

SEEA EXPERIMENTAL ECOSYSTEM ACCOUNTING REVISION 2020

REVISION PLANNING NOTE

June 2018

Background

This document describes the planned operation of the revision process for the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting. It builds on material provided for discussion to the June 2017 UNCEEA meeting and incorporates discussions with the SEEA EEA Technical Committee meetings.

Main roles in the revision process

There are four main roles to be filled in relation to the work. It is expected that many of these roles are filled by in-kind contributions from relevant organizations but some level of direct hiring of consultants will be required. The main roles are:

- A lead for each of the four research areas, each of whom is a member of the SEEA EEA Technical Committee. The selected area leads are:
 - Research area #1 – Spatial units: Sjoerd Schenau (Statistics Netherlands)
 - Research area #2 – Ecosystem condition: Joachim Maes (EU JRC)
 - Research area #3 – Ecosystem services: Lars Hein (Wageningen University)
 - Research area #4 – Valuation: Rocky Harris (UK DEFRA)
- Four Working Groups of up to 4 members each (including chair) with the selection of members to ensure appropriate involvement of experts from the relevant communities of interest (see annex 1 for the current membership)
- Consultants to prepare materials and documentation (consultants appointed would be members of the relevant Working Groups)
- Broader expert review groups

It is taken as given that there will be an overarching support and co-ordination role played by the UNSD Secretariat and the Editor of the SEEA EEA working in conjunction with the SEEA EEA Technical Committee. In practice, each working group will be supported by (i) the Editor (Carl Obst), (ii) a UNSD staff member, and (iii) a Eurostat staff member representative of the chair of the SEEA EEA Technical Committee (Anton Steurer, Eurostat).

Operation of the Working Groups

Specific terms of reference for the working groups are to be established pending endorsement of this approach. In general terms, it is expected that:

- Working Groups will be established as early in 2018 as possible. As of May 2018 composition of all Working Group have been finalized with the exception of Working Group 1 which is expected to be finalised in June 2018.
- Initial work will focus on extensive clarification and description of the revision issues and engagement of an appropriately broad network of associated experts with the aim of producing a detailed work program and action plan covering how to address the issues.
- First drafts of the programs and plans will be completed by June 2018 after discussion at the Forum of Experts and will then be the subject of discussion by the SEEA EEA Technical Committee whose primary role will be to ensure appropriate coherence and co-ordination across the work programs.
- For those research topics that can be very clearly identified at the beginning of 2018, work should commence on drafting discussion and issue papers as soon as possible subject to resource availability.
- Revision issues will be progressively advanced in line with the work program through to March 2019 and will be one focus of discussion at the next London Group meeting in October 2018 and the focus of the second Forum of experts scheduled for March 2019.

It is proposed that the four working groups operate until April 2019. At that time, an alternative structure will be established with a specific focus on ensuring integration and coherence of the standards.

It is anticipated that at least one member of each working group will be engaged as a consultant to provide capacity for more significant technical input and the preparation of relevant discussion papers in conjunction with the Editor.

It is noted that some consideration is being given to establishing a fifth working group to consider the integrated accounting aspects of the SEEA EEA. Originally this had been intended to be covered by the valuation working group but, on reflection, the areas of expertise and the breadth of topics now appears suitably distinct. Since the discussion of integrated accounting is based on the findings of the other four working groups, this issue will be considered further later in 2018 once progress in the four working groups is better understood.

Expert review groups

Those involved as broader expert reviewers would be expected to provide reviews of relevant research papers and draft chapters and to attend forums. With respect to the involvement of these additional experts, a process to engage experts and communities of interest will commence in December 2017 via consultation on the revision issues to be considered in the process. As part of this consultation, people will be asked to express an interest in participating actively in the revision process and through this we expect to identify a range of relevant experts. We would expect also that members of the Working Groups will know of particular experts in various communities and networks. Through these processes and the participation at the Forum of Experts we would therefore expect to be able to establish, by July 2018, broader review groups in each of the four research areas with whom the working group can engage to seek input and feedback. It would further be expected that the experts

participating in these review groups would be invited to the future Forums of Experts and hence be involved in the discussion of issues beyond a specific research area.

Ensuring coherence

A particular area of concern in the management of the revision process is ensuring ongoing coherence in the advances made within each working group. There are six means by which maintaining coherence will be supported:

- Each working group will commence their consideration of the issues from the two source documents the SEEA 2012 EEA and the recently completed Technical Recommendations in support of the SEEA EEA. Both documents reflect relatively high levels of coherence among the different elements of the ecosystem accounting system and hence all working groups will be starting from a relative coherent base.
- The Editor will be a participant in each Working Group and will be involved in the development of discussion and issues papers, thus providing a single set of eyes over the discussions.
- The lead/chairs of each research area should meet via teleconference every 4-6 weeks together with the Chair of the SEEA EEA Technical Committee, the Editor and the Secretariat to ensure ongoing awareness and alignment of progress and connect all parts of the project to the wide range of meetings, forums and related developments.
- The SEEA EEA Technical Committee itself should meet on a regular basis to consider progress in the different research areas and highlight issues of coherence.
- Regular technically focused meetings, including the expert forums and London Group meetings, will provide opportunities to identify issues of coherence.
- As noted below, it is anticipated that the model of four working groups will operate only until March 2019 at which time an alternative structure will be adopted with a specific focus on coherence. This will limit the potential for significant drift among the research areas.

Also in relation to coherence some specific areas are noted as of particular importance. These are:

- Alignment with the SEEA Central Framework, especially in relation to land use and land cover, and the production boundary in defining ecosystem services
- The development of classifications, especially for ecosystem types and ecosystem services
- Accounting for marine and coastal areas

In each of these areas, it is recommended that the development of the work programs for each research area discuss and incorporate particular activities to support the development of consistent outcomes.

Other matters

At this stage four key technical meetings are envisaged on the calendar of the revision process during 2018 and early 2019. These are:

- April 2018: Workshop on valuation for ecosystem accounting in cooperation with the German Federal agency of nature protection
- June 2018: EEA Forum of Experts, New York (ahead of 2018 UNCEEA meeting)

- October 2018: London Group meeting, Dublin, Ireland
- April 2019: EEA Expert forum

The Expert Forums in June 2018 and April 2019 will be particularly important both from a technical perspective but also in terms of raising awareness and securing participation from a wide range of stakeholders. Further consideration will be given early in 2018 to the precise role and corresponding format of the Expert Forums.

The role of the London Group in supporting the revision process will require further consideration and discussion. There are a number of options including preparation of papers on specific technical issues (deep dive), general feedback on the revision issues and papers, and a focus on case studies and translating accounting experience into the conceptual development. Clarification on the role of the London Group should be established by March 2018 such that preparations for the meeting in October, including calls for papers, can be well co-ordinated.

In addition, it is expected that later in 2018, face-to-face meetings of the working groups and a small number of additional experts may be held to secure advances in the conceptual discussions, building on the discussions at the Forum of Experts and ongoing teleconferences among working group members.

In advancing the work on the SEEA EEA revision, there is a strong desire to expand the range and number of people involved in the process to ensure that technical matters are as well founded as possible and to build as broad a consensus as possible around the accounting treatments.

The relevant experts may be from a range of sectors including the academic community, government and international agencies, non-government organizations, the private sector, including consultants specialising in SEEA and ecosystem measurement, and those involved in related international processes such as IPBES, TEEB and GEOSS EO4EA. In addition, it will be important to take advantage of the expertise and experience of those involved in testing the SEEA EEA at various scales. There are many such projects now in operation and relevant experts should be connected to the revision process to the greatest extent possible.

A separate but important matter for discussion is how best to engage with the user community. The appropriate strategy in this area will be developed in line with the work of UNCEEA.

Through 2019, it is expected that based on the results of the working groups and expert forum meetings draft chapters of the revised SEEA EEA will be developed for global consultation thus going beyond specifically invited experts. This is in line with the usual processes for the development of international statistical standards. The timing and process for global consultation will be determined in the second half of 2018.

Timelines for key tasks and outputs

There has been substantive progress in a number of areas in particular clarifying the substantive issues to be the focus of the revision and in establishing the proposed working group structure to take forward the first phase of research. This section provides a proposed timeline of key outputs and tasks for the information of UNCEEA and to support ongoing planning of the revision process.

Beyond the Forum of Experts in June 2018, key milestones in the revision process will be:

- The Forum of Experts planned for April 2019 and April 2020 which will bring together developments across the four research areas and resolve technical aspects
- Rounds of global consultation on draft chapters from May/June 2019 to October 2020
- Final draft of SEEA EA by December 2020.

In support of this timeline, UNCEEA will find additional context in documents which describe the preliminary outline of the SEEA EA and a short note outlining the main purpose of the SEEA EA.

The following key outputs and tasks are described from the perspective of the overall management of the project. There will be numerous associated tasks and events surrounding ongoing governance (e.g. meetings of the SEEA EEA Technical Committee), the development of discussion papers by working groups, and consultation with wider expert review groups that are not documented here. The timelines for these tasks and events will be managed to work within the key outputs and tasks listed here and are also the subject of current planning discussions.

Indicative timeline for the revision of the SEEA EEA

Date	Key outputs	Key tasks and events
2018		
Jun	Preliminary outline	Forum of Experts, New York (18-20 June) UNCEEA (21-22 June)
Jul	Forum of Experts summary report	Establish broad expert review groups for each research area and establishing priorities and programme of work
Aug		
Sep	Revised outline	
Oct		London Group meeting, Dublin
Nov		Face-face WG meetings (tbc)
Dec	First, "internal" SEEA EA draft – core framework chapters	
2019		
Jan		Completed discussion papers for all revision issues from each research area
Feb	Summary report on findings from research areas – gap analysis	
Mar		UN Statistical Commission
Apr	Forum of Experts summary report including research priorities	Forum of Experts Establish SEEA EA Editorial Board
May	Complete first tranche chapter drafts	Release first tranche chapter drafts for consultation with experts
Jun		UNCEEA
Jul		
Aug		
Sep	Complete final tranche chapter drafts	Release final tranche chapter drafts for consultation with experts Finalise discussion papers on remaining research priorities
Oct		London Group meeting (Australia)
Nov	Complete first consolidated SEEA EA (v1)	
Dec		Commence first round of global consultation
2020		
Jan		
Feb	Summary report on global consultation	
Mar		
Apr	SEEA EA (v2)	Forum of Experts
May		Commence second round of global consultation
Jun		UNCEEA
Jul	Summary report on global consultation	
Aug		
Sep	SEEA EA (v3)	Commence final round of global consultation
Oct		London Group meeting
Nov	Summary report on global consultation	
Dec	SEEA EA Final draft for UNSC	

Annex 1: Working Group members @ May 2018

Research area	Area lead	Working group members	UNSD support
Spatial units	Sjoerd Schenau (Statistics Netherlands) with Edwin Horlings	Roger Sayre (USGS) Francois Soulard (Stats Canada) Douglas Muchoney (FAO) (tbc) IUCN ESA (tbc) NASA (tbc)	Sokol Vako
Ecosystem condition	Joachim Maes (EU JRC)	Amanda Driver (South African National Biodiversity Institute) Heather Keith (Australian National University) Bethanna Jackson (Victoria University, NZ) Balint Czucz (EEA consultant)	Marko Javorsek
Ecosystem services	Lars Hein (Wageningen University, Neth)	Ken Bagstad (USGS) Neville Crossman (Adelaide) Sander Jacobs (INBO, Belgium) Alessandra La Notte (EU JRC)	Julian Chow
Valuation	Rocky Harris (UK DEFRA)	David Barton (NINA, Norway) Juha Siikamaki (IUCN) Jane Turpie (University of Cape Town) Ole Gravgaard Petersen (Statistics Denmark) (tbc)	Bram Edens