The Escazú Agreement: a pathway to developing an Environmental Information System (EIS)

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Basic facts

- **First regional environmental treaty** of Latin America and the Caribbean
- Creation and strengthening of capacities and cooperation
- Article 6: Generation and dissemination of environmental information

Adopted in Escazú (Costa Rica) on 4 March 2018
Entered into force on 22 April 2021

- **24** have already signatories
- **13** ratifications
  (OECS: Antigua and Barbuda, Guyana, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia)

Facilitating **policy** formulation, **technical** cooperation, training and **capacity-building**, strategic **advocacy** and awareness, joint **studies**, publications, reports and analytical work and promoting a **green recovery** COVID-19
Underlying basis of the Escazú Agreement

Environmental issues are best handled with the active participation of all concerned.

Access to environmental information is critical for sound policy-making.

Environmental harm must be prevented and remedied.

Regional cooperation is key.
Salient features of the Escazú Agreement

- Achieving a healthy environment and sustainable development
- Rights-based
- People-centered
- Leave no one behind
- Capacity-building and cooperation

Environmental dimension of sustainable development

- Generation and access to environmental knowledge and information
- Meaningful engagement of all sectors of society
- Redress and remedy against environmental harm

Special consideration of Small Island Developing States

Implementation support

Progressive realization
Environmental information

**Art. 5 Access to Environmental Information**

**Accessibility of Environmental Information**
- Right of access to environmental information in possession, control, or custody of the state.
- We have the right to:
  - Request information from authorities without mentioning an interest or giving reasons.
  - Receive such information promptly.
  - Challenge its non-delivery.
- Pay attention to persons or groups in vulnerable situations.

**Refusal of Access to Environmental Information**
- Access to information may be refused in accordance with domestic legislation.
- The reasons for refusal shall be legally established in advance and be clearly defined and regulated.
- When the information is not provided, the authority must notify in writing.

**Conditions Applicable to the Delivery of Environmental Information**
- In the format requested by the applicant, if available.
- Respond to request as quickly as possible.
- This period may be extended with due justification in writing.

**Independent Oversight Mechanisms**
- One or more impartial entities or institutions to promote transparency in access to environmental information.
- It shall be disclosed at no cost, insofar as its reproduction or delivery is not required. Such costs shall be reasonable and made known in advance, and payment can be waived.

**United Nations, 2021**
Environmental information

**ART. 6**

**GENERATION AND DISSEMINATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION**

- **Ways to Disseminate**
  - Culturally appropriate media formats
  - Water, land, and soil information
  - Subsidy and waste
  - Accessible
  - Easily comprehensible

- **Access to Information**
  - TRY TO ENSURE THAT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES AND IN COMPREHensible AND ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

- **Institutions**
  - In case of imminent threat to public health or the environment, institutions shall take necessary actions
  - To prevent and limit damage
  - Encourage company sustainability reports
  - Archiving and document management systems
  - Independent environmental performance reviews
  - Files must be stored to avoid being lost

- **Environmental Information Systems**
  - Environmental information systems
  - Pollutant release and transfer registers

- **Read the Agreement**
  - Get to know the Observatory

**ECLAC**

**United Nations, 2021**
Benefits of an EIS:

1. Provide the OECS region with a comprehensive platform to access data, which will allow integrated planning, impact assessments and risk analysis for national and regional development.

2. Display information publicly on a range of interests to support policy and decision-making dialogues on environmental management, social and economic issues; and facilitate public and special interest group validation at the national to international scales.

3. Identify trends (e.g., levels of pollution, population, waste disposal, uptake of renewable energy etc.) that can be categorized for prioritization of actions.

4. Serve as one-stop-shop and searchable portable for information that can be used to track areas of interests and develop strategies to minimize or mitigate negative trends.

5. Facilitating reporting obligations; avoiding duplication; ensuring consistency; and cost-effectiveness
OECS endorsed road map for an EIS

**CLUSTER**

**I Content Assessment** (availability and inventory)
- National data availability assessments (Environmental Statistics Assessment)
- Inventory proposal for EIS based on data availability and selected indicators (Climate change and disaster pilot)

**II Structure and Governance Arrangements**
- Policy Brief and COMES[8] decisions
- Develop an OECS data sharing protocol (OECS | Member States)
- Mapping of national-level actors and institutions and development of national coordination schemes

**III Logistics** (Implementation)
- EIS IT/technical requirements; OECS capacity assessment; Implementation proposal
- Implementation - including training and communication

**EISAT**
- Part I Institutional dimension
- Part II Statistics assessment
Cluster I: Content Assessment with national counterparts – Steps

**Previous diagnosis & workshop preparation**

Work along with the country to fill up the self-diagnosis of availability of environmental data (Global Set + ESSAT)

Coordinate with the Focal Point for logistics of virtual workshop
- Statistic Office
- Environmental Authority

**Live workshops and exercises**

Targeted audience (producers and users): NSO, Ministries, Environmental Authorities, Disaster Risk Reduction/ Emergency authorities, sectoral authorities, universities, research centers, and private sector

3 days of Workshop (3 hours per day)
Based on initial self-diagnosis
Methodological presentations on statistical techniques. Practical exercises / Group works - Build indicators / Develop methodological sheets
Participants receive a certificate

**Follow-up activities**

Review the methodological sheets of the indicators built during the Workshop, and provide feedback
Develop a report where the availability of national information is evaluated and synthesized
Strengthened further indicators selected by the country
Secretariat – Escazú Agreement
Sustainable Development and Human Settlements Division
United Nations, ECLAC

http://www.cepal.org/en/escazuagreement
http://observatorioriop10.cepal.org