Infrastructure and tools for a European environmental information system – the contribution through Reportnet

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Abstract:

In 2001, the European Environment Agency (EEA) adopted an updated strategy providing policy relevant information through a shared European Environmental Information System (EEIS), reorganised to implement it, and brought forward an extensive discussion on the IT solutions that should underpin Reportnet.

In short, Reportnet is a suite of tools required for the information infrastructure for the e-EIONET part of EEIS. One can then see Reportnet as part of EEIS, but scaled up to serve the entire environment sector, as appropriate, and agreed with the stakeholders.

While the EEIS and Reportnet scope and goals are still under discussion and the consultation process between the stakeholders has just been started, several e-EIONET projects are already producing components that can become the building blocks in this emerging shared information architecture.

The paper explains the approaches, which have been taken on key infrastructure issues like exchange formats and protocols, on metadata harmonisation, on registries for data definitions and XML schemas and on the establishment of European data warehouses for environmental data. Another issue is how the country deliveries under the available reporting obligations are being fed into such a system, allowing for their best possible re-usability. It also shows how guiding principles like a layered architecture or usage of open source are being implemented.

In the EIONET, ten areas of priority data flows have been identified. How Reportnet tools are implementing the above mentioned infrastructure standards into tools, supporting these data flows, is presented using selected examples.

Finally, the paper aims at clearly showing the linkages to the eEurope initiative and it reflects on some problems that have been encountered while helping to facilitate parts of this strategy.