

TERMS OF REFERENCE

For preparing a country report on the assessment of the status and needs of environmental information systems as of August 2001 according to the agreed structure, see below.

For the purposes of this report, environmental information systems are networks of institutions which support the collection, storage, dissemination and accessibility of environmental information to decision-makers and the public. These systems use both electronic tools and traditional mechanisms.

Please, give a brief description of the situation in your country by providing the information requested below. Use this survey as a checklist to make sure that you do not omit any important points. In your answers, provide a short description of the situation or, where information is not available, please indicate as much. Describe the situation at the national, regional and local levels. Describe practices and the legislative framework for those practices separately.

You are strongly urged to **use the most up-to-date, relevant reports, assessments, analyses, strategies and studies** available in your country. If possible, refer to them without repetition, providing consistent citations. Please involve the experts working on establishing best practices in environmental information collection under REReP project 1.6 "Membership with EEA: Regional Information System" and on REReP project 2.2 "Developing Strategies for Implementation of the Aarhus Convention." Please, consult your national EEA focal points and REReP 1.8 steering committee members for the report preparation. Because a detailed report on environmental monitoring and environmental pressures reporting will be done under REReP project 1.6, you do not need to repeat that information here.

When describing the environmental information system and needs, give examples, point out good and bad practices and list innovative solutions. In section II list major problems and needs in your country. Consult the government authorities, information technology specialists and NGO community representatives. With their help, identify the most up-to-date and relevant reports, assessments, analyses, strategies and studies.

The report should be approximately 10 pages, in English and in a standard word-processing format. The report should be sent in electronic form to the Regional Environmental Center, Szentendre, by September 30, 2001. The country offices of the Regional Environmental Center will be responsible for the quality of the needs assessment and its submission.

Structure of the report

I. Status of environmental information systems

1. Background information:

1.1. Describe briefly the role and responsibilities of the relevant authorities (for example, ministries, statistical office, local government) concerning environmental information collection and dissemination. Is there a comprehensive environmental monitoring system in your country. (How is it set up on the national, regional and local levels? What environmental areas are covered? How many databases are compiled and maintained? How is the data communicated from measuring institutions to the environmental information system? Are monitoring results centralised in one database?)

1.2. Describe briefly the needs regarding environment related information of:

- government authorities,
- NGOs,
- business sector,
- academia (kinds of information and format they usually demand, main users of environmental information, tools needed to collect or disseminate environmental information for them).

1.3. Describe briefly the Internet accessibility and telecommunications status in your country (especially, Internet availability in the government).

2. Describe policy responses to the needs to provide environmental information (environmental information comprehensiveness and accessibility) in line with following indicators:

2.1 legal regulations established for environmental information systems, if any

- 2.2. status of the Aarhus Convention ratification, implementation of other relevant international instruments (EC, OECD)
 - 2.3. financial resources available for environmental information system development (any allocations made by the government)
 - 2.4 human resources available for environmental information system development (number governmental personnel devoted for it)
 - 2.5 distribution of environmental information (free of charge or with a fee, is this fee excessive in comparison to average monthly salary?)
 - 2.6. number of monitoring reports published and/or made accessible electronically in the last 5 years
 - 2.7. formats in which monitoring data is presented (what is available electronically, any public access centers in your country, how user-friendly is the data presentation format)
 - 2.8. efforts to reach different stakeholders (NGOs, business, academia, mass media and general public) through distribution of environmental information in diversified formats
 - 2.9. format of the information request (is it possible to request the information via e-mail, for example)
 - 2.10. approximate number of information requests per a quarter of a year and what is the ratio between traditional inquires (via post, in person) and e-mail requests
 - 2.11. accessibility of environmental health information (any public databases compiled and maintained, any ministerial cooperation on making it accessible)
 - 2.12. accessibility of the emergency or army connected environment related information (any public databases compiled and maintained, any ministerial cooperation on making it accessible)
3. State the legal time-frame for answering to the information requests
 4. State legal reasons for information denial (for example, in case of working documents during authorities decision-making process, national security, business secrets, personal data protection, intellectual property protection)
 5. State legal procedures in case of information denial or non-response
 6. Describe environmental information use in the decision-making process (publication of facts and analyses that the state considers relevant and important for framing environmental policy proposals and deciding on national environmental priorities)
 7. Indicate if the environmental information system is organized in an electronic and/or paper databases form.
 8. Indicate the softwares used for electronic databases and the extent of their compatibility with each other.
 9. Discuss the extent of the environmental information system centralization in your country
 10. How often are databases updated? State if it is on-going and automatic.

II. Description of priority needs for environmental information system development

Describe priority needs of the public sector with respect to:

1. Cooperation, the extent of databases sharing and exchange of information among relevant ministries and other authorities
2. Human resources situation in your country (need for information suppliers and user training)
3. Public education, awareness raising
4. On-going and planned international support projects
5. Improving existing institutional framework
6. Cooperation with international organizations and programs
7. Needs in communication and information technologies
8. Legislative framework
9. Estimated financing needs for environmental information system maintenance
10. Methodologies for data integration
11. Other

Try to identify priority needs of NGOs, business and academia for environmental system development as well.

III. Proposed actions in environmental information system development

Propose:

1. Actions for quick improvement
2. Pilot activities

IV. Anticipated main problems and constraints in the environmental information system development

Give basic information on each of your experts (in case of government authorities, her or his organizational unit, role within the unit, primary responsibility, scope of expertise), work details and scope of expertise of information technology experts and NGO representatives.

Note: Cite answers to points from 3 to 5, question on of legislative regulations and procedures, international instruments ratification and implementation of section I that are already covered by other reports, assessments, analyses, strategies or studies.