



The London Group,
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A work plan for the London group 2019-2021

Summary

This paper outlines a draft work plan for the term 2019-2021 in order to continue the transparency and the direction of the work that the London Group can contribute with in the field of environmental-economic accounting.

The strength of the London Group lies in the technical capabilities of the experts attending the meetings thus enabling, among other things, a harmonised approach for quality assured statistics under the framework on environmental accounting.

The current objectives of the London Group are at a technical level to:

- a. support the further methodological development of the SEEA-CF;
- b. support the promotion and implementation of SEEA-CF;
- c. contribute to the further development of SEEA and the Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA-EEA);
- d. provide a forum for the sharing of national and international expertise and experience.

With the push for more data on environmental-economic accounting that are seen globally, regionally and nationally, synergies between different groups that are established in the field, such as the UNCEEA and the Technical committees can provide high potentials for success. The London group can provide assistance to this end.

Setting the London group research and meeting agenda

The past three years have seen the research agenda being set by the London group via the call for abstracts from the group and then discussed at the yearly meeting. From 2018, the revision process of the SEEA EEA started.

The engagement of the LG in the SEEA EEA revision is a vital part of the process. Specific issues, in particular the relationship between the SEEA EEA and the SEEA CF and stronger connections to the economy, via the SNA, will need to be actively considered by the Group.

In addition, there are certain sets of accounts, such as ocean accounts and ecosystem accounts for urban areas, where discussions in the LG would help to advance the research agenda in the longer term. Short abstracts (1-2 pages) are invited, both on general methodological issues and on issues relating to certain types of accounts."

Another new area for promotion, development and implementation is the Sustainable Developments Goals follow up. This policy area calls for environmentally related indicators that can come from the SEEA and analysis on how the various goals are interconnected.

The work plan follows this process for the years 2019-2021:

Timing	Action	What happens?
1 st quarter	Preparing next LG meeting	Calling for papers – research, implementation, extensions and applications including inviting speakers for the SEEA EEA revision process
2 nd quarter	Drafting agenda of the LG meeting	The LG Bureau draft and circulation to LG members
2 rd quarter	UNCEEA meeting	Input from the committee on draft agenda
4 th quarter	LG meeting	The meeting outcome provides direction for next year(s)

1. Introduction

The London Group was created in 1993, as a UN City group¹, to provide an informed forum for practitioners to share their experience of developing and implementing environmental satellite accounts linked to the economic accounts of the System of National Accounts.

Prior to the adoption of SEEA Central Framework by the UNSC in 2012, the London Group was instrumental in pushing the area forward, evaluating methodologies and verifying new achievements, all of it being fed into the SEEA CF. After the completion of the SEEA CF the London Group has focused on exchanging experience and best practices as well as moving the research agenda on the SEEA CF and the SEEA EEA forward.

The past three years the London group has through the integrated work of the group as a whole driven the setting of the agenda. The work on resolving particular issues on the SEEA CF research agenda has been done, e.g. the work on the SDMX/DSD transmission programme, material flow accounts and integrated framework on monetary accounts. New topics on climate change – the fossil fuel subsidies have been taken forward by the group as well.

For the SEEA EEA work, the group has discussed several areas of difficulties, such as conditions of ecosystems, valuation practices and spatial methods.

The sharing of implementation practises and stretching out to new grounds have also been seen in the group. Energy, air emission, water, land and many other issues related to the SEEA have been up for debate and exchanges. New areas have been broached on e.g. green technology, bioeconomy, big data and input-output techniques.

2. A three year work plan

Establishing a work plan facilitates the communication with other groups that work in the field. A work plan has not been available before in the London group but each meeting has evolved and developed with the items currently on the global agenda. The work

¹ <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/citygroup/index.htm>

plan focuses on the coming two years with the mandate of the chair. The UNCEEA is working on a strategy stretching until 2020.

It is not the intention to specify and lock down the topics and tasks but to provide a direction of work and the process involved.

The time plan and coverage:

The initiation of the planning for the meeting in 2019 will take place in the first quarter by a call for papers to the LG on research issues, implementation, extensions and applications. This is a continuation of the current approach for the LG. It is anticipated that the call for papers should be met by a short abstract and the London group Bureau will evaluate the incoming abstracts to build a draft agenda.

The draft agenda will be circulated to the London Group and those abstracts chosen will be given a tentative place on it. The UNCEEA will be given the opportunity to comment and propose changes to the agenda before the meeting plan is final.

With the revision of the SEEA EEA the London group is asked to contribute to that through the link with the national accounts and the SEEA CF.

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The Agenda will cover:

A. Introductions and UNCEEA up-date

The LG will receive information on up-to-date issues from UNCEEA and other related initiatives.

B. Methodological work

The LG will receive an invitation from the Bureau to contribute to the research agendas of the SEEA CF and the SEEA EEA. Short abstracts (1-2 pages) are encouraged to be sent in stating the issue at hand, and solutions proposed specifically for the SEEA CF. With regards to the revision of SEEA EEA another process are foreseen with invited speakers. More information on each topic can found in the links included here:

Research Agenda for the SEEA CF, August, 2018:

https://seea.un.org/sites/seea.un.org/files/research_agenda_seea_cf_2018_2.pdf

SEEA experimental ecosystem accounting revision 2020 – revision issues Note – Final July 2018:

https://seea.un.org/sites/seea.un.org/files/documents/EEA/eea_2020_revision_issue_final_jul2018.pdf

C. Implementation, extensions and policy applications

The LG will receive an invitation to contribute to the implementation, extension and policy applications of the SEEA CF and the SEEA EEA. Short abstracts (1-2 pages) are encouraged to be sent in stating the issue at hand.

Open invitation for the London group to propose SEEA CF and SEEA EEA topics on implementation, extensions and policy applications.

The Sustainable Development Goals statistical follow-up is an important policy area where the London Group can provide its expertise. It can be in the form of supporting the developing of new indicators that are part of the statistical follow-up, such as for fossil fuel subsidies in Goal 12 on Sustainable Consumption and Production. It can also be by applying already established methods such as input-output analysis that is designed to look at how consumption is connected with the production system. Under the Inter Agency Expert Group for Sustainable Development Goals there is a working group on Interlinkages that is working with the area of SEEA on how the statistical systems can provide analyses that ties

environmental and economic targets together. The London group has the potential to answer to the needs of this work.

The work that is on-going in the UNECE task force on a set of core climate change-related statistics is also very relevant for the London group to acknowledge and support. It will also be valuable to reflect on how this work is connected to the SEEA CF and the SEEA EEA.

The process of selecting abstracts

The approach of asking for abstracts was initially based on a desire to increase transparency of topics on the agenda of the group. It was also a way to ensure that the topics on the agenda was current, and what the experts want to discuss, thus ensuring active participation at the meeting.

Two rounds of calls for abstracts have been conducted (2017 and 2018). As such the London group bureau and the larger group is still in the learning phase of its process.

Abstracts of the following categories will be considered:

- A) Abstracts related to topics on the SEEA CF research agenda
- B) Abstracts with concrete questions to the London group
- C) Abstracts shedding light on specific conceptual challenges related to SEEA CF or SEEA EEA or their interlinkages
- D) Abstracts proposing solutions of implementation issues
- E) Abstracts highlighting policy applications and extensions

From the abstracts received, a selection for discussion and potential presentation will be made by the London Group Bureau based on the following criteria:

- Relevance for the session (methodology CF, methodology EEA, extensions and applications)
- Degree of conclusiveness i.e. documents with conclusions are preferable to work in progress
- Potential for application in other countries
- Suitability for a short presentation and a focused discussion (indicatively: 10 minutes presentation and 45 minutes discussion)

The agenda is divided into three broad categories and thus the timing (around 3-3½ days) has to be allocated to them, which sets a limitation to the number of abstracts accepted.