

6th Joint OECD/UNECE Seminar on the Implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA)

Online meetings, 9-11 March 2021

CONCEPT NOTE

1. Background

The sixth *Joint OECD/UNECE Seminar on the Implementation of SEEA* will be organised as a series of online meetings on 9, 10 and 11 March 2021.

The aim of the seminar is to provide a platform for exchange of knowledge and experiences on SEEA implementation and to facilitate coordination between all relevant partners in the OECD and UNECE regions. The seminar is organised regularly with a long-term view to support the implementation of the SEEA.

All UNECE and OECD countries as well as other UN member countries can participate in the seminars.

The seminar will be held with English-Russian interpretation.

Documents for the seminar will be available on the Seminar's webpage <https://unece.org/statistics/events/joint-oecdunece-seminar-seea-implementation>.

2. Introduction

Differently from previous seminars the 2021 event will be organised online. This will allow more experts to participate.

Main target audience of the seminar are producers and users of SEEA, including participants from National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and other agencies of National Statistical Systems, line ministries (e.g. environment, agriculture, finance), academia and NGOs. Furthermore, the seminar also targets international organisations which support countries in their efforts to implement SEEA and/or use SEEA for regional and global policy analysis or policy making.

Taking into account the decisions and recommendations of the 2020 seminar, and the increasing role of SEEA in important emerging policy areas, the Organising Committee¹ proposed to focus on showcasing and discussing SEEA policy applications and “storytelling with SEEA”.

Important policy areas which are increasingly informed by SEEA include climate change, circular economy, biodiversity and sustainable finance. Measuring impacts of managing COVID-19 on the environment and the economy is an additional area which could be informed by SEEA.

¹ Organizing Committee: National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus (Co-Chair), Statistics Netherlands (Co-Chair), Australian Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Canada, Statistics Finland, Federal Statistical Office of Germany, Statistics Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan, National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, Statistics Sweden, Eurostat, UNDP Kyrgyzstan, UNSD, OECD, UNECE and Tillväxtanalys.

Producers of SEEA will be invited to present practical national and international examples of using SEEA for these policy areas, and to discuss with (potential) users their specific information requirements.

In addition, the seminar will include a more technical discussion of SEEA waste in the context of circular economy.

It will also inform about relevant international developments and capacity building activities of international organisations and countries in the region.

Participants will benefit from presentations of countries and international organisations. The presentations will be combined with panel discussions and other forms of interactions with the audience (e.g. by using an electronic voting tool and allocating sufficient time for discussions).

3. Organisation of the Seminar

The 2021 Seminar will be organised in form of **three online meetings on 9, 10 and 11 March 2021** with five substantive sessions, which are outlined below. Each online meeting will be held from 13:00 – 16:00 CET (12:00 – 15:00 UTC).

Participants who are interested to give presentations or to participate in panel discussions are invited to contact Daniel Clarke (daniel.clarke@oecd.org) or Michael Nagy (michael.nagy@un.org) by 18 January 2021 at the latest.

Online meeting 1 (9 March 2021, 13:00 – 16: CET)

Session 1: Opening and setting the scene

Session organisers: OECD and UNECE; Seminar chair: Ekaterina Poleshchuk (National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus)

The session will inform about recent global developments of relevance for the region, including progress on the work of the *United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting* (UNCEEA) and a report of the 26th meeting of the *London Group on Environmental Accounting*, which was held as a series of online meetings in October 2020.

The outcomes of the discussion of SEEA Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA-EA) at the 53rd session of the *United Nations Statistical Commission* (2-5 March 2021) will be presented as well. Participants will also be informed about the developments in the context of the update of the 2008 SNA.

Session 2: SEEA Ecosystem Accounts and its relevance in policy and decision making

Session organisers: Australian Bureau of Statistics and UNSD; Session chair: Bhanumati (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation of India)

The objective of the session is to introduce the context and policy relevance of SEEA Ecosystem Accounting, introduce countries to a tool that will allow jumpstarting its implementation using global datasets and showcase country case studies.

The session will be organised in two parts of which the first part will provide the context of the policy relevance of SEEA-EA, and the second part will focus on the compilation of SEEA-EA.

The first part will discuss the policy context of SEEA-EA in particular with the monitoring framework for the *Global Biodiversity Framework* which will be submitted for adoption at the COP15 on Biodiversity in late 2021 and the *IUCN Motion on Accounting for Biodiversity* which was recently adopted and calls for IUCN members to work together with national statistical offices on

the implementation of the SEEA for biodiversity. It will include a panel of leaders in the use of information on biodiversity, discussing the relevance of the SEEA EA in supporting those policy frameworks as well as the SDG and UNCCD indicators.

The second part will showcase ARIES for SEEA, a tool which allows countries to jumpstart the compilation of the SEEA Ecosystem Accounts using global datasets and country case studies. It will include short presentations on the implementation of ecosystem accounts in countries. These presentations will incorporate views on the complexity and challenges with measuring the concepts from the view of the revised SEEA-EA.

The objectives of the session are:

- Increased knowledge about the revised SEEA-EA;
- Present ARIES for SEEA, a tool for jumpstart the compilation of SEEA-EA accounts;
- Share experience in the compilation of SEEA-EA;
- Identify challenges with measuring ecosystems from a national and local scale, and how SEEA-EA can help to overcome them;
- Discuss the role of NSOs in the compilation of ecosystem accounts;
- Show the links between SEEA-EA and the monitoring framework of the Global Biodiversity Framework;
- Showcase the policy relevance of the ecosystem accounts with practical examples.

Online meeting 2 (10 March 2021, 13:00 – 16:00 CET)

Session 3: Measuring circular economy with SEEA, and the role of waste accounts

Session organisers: Statistics Canada, Statistics Finland and the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus; Session chair: Michael Wright (Statistics Canada).

Measuring circular economy with SEEA was first discussed at the 5th Joint OECD/UNECE Seminar on the Implementation of the SEEA in 2020.

The first part of the session will present the outcomes of the '*Conference of European Statisticians (CES) In-depth Review of Measuring Circular Economy*' which was approved by CES Bureau in October 2020². Countries and international organisations will be invited to share their experiences on measuring circular economy with SEEA. Furthermore, participants will discuss how statistics on the circular economy can be turned into a policy narrative.

The second part of the session will focus on the implementation of SEEA waste accounts and how to use them for measuring circularity of flows of materials and products. It will include an introduction into waste accounts and a presentation of national examples of implementation and policy uses. Participants will discuss how waste accounts can be used to the maximum extent possible for measuring the circular economy.

The objectives of the session are to:

- Introduce the publication '*In-depth Review of Measuring Circular Economy*';
- Share experience on measuring circular economy with SEEA;
- Focus on the implementation of SEEA waste accounts and how to use them for measuring circularity of flows of materials and products;
- Present specific cases of waste accounting, including e-waste statistics, and show their linkages with circular economy;

² CES In-depth Review of Measuring Circular Economy:

http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/bur/2020/October/02_In-depth_review_Circular_Economy_approved.pdf

- Identify strengths and weaknesses of SEEA waste accounts and proposals for revision and technical guidance if needed;
- Discuss how SEEA can be used to produce policy-relevant information and stories about circular economy.

Session 4: Using SEEA for policies on climate change and sustainable finance

Session Organisers: OECD, UNECE and UNSD; session chair TBD

Climate change is a key issue on the international, national and local political agendas. Official statistics can provide significant input to the decision-making and the public debate with SEEA being a particularly useful framework, because it covers key thematic areas such as energy, greenhouse gas emissions, financial transactions and more.

The session is divided into two parts - the first part discussing the use of SEEA for climate change policy and the second part focussing on the role of SEEA in sustainable finance concerning climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Part I: SEEA for climate change policy

In 2020, the Conference of European Statisticians endorsed the updated '*CES Set of Core Climate Change-related Indicators and Statistics using SEEA*'³. Over the years various examples of using SEEA for climate change related statistics were presented at the *UNECE Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Climate Change Related Statistics* by NSOs and researchers including SEEA based quarterly emissions, measuring fossil fuel transfers, footprint indicators or illustrating impact of climate change on national comprehensive wealth.

Furthermore, the revised SEEA-EA addresses accounting for climate change in section 13.4. The section discusses how several of the accounts of SEEA-EA, in combination with SEEA-CF, can inform climate policies.

This sub-session will consider the following questions:

- What are the information needs of climate change policy and debate? Where can SEEA best contribute? What are the advantages of information coming from SEEA? How it can complement the formally required reporting following the IPCC guidelines?
- What can be done to promote, support and facilitate the use of SEEA so that it is used more widely to inform climate change policy and debate?
- What should be considered in implementing SEEA to make it most useful in the context of climate change? What to prioritize?
- On what issues SEEA could provide information but more work is needed, e.g. through the research agenda?

Online meeting 3 (11 March 2021)

Session 4: Using SEEA for policies on climate change and sustainable finance (con't)

Part II: The role of SEEA in sustainable finance

There has been an increasing focus on sustainable finance as it has been recognized that the financial sector has a crucial role to play in facilitating the implementation of the climate policy goals, while climate change is a significant risk for the financial institutions. Many initiatives are

³ CES set of indicators and related implementation guidelines:

<https://statswiki.unece.org/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=285216611>

currently taking place in the financial sector aiming to advance this agenda. Particularly important for statistical community are the discussions on taxonomies, definitions and criteria allowing to differentiate and identify spending or investments that are green and sustainable from those that are not, which are needed to produce related statistics e.g. on climate change mitigation and adaptation expenditure.

This sub-session will provide the opportunity to:

- Share information about developments relevant for the SEEA community;
- Consider the impact of the recent and ongoing initiatives for SEEA and official statistics, (e.g. post-COVID-19 building-back better initiatives or the European Green New Deal);
- Identify what SEEA could contribute.

Session 5: Conclusions and recommendations: Storytelling with SEEA

Session organisers: Tillväxtanalys (a Swedish research institute), OECD and UNECE; session chair TBD

The session will highlight the main features of turning data from the SEEA into policy relevant discussions as well as enhancing the use of data by researchers as heard throughout the seminar.

A panel consisting of national and international organisations will discuss the key take-aways and look towards emerging policy and research areas for which SEEA data can be useful, e.g. in the post-COVID-19 society and how the EU Green Deal will emphasise the need for more data linking the economy to the environment.

The session is expected to conclude with some recommendations for better communication and use of SEEA in policy making. The session will also discuss and agree on recommendations for further advancing the implementation of SEEA in the OECD and UNECE regions.