Reportnet

Reportnet is both an infrastructure and a set of web tools for assisting information flows resulting from reporting obligations. It is currently mainly being implemented for reporting to EEA and the open system allows reporting also to other national and international organisations.

Reportnet builds on active use of the World Wide Web. The system makes interoperability of different web services and allows distributed responsibilities.

Reportnet ensures that data reported are immediately available for analysis and in addition, it additionally allows public availability without delay.

It is a contribution to facilitate a shared challenge for European countries to develop networks of institutions and EU Institutions to develop technical and organisational systems which facilitate streamlined, transparent and shared use of information.

EIONET

EIONET (European Information and Observation Network) is EEA’s mature network consisting of administrative and scientific institutions at national level in more than 30 countries. Main focus is on agreements on classifications and standards, IT-solutions, definition of priority data flows, where countries are continuously benchmarked and definition of indicators linking data to policy targets.

EEA

The EEA aims to support sustainable development and to help achieve significant and measurable improvement in Europe’s environment, through the provision of timely, targeted, relevant and reliable information to policy-making agents and the public. Reportnet is an important infrastructure project contribution to full EEA’s objectives.
Reportnet - a shared information infrastructure to support environmental policy making in Europe

EEA and countries are collaborating on Reportnet because the flows of information from countries to the international level, and back again, is important to understand environmental progress. The flows are primarily linked to targets and measures defined in European Union legislation, international conventions and protocols.

Information is needed on issues such as the causes of pollution, the status of biodiversity, the environmental performance of sectors and the effectiveness of actions. Such information is used to describe trends and model futures, thereby helping countries and European institutions to formulate more effective policies.

Reportnet is currently focusing primarily on flows from member states to the EEA. The long-term vision is to develop an infrastructure allowing multiple users at national and international levels access to reported data.

Towards a balanced and efficient reporting system

EU's Sixth Environmental Action Programme (6EAP) recognises the need to revise the reporting system in order to achieve a clearer specification of policy-relevant information needs to increase transparency and to remove overlaps and duplications. The programme highlights that solutions enabling a more transparent and efficient flow should be enabled, and that suitable IT developments should be exploited.

Information flows and indicators

For the EEA and EIONET, most interest in information flows centres on the collection and organisation of data on the state of the environment, and associated driving forces, pressures and impacts. The data provided is used to produce and analyse indicators, including those for assessing the effectiveness of policies. The EEA is currently developing, with countries, a core set of indicators covering:

- Environmental issues: water stress, air pollution, climate change, biodiversity and nature protection, soil and land issues, waste and material flows
- Economic sectors and environment: transport, energy, agriculture, tourism, fisheries

The indicators will be implemented gradually over the period 2004-2008, and will provide the main focus for information flows in Reportnet between countries and EEA.

How can different tools contribute?

Reportnet tools can contribute in several ways to more effective information flows:

- it can provide a catalogue of reporting obligations to the countries planning obligations to the countries’ planning
- it can provide smart software to make data provision by countries easier, more comparable, quality assured and fully audited
- it can store information in one place for easy reference and for achieving over time
- and it can provide the means for countries to user other countries’ information for their own assessment needs.

In these ways Reportnet contribute also to Europe’s eGovernment activities in the environment sector.

Provide once - shared by many: a system for multiple use

Countries also report and work with Eurostat, DG Environment, other DGs, OECD, UN, and international conventions, being major users of reported data. They are also seen to have a shared interest in improving the reporting process.

For the future it will be a joint challenge for the European countries and the international institutions to maintain a coherent infrastructure for information flows. EEA and the member states work together to make Reportnet contribute to this challenge, making information available, so as to maximises it’s multiple use and value.
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Steadily increasing reporting obligations

Reporting obligations agreed between EU and international bodies and countries provide the framework for information flows. This framework has grown in Europe as the Commission and the Member States have agreed reporting requirements for separate laws or sectors, in most cases independently of one another. Member States are also required to respond to a myriad of non-legal (more) obligations, mainly emanating from EEA, Eurostat, OECD and United Nations. Duplication of efforts, together with the lack of a transparent, need-based approach to information flows, have contributed to poor response rates to main reporting obligations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection</th>
<th>Data handling</th>
<th>Product distribution</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reportnet focus</td>
<td>EEA/EIONET assessment processes</td>
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<td>Tools to serve MS, EEA and other institutions</td>
<td>Indicator management tools</td>
<td>Current EEA business processes. The Reportnet tools facilitate flow of environmental data from countries to the EEA assessment and information activities. The Reportnet tools can also serve data flows from countries to other institutions.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Reportnet users - needing streamlining and support

Reportnet addresses people active in the reporting chain from national to international levels.

Users can be classified in different groups based on their roles, such as data definers, data providers, reporting managers, data collectors, and actors organizing assessments and information provision. The tools are designed to meet both national and international needs.

Reportnet offers tools and services to facilitate the data lifecycle for environmental data as required by the European Union. Reporting obligations in Europe are distributed among several institutions, including the European Environment Agency (EEA), the European Commission, and the individual member states. Reportnet tools are designed to help streamline processes, reduce the burden of repetitive tasks, and ensure that data is collected accurately and efficiently.

1. Data definers
   Reporting obligations are agreed at national and European levels. In the work of defining obligations, committees and working groups may get help in Reportnet, where the overall picture of European requirements is built. Reporting obligations are also distributed in national Implementing Regulations, in addition containing standards, nomenclature and definitions of elements and codes for existing requirements. This source material can be controlled and reused.

2. Data providers
   The present focus of Reportnet is to facilitate and streamline data files from providers at national level to the European level. But Reportnet tools will also be available for country internal data flows. National providers need structured information about reporting obligations in order to coordinate data collection. Reportnet provides web interfaces of obligations, detailed technical descriptions of data requirements, network contacts, and reporting of Information flows. Such products and services are used by National Focal Points (NFPs), the EEA’s contact point in each country, in their contact with national institutions, the so-called National Reference Centres (NRCs).

3. Reporting managers
   Reporting managers at both the national and European levels need to keep track of the flow of data. There are specific tools for follow-up actions on reporting, describing what has been deleted, when and by whom. Specifically, EEA and other data definers use the tools.

4. Data collectors
   The EEA and other international organisations receive the delivered data. The deliverables are thematically controlled and providers contacted if discrepancies between the actual and expected content are observed. The data collectors merge national data into European data, supported by the definitions stored in Reportnet.

5. Assessment producers
   EEA and its topic centres (ETCs) are assessment producers at the European level, implementing the core set of environmental indicators. Reportnet contains tools to help develop harmonised specifications of such reporting assessment procedures. EEA is an active participant in the Open Data Initiative and the EEA aims at sharing best practices of how to use data as well as making them available on the EEA platform.

6. Information providers and end users
   EEA is a major provider of European environmental assessments. The production of information products and the provision of those are not directly included in the Reportnet concept. EEA has other specific services, such as the Data Services and the Reference centre, focused on information provision. EEA aims at to keep track of how the reported information is used, as the above table and its producers should be visible in the publications referred to and later.

End users, such as policy makers or the general public can view publications and the environmental indicators on the EEA website. Data will be shown as summary graphical illustrations. Where deliverables are freely available users can access these directly too. Key clients get behind products.

Views from two Reportnet users

Lucyna Dzys - Ciolkowska, National Focal Point, Poland

“Once an EEA reporting data as well as transparency established structure of databases are the advantage of the central data repository solution. Sorting, loading the data and keeping much of obligations and responses are undoubtedly helpful.”

Barbara Clerk, National Focal Point, Germany

“I use the central data repository to deliver Germany’s priority data flows. I find it easy to use. Although I want some improvements for how to add data and it is not easy to find the right area in the tool. I would like to see a table of all data flows and types in the tool. It is very helpful.”

The illustration shows in a generalised form action data providers and reporting managers, in addition to the actors that perform the actions and the data flows among the different levels and the roles they play.
**Reportnet users - needing streamlining and support**

Reportnet addresses people active in the reporting chain from national to international levels.

Users can be classified in different groups based on their roles, such as data definers, data providers, reporting managers, data collectors, and actors organizing assessments and information provision. The tools are designed to meet both national and international needs.

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### 1. Data definers

Reporting obligations are agreed at national, European, and global levels. In the work of defining obligations, committees and working groups may get help in Reportnet, where the overall process of defining takes place. In addition, Reportnet contains standards, nomenclature, and definitions of elements and codes for existing requirements. This source material can be controlled and reused.

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The national institutions in the countries deliver a multilayered set of detailed thematic information.

### 3. Reporting managers

Reporting managers both at European and national levels need to keep track of the flow of data. There are specific tools for follow-up actions on reporting, describing what has been delimited, who has been informed, and by whom. Specifically, EEA and other data requesters use these tools.

### 4. Data collectors

The EEA and other international organisations receive the delivered data. The deliveries are thematically controlled, and providers contacted if discrepancies between the actual and expected content are observed. The data collectors merge national data into European data, supported by the definitions stored in Reportnet.

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<td>Information providers</td>
<td>End users</td>
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</tbody>
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### The Reportnet tools

In order to ease the work, standard data template files are provided. Reportnet is also developing various other standardised validation reports back to the provider, thus alleviating the burden of tedious work.

A major contribution from Reportnet is the standardisation and storage facility for deliverables - offered through the central data repository. Data providers need a common place to store the requested data, and a service immediately verifying that data are transferred.

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### Views from two Reportnet users

**Lucy Anne Dygge - Polish Environment Agency, Poland**

"One advantage of an EEA reporting data set as well as transparency established structure of deliverables are an important advantage for the central data repository solution. Seeing, loading the data and seeing much of obligations and responses are undoubtedly helpful."

**Barbara Klein, National Focal Point, Germany**

"I use the central data repository to deliver Germany’s biennial priority database. I find it easy to use. Although I want some improvements for how to add data, the tool itself is already a major plus. By using Reportnet tools get immediate access to its products, such as the cutting edge report. As a data reporter, I get to see what happens to my data that is in a virtual level, data provided need to follow the information that are not just end in a sheet."

"As other European and international organisations begin to use Reportnet as well, it will make it much easier for all players in the reporting process and provide multiple reporting."

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### 5. Assessment producers

EEA and its topic centres (TECs) are assessment producers of the European level, implementing the core of environmental indicators. Reportnet contains tools to help procure harmonised specifications of such repetitive assessment procedures. This enables the comparison of products and allows the dissemination of tested and validated products through Reportnet, which are to a large degree also based on other sources.

### 6. Information providers and end users

EEA is a major provider of European environmental assessments. The production of information products and the process of those are not directly included in the Reportnet content. EEA has other specific services, such as the Data, Services and the Reference centre focused on information provision. EEA acts as to keep track of how the reported information is used, as the source data and its producers should be visible in the product offered to end users.

End users, such as policy makers or the general public can view publications and the environmental indicators on the EEA website. Data will be shown as summary graphical illustrations. Where deliverables are freely available users can access these directly too. Key clients get behind products.
The Reportnet tools include central web services to facilitate flows and use of information.

**Reportnet Obligations Database (ROD)** - legal basis and agreements for reporting

National organisations are kept informed about their obligations - legal basis and agreements for national deliveries. The central data repository provided by Reportnet makes it easy for EEA, its member states, and the reporting chain - information providers, reporting managers, analysers, and disseminators - to deliver data and national performances. The central data repository provided by Reportnet makes it easy for EEA, its member states, and the reporting chain - information providers, reporting managers, analysers, and disseminators - to deliver data and national performances.

**Data Dictionaries (DD)** - what is to be reported

The Data Dictionary (DD) is a central storage for the technical specifications of data requested in reporting obligations. It provides countries with detailed specifications of what to produce and report in a comparable way; data file structures, detailed specifications of what to produce and report in a comparable way; data file structures, data to central storage at EEA. The Data Dictionary (DD) provides countries with detailed specifications of what to produce and report in a comparable way; data file structures, detailed specifications of what to produce and report in a comparable way; data file structures.

**Data Exchange Modules (DEM)** - tools for checking and sending data

Countries make some deliveries using Data Exchange Modules (DEMs). These are partly standard electronic tools reported in quality assurance, drawing on the data specifications on the Data Dictionaries. The data being exchanged are sent to EEA using these DEMs. They provide functionality for importing data in popular formats, or alternatively allow direct input. DEMs also package datasets, and upload them to national data repositories. DEMs currently exist in the form of an XML and XDR format, but generic tools are planned.

**Data Repositories (CDR)** - places for storing data

The data repository is the location where the deliveries of data from countries are stored. There is one Central Data Repository (CDR) in each country, and these are linked to each other via the Data Service. CDR is a current management system providing facilities for update, download, exchange and tagging with meta-information. National data repositories exist in a few countries.

**Network Directory (ND)** - who is involved - roles

The Network Directory (ND) is a database that helps find people, organisations, and roles in the reporting chain - information providers, reporting managers, analysers, and disseminators - at European and national levels. The directory contains information about organisations, users, and roles involved in the reporting process. The directory provides a way to access information on organisations, users, and roles involved in the reporting process.

**Data Exchange Infrastructure (DEI)** - technical requirements

The technical requirements. The tool, currently under development, also provides algorithms needed in data validation and serves as a reference for users.

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Reportnet tools - interlinked web services to facilitate flows and use of information

The Reportnet tools include central web services with a set of intelligent data systems behind. Member states are active participants in the development, securing that tools are tailored to their needs.

The Reportnet tools provide national institutions with - the reporting obligations and the resulting activities - data specifications clarifying technical requirements - data capture tools for easing the assembly of data - exchange mechanisms for delivering data easy, efficient and transparent - validation tools for data accuracy

Other tools provide overviews on national deliveries, useful for reporting managers at both national and central levels.

The central data repository provided by Reportnet makes it easy for EEA, its topic centres and users from other environmental networks to access national deliveries.

Reporting Obligations Database (ROD) - legal basis and agreements for reporting

National organisations are kept informed about deadlines for expected deliveries in the Reporting Obligations Database (ROD). This is the central data repository provided by Reportnet. The data is stored in EEA’s central data warehouse. The network of central data repositories in national institutions with RODs is active partners in the development, also providing algorithms needed in data processing. The tool, currently under development, also provides algorithms needed in data validation and serves as a reference for users.

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Data Services - a functional basis for creating indicators

The Reportnet architecture builds on active use of technical standards - in particular XML - and standardisation initiatives to facilitate the work towards agreed definitions on environmental information. The strategic priority for EEA has been to create a suite of actions for producing indicators. The central data repository provided by Reportnet makes it easy for EEA, its topic centres and users from other environmental networks to access national deliveries.

Network Directory (ND) - who is involved - roles

The Network Directory (ND) is a database that helps find people, organisations, and their role in the reporting chain - information providers, reporting managers, analysts, and observers at European and national levels. It includes links to European and national web services with a set of intelligent data systems behind. Member states are active participants in the development, securing that tools are tailored to their needs.

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Content Registry (CR) - what has been delivered and is thus available

Deliveries to the international reporting system are kept track of through the Content Registry (CR). The CR is a central data exchange, also providing algorithms needed in data processing. It is therefore a prerequisite for effective handling.

Standards - a requisite for effective handling

Standards are the essence of an information infrastructure. In order to achieve effective flows of data, standards have to be followed. By working towards standardisation through membership of agreed European standards, EEA therefore participates in standardisation and shared infrastructure initiatives, e.g. INSPIRE for spatial data, as well as coordinating European work towards agreed definitions on environmental issues.

This component of Reportnet and the main data flow. The lower, white circle illustrates exchange and validation components, the outer ring the main tool data flow.

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