

Main outcomes of the MAES Ecosystem Condition Workshop of 27-28 June 2017

Introduction

The MAES Ecosystem Condition Workshop was attended by about 90 participants among which there were 20 Member states, stakeholders, researchers and different services of the Commission (AGRI, ENV, ESTAT JRC, MARE, RTD) and agencies (EEA, EASME).

Objective

The objective of the workshop was to develop a common understanding of the analytical framework to be used for assessing ecosystem condition including relevant indicators to support Target 2.

Discussions

The discussions were supported by a comprehensive background document, which had been jointly developed by a so-called technical team involving EEA & ETCs, JRC and ENV. It included proposals for indicators to be used to assess ecosystem condition of nature, agro-ecosystems, forest, freshwater, marine and urban; it also included cross-cutting proposals from soil.

Outcomes

The analytical framework was overall accepted but some refinements were proposed, in line with the example from France, which would allow for distinguishing the capacity to provide ecosystem services from the actual use of ecosystem services, and would therefore build a useful bridge with the accounting work (KIP-INCA).

The indicators were discussed in parallel break-out groups chaired by the different policy units of DG ENV. While the proposed set of indicators was considered as relevant by all groups, some missing ones were proposed (e.g. climate change for all, noise and water in urban) and top priority ones identified (e.g. birds and soil biodiversity for agro-ecosystems), as well as some research gaps on the role of biodiversity in regulating air quality.

Among policy examples that could be used for further testing the framework, and in particular the link between ecosystem condition and ecosystem services, water policy (including wetlands), pollination and links with the Common Agricultural Policy were highlighted. Participants agreed on the importance of not waiting for the full results of assessing ecosystem condition on the one hand, and on ecosystem services on the other hand to start looking at the links between the two already during 2018, in areas where there are more data.

The importance of developing methodologies for selecting, combining and ranking indicators for assessing ecosystem condition in a transparent way was also stressed.

Next steps

following further written feedback from workshop participants, and from the members of the MAES Working Group at their next meeting on 13 September, the objective is to publish by the end of the year a 5th MAES Report on An analytical framework for ecosystem condition for mapping, assessment.

Conclusions

The analytical framework for ecosystem condition is the keystone of the whole action 5 of the EU Biodiversity Strategy. It is therefore crucial to get it right and common to both biophysical and accounting developments.

It is expected to apply the framework with real data in 2018 with a view to deliver an integrated assessment of the state of ecosystems and their services in EU in 2019. It will also be applied for the development of pilot accounts in the context of KIP-INCA.

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