Regional reporting: European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet)

Background

The 38 member and cooperating countries of the EEA regularly report data on the state of their water bodies through its e-reporting infrastructure, Reportnet, as part of existing reporting obligations under different EU directives (especially the WFD) and annual state of the environment reporting. These data feed into the Water Information System for Europe (WISE) and form the basis for pan-European water quality indicators and assessments. Following the **request** of several European countries **to reuse existing regional data flows** for SDG indicator 6.3.2 reporting to reduce reporting burdens and harmonize results, the EEA and UNEP have developed and piloted a methodology to calculate indicator 6.3.2 data for European countries based on **annual averages of selected core parameter concentrations** for surface-water bodies and groundwater bodies available in WISE.

Method

Indicator results were calculated in a two-step process:

Step 1: EEA calculated for each monitoring station and water body an **annual statistical water quality classification** for selected water quality parameters for the period 1992–2018, based on annual average concentration data available in the EEA Waterbase database. The pan-European **quintiles** of parameter concentration levels were used as target values for classification into five quality classes.

EEA published the resulting data and accompanying analytics through several online dashboards for review and further processing.

Step 2: The indicator 6.3.2 help desk used the fortieth percentile to further classify each water body into "good" or "not good" quality status, using a "one out, all out" approach for the 2017 and 2020 reporting periods covering the time periods 2013–2015 and 2016–2018, respectively. After further aggregating to River Basin Districts (as defined in the WFD) and to country levels, the results were shared with the countries for review, adoption or replacement with their own indicator data.

Link to full story here:
https://communities.unep.org/display/sdg632/Documents+and+Materials

Outcome

Using the harmonized methodology, indicator data for 36 European countries were calculated, ranging between 0 per cent and 100 per cent of assessed water bodies with good quality (on average **76 per cent for the 2017 reporting period and 79 per cent for 2020**). Extremely low and high indicator values occurred most often in countries where there were few monitoring data available.

The quality status of the assessed groundwater bodies was considerably lower (49 per cent on average) and showed a decrease between reporting periods compared with the assessed surface waters, which showed a slight increase. For the groundwater bodies, only nitrate data were used due to data availability, and the fact that the applied target value of 6.8 mg NO3/l is relatively low compared with the European standard of 50 mg/l, resulting in many groundwater bodies being classified as "not good".

Out of the 23 European countries that were covered by the pilot study and had an official indicator focal point, 14 approved the pilot data, four countries provided their own reporting data and five are pending review (April 2021).

Future

The pilot study provided insights into the **opportunities** and **challenges** of reusing existing reporting data at the European level. These will be used to further **evolve** the methodology and feedback process with countries.

Data availability could be further enhanced by including WFD reporting data covering a wider range of water bodies and parameters (Level 2 reporting). The selected "one out, all out" **classification approach** could be replaced with an averaging approach more in line with the general indicator methodology, reducing the impact of single parameters and increasing comparability with reporting data from other regions.

Countries requested more time for the data review and the possibility of modification of selected target values. This could be achieved by **establishing a dedicated Reportnet reporting process** that is harmonized with existing reporting obligations.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS