

Implementation of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) principles and practices in the Eastern Partnership Countries

Regional work plan (2017-2019) - Biodiversity

*Prepared by ENI SEIS II East Project Team
European Environment Agency*

2017



Biodiversity

1 Introduction

ENI SEIS II East project ⁽¹⁾ aims at supporting the ENI countries (Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus) in improving national capacity for knowledge-based environmental policy implementation as well as reporting to the international obligations (such as conventions). This regional work plan for biodiversity has been developed in line with these two major objectives in the area of biodiversity.

European Environment Agency (EEA) and the Council of Europe (CoE) are in close cooperation to support the work of the ENI East countries in improving the coverage of Emerald Network sites in the ENI East countries as response to the Aichi Strategic Goal C Target 11 and SDG Goal 15. In that context, the cooperation between EEA and CoE will mainly focus on organizing the biogeographical evaluation seminars for Caucasus and Eastern Europe and also two regional workshops dedicated to reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012) of the Bern Convention.

The European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity, on behalf of the European Environment Agency, will provide necessary expertise for biogeographical seminars and workshops as well as implementing the protected areas indicator as supporting the knowledge-based policy implementation in the countries.

2 Thematic context

Expected main outputs

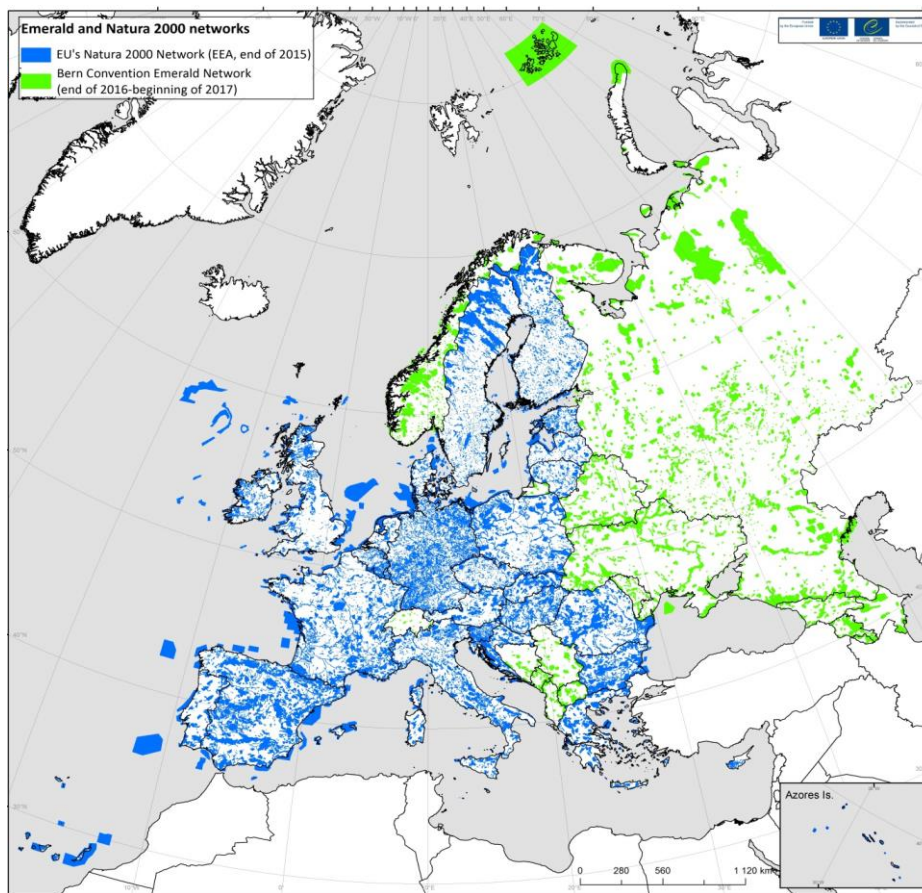
- a) Supporting the work of the ENI East countries in improving the coverage of Emerald Network sites in the ENI East countries as response to the Aichi Strategic Goal C Target 11 and SDG Goal 15.
- b) Improving the capacity of the countries in reporting the data on species and habitats to the Central Data Repository of the European Environment Agency
- c) Production of regionally comparable biodiversity indicators in accordance with EEA and UNECE implementations

The setting up of the Emerald Network under the Bern Convention in ENI East countries is supported by the Council of Europe between 2009-2016 by means of two consecutive joint programmes, co-financed with the European Union. During the latest years, a significant increase in the number of designated areas (Map 1) in the six ENI East countries (579 sites in 2017 against 219 sites in 2012) resulted with an average coverage of protected sites of 12.27 % of the territories of the six countries. Despite this encouraging positive trend in safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity of the Region, it is still far from achieving the Aichi Strategic Goal C Target 11 and SDG Goal 15.

¹ <https://eni-seis.eionet.europa.eu/east>



Map 1: Emerald and Natura 2000 networks



Source: CoE 2016

However, proposing new sites by the national authorities for the inclusion into the Emerald Network requires implementation of a number of technical and administrative processes as briefly outlined below:

At the national scale

- 1- Conducting field survey to potential areas of designation
- 2- Developing distribution maps of targeted habitat types and species
- 3- Compiling ecological and spatial information on the areas to be designated and filling in of the required Standard Data Form

At the regional scale

- 4- Regional seminars for evaluating the sufficiency of the proposed sites

At the scale of the Bern convention

- 5- Submission by national authorities of their proposed Emerald sites for adoption by the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention as Emerald Network candidate sites
- 6- National designation of candidate Emerald sites as Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCI)

The ENI-SEIS East project will provide necessary support particularly focusing on organizing regional seminars for evaluating the sufficiency of the candidate sites and reporting on the conservation status of habitats and species targeted respectively by Resolution No. 4 (1996) and Resolution No. 6 (1998)



of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention. In addition, and based on the available data, developing biodiversity related indicators within the UNECE regional environmental indicators catalogue will also be supported.

3 Detailed description of actions

3.1 Support to national capacities for reporting on species and habitats of European importance to the Bern Convention

Regional workshops on reporting requirements

The first reporting exercise on the conservation status of species and habitats under Resolution No. 8 (2012) of the Bern Convention is going to take place in 2019. The reporting exercise initiates a regular data flow (on habitats and species) from ENI countries to the Bern Convention. The country capacities in using the coming reporting format as well as new reporting tools should be improved before the reporting will take place by 2019. For that purpose, two workshops are planned to be organized in 2018 in a voluntary host country.

The potential content of the workshops is the following;

First workshop on:

- Reporting requirements based on international standards (with a view to the first reporting exercise under Resolution No. 8 (2012) in 2019)
- Training on GIS standards for the production of habitats and species distribution maps

Second workshop;

- Consolidating knowledge and experience acquired during the first workshop on use of reporting formats

Deliverables;

- *18 experts in total (3 national experts per ENI East country) trained on reporting on the conservation status of species and habitats under Resolution No. 8(2012) of the Bern Convention*
- *6 GIS experts trained in making use of international standards to produce habitat and species distribution maps*

Biogeographical seminars on sufficiency assessment of proposed and candidate Emerald Network sites

The designation of Emerald sites (Areas of Special Conservation Interest) and the notification of those sites to the Secretariat of the Bern Convention are under the sovereignty of the Contracting Parties and observer States. However, reviewing the implementation of the Convention and producing the standards in the form of “recommendation” fall in the mandate of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks subject to the further approval of the Standing Committee to the Convention. Once the notification on the new site proposal is submitted by the national authorities to the CoE Secretariat, at the same time site boundaries and other relevant data and information on the proposed area are also reported to the European Environment Agency Central Data Repository (EEA CDR). Afterwards, the Standing Committee assesses the proposed site against the set of criteria for officially nominated Emerald Network candidate site. The sufficiency of the proposed, candidate and adopted Emerald sites is scientifically assessed during the biogeographical seminars. The sufficiency assessment ensures the appropriate approach is in place for ensuring the long term conservation of habitats and species of European interest. Once the scientific value of the site is assessed, the candidate Emerald site is eventually adopted by the Standing Committee as part of the Emerald Network.



On the other hand, regional seminars are the last technical step to be taken in the process for the approval of proposed sites by the Standing Committee. That means, the outcomes of the biogeographical seminars are also supporting the countries to meet their international obligations towards the biodiversity conservation i.e. Aichi targets and SGDs.

Two biogeographical seminars will be organized to assess the sufficiency of proposed and candidate Emerald sites based on the annual reporting of sites from the ENI East countries to the Bern Convention;

- *Scientific sufficiency assessment* of proposed and candidate sites to protect the long term conservation of all species (except birds) in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia
- *Scientific sufficiency assessment* of proposed and candidate sites to protect the long term conservation of bird species in Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine

It is obvious that the harmonization in terms of representativeness of new proposed sites as well as the sufficiency for ensuring the long term conservation of species and habitats of the nominated sites is very important to ensure the consistency at the regional scale. However, a further comparison and harmonization are also conducted on a regular basis between Bern Convention lists of species requiring special conservation measures [Res. No. 4 (1996) and No. 6(1998)] and the EU Habitats and Bird Directives lists of species [Annex II of the Habitat Directive and Annex I of the Bird Directive]. The main aim of this comparison exercise is to keep the Emerald and Natura 2000 networks as coherent as possible, thus streamlining the biodiversity conservation policies at the Pan-European level. In addition, the Emerald Network implementation is helping EU candidate countries to prepare for Natura 2000 implementation and the *acquis communautaire* in this field.

Deliverables;

- Detailed conclusions database on the sufficiency of the Network of sites for each country assessed (for the species and habitats concerned by the Biogeographical Seminars organised)

Helpdesk support in using the Standard Data Form tool for reporting the data to the EEA CDR

The Standard Data Form tool (the SDF manager) is a support tool that may be used by countries for the annual reporting to the Bern Convention on the standard information of the sites and information on habitats and species present in the sites. This tool is an open source application facilitating the countries to report the data to the EEA Common data repository (CDR) and to comply with international reporting obligations. Availability of continuous helpdesk support is needed for countries while they report the data to the CDR and for feedback to the EEA where bugs are identified or where improvements to the tool are suggested. This background support is needed throughout the project period.

Deliverables;

- Documentation of all content related questions to the annual reporting of the Emerald sites are answered to facilitate the reporting process in the ENI countries.
- The data is available on CDR
- The data will be publicly available after the adoption by the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention.



Ensure taxonomic consistency in reporting between the Annexes of the Nature Directives and the Resolution No. 6(1998) of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention.

For the reporting purposes and in parallel to the species names mentioned in the related Appendices of Bern Convention, Annexes to Resolutions No. 4 (1996) and No. 6 (1998) and Nature Directives, a list of common species concepts is maintained. That is a continuous task as taxonomy evolves. The Catalogue of Life is the reference.

Expert support will be provided to ensure the consistency of the listed species' names under the Bern Convention and the Nature Directives.

Deliverables;

- *Scientific species names reviewed in accordance with the list of common species concepts for the reporting purposes*

3.2 Harmonization of methodologies for production of regionally comparable indicator on protected areas (D1)

As mentioned in the Chapter 1.1, ENI SEIS II East project aims to support SEIS monitoring mechanism based on the regionally comparable data and indicators. This process should be underpinned by developing harmonized data, implementing regularly updated and comparable indicators as well as undertaking the assessment on biodiversity state and conservation measures. The first conducted online survey on indicators with the websites of the national statistical agencies and/or Ministries of Environment of the ENI countries has shown that the data for the biodiversity indicators particularly for D1 – protected areas from the list of UNECE regional environmental indicators are already available in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Ukraine. However, further developments are needed to improve the quality of the indicator in line with the EEA/EIONET experiences (e.g. EEA indicator guideline) to support the knowledge-based policy implementation at the national and regional scales.

Supporting the knowledge-based policy process requires the implementation of certain methodologies such as MDIAK to ensure traceability between data and knowledge, designing the data and information in accordance with international standard (e.g. Standard Data Format of the Emerald sites) and also production of comparable D1 indicator in line with the DPSIR framework across the Region.

The priority of implementing the biodiversity indicators will be given to D1 related to protected areas. This indicator should show the evolution in time of the surface area designated at national level, as well as the share of surface area designated per IUCN category similar to EEA indicator of the SEBI 07 (2).

Further on, based on the available data, the remaining biodiversity indicators might also be supported during 2018 and 2019 depending on the resource availability (Table 1).

² <https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/indicators/nationally-designated-protected-areas/nationally-designated-protected-areas-assessment-3>



Table 1: Implementation phases of the UNECE biodiversity indicators

D. Biodiversity	Indicator description	Data production	Glossary of terms	Implementation year by the ENI SEIS II projects
D1. Protected areas (updated October 2014)	PDF	XLS	PDF	2018
D2. Biosphere reserves and wetlands of international importance	Placeholder			n.a.
D3. Forests and other wooded land (updated October 2014)*	PDF	XLS	PDF	2019 (tbd)
D4. Threatened and protected species (updated October 2014)*	PDF	XLS	PDF	2019 (tbd)
D5. Trends in the number and distribution of selected species (updated October 2014)*	PDF	XLS	PDF	2019 (tbd)
D6. Invasive alien species	Placeholder			n.a.

*Subject for availability of the ENI SEIS II East project resources

Two complementary actions have been planned to support the implementation of the D1 indicators in the countries;

- training of the national experts on the implementation of the biodiversity indicators and,
- ad-hoc expert support to the national experts during the implementation of the indicator

Training national experts on developing biodiversity indicators (particularly protected areas-D1)

Half a day meeting will be organized for national experts from all six ENI countries to explain the context of D1 and how to document them at a national level. The meeting will be held back to back with the first regional workshop on Emerald reporting (February 2018). The national experts who are going to be involved in implementing the D1 are supposed to be the same national experts involved in the implementation of the Emerald Network in the countries. Therefore, no additional attendance to the training is considered. Attendance of the national experts to the training will be coordinated with the NFPs of the countries.

Ad-hoc support in implementing the indicators

A helpdesk support will be provided while the national biodiversity experts are implementing the indicator of the protected areas. The ad-hoc support will cover the methodological support in harmonizing and processing the data, computing the indicator as well as undertaking the assessment.

Deliverables;

- *Protected areas indicator is available on the respective national websites.*

4 Cooperation

As the activities will mainly support the further establishment of the Emerald Network under the Bern Convention of the Council of Europe and the implementation of the indicator on the protected areas from the UNECE set of regional environmental indicators, a strong coordination and cooperation will be ensured by both organizations. While the cooperation with the UNECE will be mainly in a voluntary consultation format and ensured by the EEA project manager, the cooperation with the CoE is particularly important for organizing biogeographical seminars and workshops. A memorandum of cooperation between EEA and CoE is in place since 2001. It gives provision for building a formal cooperation with the CoE.



Based on the MoC and in accordance with the letter of request for support received from the CoE, the Bern Convention Secretariat will support biogeographical seminars and workshops in the following means;

- Organization of the biogeographical seminars and regional workshops together with the host country by using National networks of the Bern Convention. That covers –inter alia- helping the EEA in identifying national experts participating to the regional seminars.
- Support to the development of the agenda of seminars and workshops
- Participating to all seminars and workshops by their own costs
- Supporting the moderation in seminars and workshops
- Contributing to the evaluation reports of seminars and workshops
- Ensuring the participation in biogeographical seminars of independent external biodiversity experts



4. Implementation phase

The work plan is covering the years 2017 and 2018 with possible revisions by the end of 2018 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Implementation phases of the biodiversity work plan (Dates are tentative)

Activities	2017											2018											2019
	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Jan.		
Development of regional work plan including the contract with ETC/Biodiversity	█	█	█	█	█																		
First regional workshop including a session on training on GIS standards for the production of habitats and species distribution											█												
Second regional workshop to consolidate knowledge and experience acquired during the first workshop on use of reporting formats																		█					
First biogeographical seminar to scientific sufficiency assessment of Emerald sites proposed by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia for habitats listed in Resolution 4 and species listed in Resolution 6 (except bird species) of the Bern Convention								█															
Second biogeographical seminar to scientific sufficiency assessment of Emerald sites proposed by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia for bird species listed in Resolution 6 of the Bern Convention											█												
Streamlining between Bern Convention (Emerald) and the EU Nature Directives in reporting								█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
Helpdesk support to the ENI East countries in using Standard Data Form tool (SDF manager) for the reporting of their Emerald sites to the EEA CDR								█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
Regional training session for national biodiversity experts											█												
Helpdesk support to computing of- and undertaking the assessment with the D1												█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
Protected areas indicator is available on the respective national websites																						█	



5. Deliverables

5.1 Main deliverables

Activity	Deliverables	ENI East countries	ETC task manager	Council of Europe	EEA	Date
Biogeographical seminars	Detailed conclusions database on the sufficiency of the Network of sites for each country assessed	NFPs and National experts	MNHN* and ILE-SAS**	Marc Hory	Nihat Zal and Mette Lund	30/11/2017 and 30/03/2018
Regional workshops	18 experts in total (3 national experts per ENI East country) trained on reporting on the conservation status of species and habitats under Resolution No. 8 (2012) of the Bern Convention	NFPs and National experts	MNHN and ILE-SAS	Marc Hory	Nihat Zal and Mette Lund	28/02/2018
	6 GIS experts trained in making use of international standards to produce habitat and species distribution maps	NFPs and National experts	MNHN and ILE-SAS	Marc Hory	Nihat Zal and Mette Lund	28/09/2018
Helpdesk support for the SDF tool	Documentation of all content related questions to the annual reporting of the Emerald sites are answered to facilitate the reporting process in the ENI countries.		MNHN and ILE-SAS		Nihat Zal and Mette Lund	30/11/2018
Streamlining between Bern Convention (Emerald) and the EU Nature Directives in reporting	Scientific species names reviewed in accordance with the list of common species concepts for the reporting purposes of the Emerald Network		MNHN and ILE-SAS	Marc Hory	Nihat Zal and Mette Lund	30/11/2018

*MNHN=Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle (MNHN)-France

** ILE-SAS= Ustav Krajinej ekologie Slovenskej Akademie vied – Slovakia



5.2 Key deliverables

Key deliverables	ENI East countries	ETC task manager	Council of Europe	EEA	Date
Database with conclusions of the first biogeographical seminar, including reference lists of species and habitats		MNHN and ILE-SAS	Marc Hory	Nihat Zal and Mette Lund	08/01/2018
Database with conclusions of the second biogeographical seminar, including reference lists of species and habitats		MNHN and ILE-SAS	Marc Hory	Nihat Zal and Mette Lund	07/05/2018
Report on status of development of the D1 indicator		MNHN and ILE-SAS		Nihat Zal	20/11/2018
Protected areas indicator is available on the respective national websites	NFPs and National experts			Nihat Zal	07/01/2019



6. Project team members

Partner	Name and title	Role in the project
EEA	Galina H. Georgieva, Head of Group - European neighbourhood policy activities	Overall execution of the ENI SEIS II East Project
	Jean-Nicolas POUSSART, ENI East project coordinator	Coordination of the ENI SEIS II East
	Nihat Zal, Project manager – water, biodiversity, land	Responsible for the overall implementation of this work plan
	Mette Lund, Project officer - Biodiversity data and information systems	Technical support to the project implementation
	Victoria Goncharova, Project officer- Networking and communication	Contact point for the visibility of project activities
, National assistance *	Day-to-day execution of the communication with partners
ETC/BD	Dominique Richard (EEA/MNHN)**	Administration of the contract with EEA
	Marc Roekaerts (EEA/ILE-SAS)**	Technical and scientific support to the project activities, Indicator development, Helpdesk support
	Otars Opermanis (EEA/MNHN)**	Technical and scientific support to the project activities,
	Lubos Halada (EEA/ILE-SAS)**	Technical and scientific support to the project activities, Indicator development, Helpdesk support
Council of Europe	Marc Hory, Project Officer, Emerald Network European Diploma for Protected Areas Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation – DGII	Coordination with national network of the CoE
	Iva Obretenova, Executive Secretary of the Bern Convention	Coordination with national network of the CoE
Armenia	Julieta Ghlichyan, National Focal Point - Ministry of Nature Protection	Coordination with national biodiversity agencies in the respective countries as the capacity of being NFPs
	Yurik Poghosyan, National Focal Point - Statistical Service	
Azerbaijan	Rena Lazimova, National Focal Point - The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan	
	Ibrahim Museyibov, National Focal Point - Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources	
Belarus	Ekaterina Poleshchuk, National Focal Point - The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus	
	Vladimir Markov, National Focal Point - Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection	
Georgia	Maia Javakhishvili, NFP, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia	
	Vasil Tsakadze, NFP, National Statistics Office of Georgia (GEOSTAT)	
Republic of Moldova	Veronica Lopotenco, National Focal Point – Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Moldova	
	Elena Orlova, National Focal Point - National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova	
Ukraine	Dmytro Averin, National Focal Point - Eastern Ukrainian Ecological Institute	
	Oleg Prokopenko, National Focal Point - State Statistics Service of Ukraine	

(*) National assistances will be included into the list once the names have been identified

(**) Funding of the expertise is provided by the ENI-SEIS II East project based on the service contract between the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the French National Museum of Natural History (MNHN) and the Institute of Landscape Ecology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (ILE-SAS) which are partner organisations of the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity.



7. Assumptions and risks

The deliverables are depending on commitments of the ENI East countries as well as efficiency of collaboration and cooperation between the EEA, CoE and the respective national institutions. In the case of low level institutional commitments to the project activities during the implementation phase, there would be a high risk of failure to achieve the key deliverables. Moreover, unstable political and economic situation in the Region would also pose an additional risk with frequent and sometimes rather extensive changes in the national administrations. The EEA will take the necessary dialogue and communication with the CoE and the National Implementation Teams as well as mobilize the Project Assistants to mitigate the impacts of such risks.

