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

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Basic facts

Adopted in Escazú (Costa Rica) on 4 March 2018

Entered into force on 22 April 2021

- First regional environmental treaty of Latin America and the Caribbean
- Ultimate aim: to protect the right of present and future generations to a healthy environment and to sustainable development
- Creation and strengthening of capacities and cooperation

24 signatories (6 OECS) (Dominica)

13 ratifications
(4 OECS: Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)
Underlying basis of the Escazú Agreement

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

Generation and 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

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
- 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

Independent Oversight Mechanisms

- One or more impartial entities or institutions to promote transparency in access to environmental information
Environmental information
EIS under the Escazú Agreement

- One or more systems
- Up-to-date
- Duly organized
- Accessible to all persons
- Made progressively available through information technology and georeferenced media, where appropriate

Possible content:
- Reports on the state of the environment
- List of public entities competent in environmental matters
- List of polluted areas, by type of pollutant and location
- Information on the use and conservation of natural resources and ecosystem services
- Climate change sources aimed at building national capacities
- Information on environmental impact assessment processes and on other environmental management instruments, environmental licences or permits granted by the public authorities
- Estimated list of waste by type and, when possible, by volume, location and year
Why an EIS in the OECS?

(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 monitor and 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 EIS structure

Proposed OECS sub-REIS

- Antigua & Barbuda
- Dominica
- Grenada
- St. Kitts and Nevis
- Saint Lucia
- Saint Vincent & the Grenadines
- Anguilla
- Br. Virgin Islands
- Guadeloupe
- Martinique
- Montserrat

OECS REIS Data Hub

Potential linkages with regional platforms e.g. UNEP-ROLAC/CARICOM

MEA Indicators ➔ MEA Reporting

Progress Measures ➔ SGD2040 Reporting

SDG Indicators ➔ SDG Progress Reports
## OECD endorsed roadmap for the EIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLUSTER</th>
<th>ACTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I Content Assessment (availability and inventory)</strong></td>
<td>National data availability assessments (Environmental Statistics Assessment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II Structure and Governance Arrangements</strong></td>
<td>Inventory proposal for EIS based on data availability and selected indicators (Climate change and disaster pilot)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III Logistics (Infrastructure and implementation)</strong></td>
<td>Policy Brief and COMES decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop an OECS data sharing protocol (OECS</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Mapping of national-level actors and institutions and development of national coordination schemes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EIS IT/technical requirements; OECS capacity assessment; Implementation proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implementation - including training and communication</td>
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</tbody>
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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
By enhancing access to data, knowledge, and information, and by engaging vulnerable groups, it upholds fundamental values of democratic life and fosters responsive public policies.

When the agreement enters into force and is implemented, countries will be better placed to preserve their strategic natural heritage through more inclusive and community-oriented actions.
Secretariat – Escazú Agreement
Sustainable Development and Human Settlements Division
United Nations, ECLAC

http://www.cepal.org/en/escazuagreement
http://observatoriopi0.cepal.org