei 5, 1010 Wien, Austria	Margareta.Stubenrauch@lebensministerium.at
Belgium	Ms. Joëlle BASTIN	Ministère de l'Environnement Wallon de Belgique c/o Représentation Permanente de la Belgique auprès de l'UE Délégation de la Région wallonne Rue de la Loi 61-63, 1040 Brussels, Belgium	joelle.bastin@diplobel.fed.be
Belgium	Mr. VOET Jan	IRCEL / CELINE, Kunstlaan 10-11 1210 Brussels, Belgium	voet@irceline.be
Denmark	Mr. Olav EGGERS	National Survey and Cadastre, Rentemestervej 8 2400 Copenhagen, Denmark	oe@kms.dk
Denmark	Mr Christiaan STEENMANS	EEA	Christiaan.Steenmans@eea.europa.eu
Denmark	Mr Bernt RONDELL	EEA	Bernt.Rondell@eea.europa.eu
Denmark	Mr. STJERNHOLM Michael	National Environmental Research Institute Department of Lake and Estuarine Ecology Vejlsovej 25, PO Box 314, 8600 Silkeborg Denmark	msh@dmu.dk
Denmark	Mr. TIND Esben	Ministry of the Environment Haraldsgade 53, 2100 Copenhagen O Denmark	estin@blst.dk
Estonia	Ms. DISLIS Tiina	Estonian Environment Information Centre Mustamäe tee 33 10616 Tallinn, Estonia	tiina.dislis@ic.envir.ee
Finland	Mr. Jarmo MUURMAN	Ministry of the Environment PO Box 35, 00023 GOVERNMENT Finland	jarmo.muurman@ymparisto.fi
France	Mr. DAVID Michel	Ministère de l'écologie, de l'énergie, du développement durable et de l'aménagement du territoire (MEEDDAT), Service de l'observation et des statistiques, 5 route d'Olivet, BP 16105, 45061 Orléans Cedex 2, France	michel-r.david@developpement-durable.gouv.fr
France	Mr. SALGE François	Ministère de l'Ecologie, de l'Energie, du Développement Durable et de l'Aménagement du Territoire (MEEDDAT), Arche de la Défense Paroi Sud 92055 La Défense Cedex, France	francois.salge@developpement-durable.gouv.fr
Germany	Ms. WERNER Julia	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conversation and Nuclear Safety, Division "European Union" (KI II 2) Alexanderstr. 3, 10178 Berlin, Germany	Julia.Werner@bmu.bund.de
Germany	Mr. SCHULTZ- KRUTISCH Thomas	Federal Environment Agency Environmental Information Systems and Services Wörlitzer Platz 1 06844 Dessau-Rosslau, Germany	thomas.schultz-krutisch@uba.de

Germany	Mr. BILO Michael	Bundesamt für Naturschutz Naturschutzinformation, Geoinformation, Konstantinstr. 110, 53179 Bonn, Germany	michael.bilo@bfn.de
Germany	Ms. VON JANOWSKY Dagmar	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conversation and Nuclear Safety Referat ZG I6 - Informationsmanagement, Statistik, Bibliothek Robert-Schuman-Platz 3 53175 Bonn Bonn, Germany	Dagmar.vonJanowsky@bmu.bund.de
Greece	Ms. ARAVANTINO Mata	Ministry for the Environment Physical Planning and Public Works Office for National Environmental Information System and EEA Patision 147, 112 51 Athens, Greece	m.aravantinou@dpers.minenv.gr
Hungary	Mr. BOZÓ Pál	Ministry of Environment and Water 1394 Budapest, P.O. Boks: 351, Hungary	bozo@mail.kvvm.hu
Ireland	Ms. O'DONOGHUE Lorraine	Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Custom House, Dublin 1, Ireland	lorraine.o'donoghue@environ.ie
Ireland	Ms. Deirdre KIRWAN	PO Box 3000 Johnstown Castle Estate Co. Wexford, Ireland	d.kirwan@epa.ie
Italy	Ms. PASCA Monica	Ministero dell'Ambiente e della Tutela del Territorio e del Mare Direzione per la Salvaguardia Ambientale, Italy	pasca.monica@minambiente.it
Latvia	Mr. BUKSS Aivars	Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Agency, 165 Maskavas Str. Riga, 1019 Latvia	aivars.bukss@lvgma.gov.lv
Lithuania	Mr. NARUSEVICIUS Vytautas	Environmental Protection Agency, A. Juozapaviciaus str. 9, Vilnius, Lithuania	v.narusevicius@aaa.am.lt
Malta	Mr. ZAHRA Antoine	Malta Environment & Planning Authority, St. Francis Ravelin, Floriana, Malta	Antoine.Zahra@mepa.org.mt
The Netherlands	Mr. OUDEMAN Adriaan	Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, International Affairs Directorate, Rijnstraat 8, P.O. Box 30945, 2500 GX The Hague, Netherlands	
The Netherlands	Ms. PELTZER Linda	Permanent Representation of the Netherlands to the EU 48, av. Hermann Debroux, 1160 Brussels, Belgium	linda.peltzer@minbuza.nl
Norway	Mr. HOLDEN Kari	Norwegian Pollution Control Authority Postboks 8100 Dep., 0034 Oslo, Norway	kari.holden@sft.no
Norway	Mr. SCHRODER Jan	County Governor of Hedmark, Postboks 4034, 2306 Hamar, Norway	js@fmhe.no
Poland	Mr. STARCZEWSKI Cezary	Ministry of the Environment, Centre for Environmental Information, ul. Wawelska 52/54, 00-922 Warszawa, Poland	cezary.starczewski@cios.gov.pl
Romania	Ms. MONEA Elena	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, B-dul Libertatii, nr. 12 cod 040129, sector 5, Bucuresti, Romania	elena.monea@mmediu.ro
Slovak Republic	Mr. BENKO Vladimir	Slovak Environmental Agency, Tajovskeho 28, 975 90 Banska Bystrica Slovak Republic	vladimir.benko@sazp.sk
Spain	Ms. Fernández SAN MIGUEL Montserrat	Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs Subdirección General de Calidad del Aire y Prevención de Riesgos C/ Agustín de Betancourt, 25 Primera planta, 28071 Madrid, Spain	mfsanmiguel@mma.es

Spain	Mr. AGUDO Rubén	Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs, Subdirección General de Calidad del Aire y Prevención de Riesgos, C/ Agustín de Betancourt, 25, Primera planta 28071 Madrid, Spain	at_ragudo@mma.es
Sweden	Mr. KYRKLUND Titus	Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, 106 48 Stockholm, Sweden	Titus.Kyrklund@naturvardsverket.se
Switzerland	Mr. GARDAZ Jean-Michel	Federal Office for the Environment – FOEN 3003 Bern, Switzerland	Jean-Michel.Gardaz@bafu.admin.ch
United Kingdom	Mr. LEE David	Defra, Area 5F, Ergon House, 17 Smith Park London SW1P 3JR, United Kingdom	david.j.lee@defra.gsi.gov.uk
COM	Mr MAKELA Timo	European Commission DG ENV.G, BU-9 4/204 1049 Brussels, Belgium	Timo.makela@ec.europa.eu
COM	Mr CLARK Ian	DG ENV.G.3 BU-9 4/191 1049 Brussels, Belgium	Ian.clark@ec.europa.eu
COM	Mr KALFSBEEK Henk	DG ENV.G.3 BU-9 4/176 1049 Brussels,Belgium	Henk.kalfsbeek@ec.europa.eu
COM	Ms PANELI Meropi	DG ENV.G.3 BU-9 4/107 1049 Brussels, Belgium	Meropi.Paneli@ec.europa.eu
COM	Mr WICKS Peter	DG ENV.G.3 BU-9 4/111 1049 Brussels,Belgium	Peter.Wicks@ec.europa.eu
COM	Mr DE GROOF Hugo	DG ENV.G.3 BU-9 4/124 1049 Brussels,Belgium	Hugo.de-groof@ec.europa.eu
COM	Mr RASE Daniel	European Commission DG ESTAT .E.3 BECH C2/613, 1049 Brussels, Belgium	Daniel.Rase@ec.europa.eu
COM	Mr HEIDORN Christian	European Commission DG ESTAT .E.3 BECH C2/617, 1049 Brussels, Belgium	Christian.HEIDORN@ec.europa.eu
COM	Mr RIZZI Daniele	European Commission DG ESTAT .E.3 BECH A3/036, 1049 Brussels, Belgium	Daniele.Rizzi@ec.europa.eu
COM	Mr. CRAGLIA Max	European Commission Joint Research Center	massimo.craglia@jrc.it
COM	Mr. Arno KASCHL	European Commission, DG ENTR, GMES Bureau	Arno.Kaschl@ec.europa.eu