Requirements of and developments by the EEA for classification systems relating to European habitats, land cover and landscapes

Ulla Pinborg, European Environment Agency

1. Some important aspects of the EEA's working area

- expansion of the geographic area covered by EEA work :

  With the EEA expected to grow over the next few years, to possibly include 37 countries, the EEA can be seen to be expanding faster than the EU.

- the scale involved is that of the European 'use' scale :

  It is those scales at which environment data and information is used across the European countries that are the scales for the EEA work. Much of this use of data and information is on a 'landscape scale'.

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- what type of activities is it that the EEA undertakes? :

  The EEA principle activities concern environmental reporting to decisionmakers, based on targeted data collection and coordination of dataflow. Thus, EEA relies on ‘research’ and ‘monitoring’, but does not directly undertake such activities.

- MDIAR and DPSIR are important aspects of the EEA work :

  The Monitoring, Data, Information, Assessment and Reporting value chain and the Driving Forces, Pressures, States, Impacts, Responses framework are important concepts within EEA work.

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- the ‘EEA year’ :

  A central task for the EEA is to provide the Environmental Signals Reports in time (June) before Commission preparation of EU Spring Councils, (February). EEA Reports related to evaluation of the EU Environmental Action Programmes and to the Environment for Europe process (next meeting in Kiev 2003) are also key aspects of EEA work.

- the EEA reporting and harmonisation :

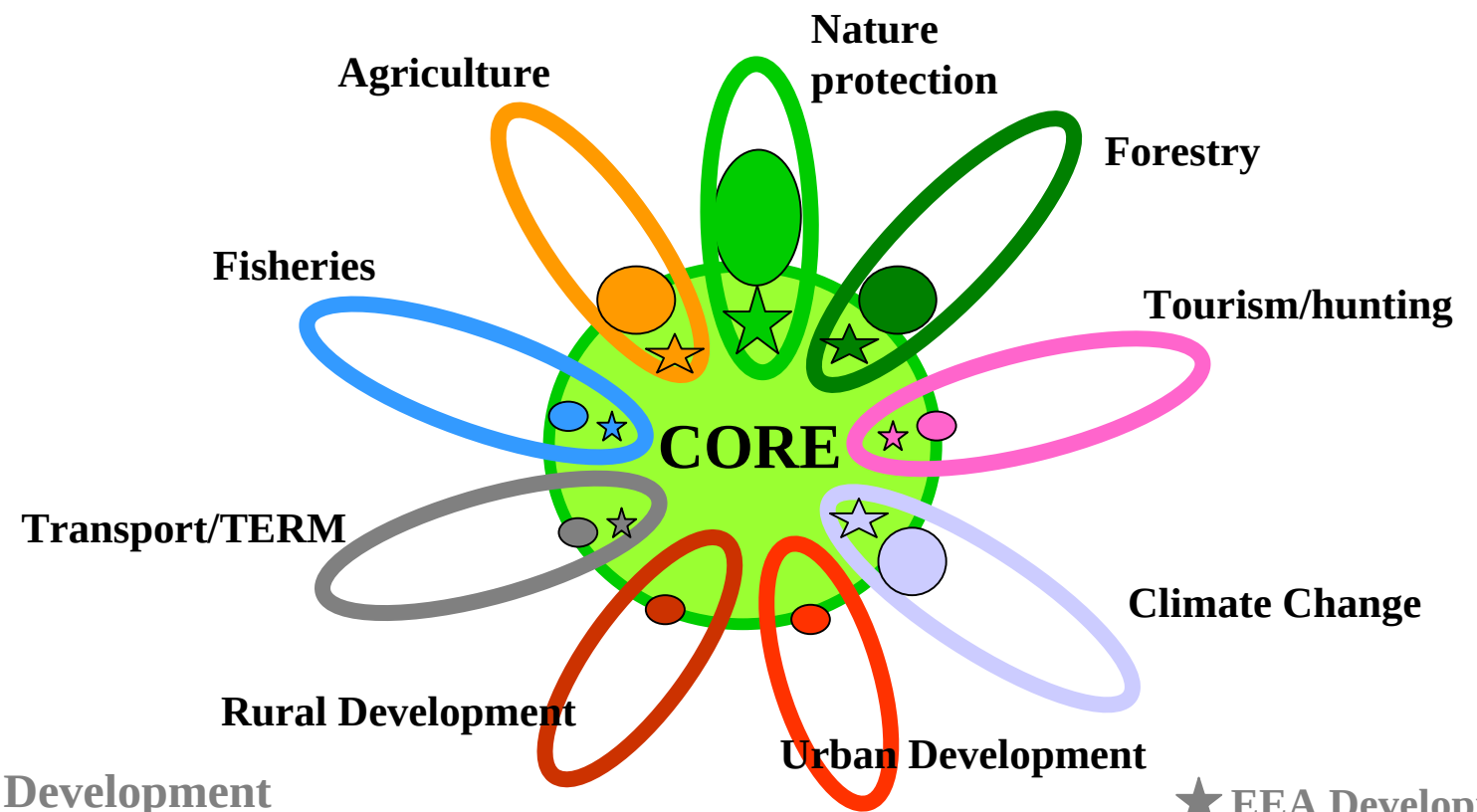
  In making these reports, a crucial task is harmonisation of data. This relates to different spatial units, depending upon different conventions, e.g.:

Bern Convention, EU Habitat Directive:	biogeographical regions
EU Water Directive:	catchment area regions

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Biodiversity Indicators - EEA CORE touches many issues



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2. EEA data sets and classification systems

- CORINE Land Cover :

  CLC is the most used EEA spatial data set. The CLC data are often used in analyses outside of the CLC own hierarchical class structure, providing maps of specific themes, such as ‘forest’ or ‘wooded’ areas, fragmentation of land and proximity of protected areas to pressure from land use. CLC is entering its second data collection round, based on satellite images from 2000 (Image 2000). Making the CLC classification more detailed is being tested

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- EUNIS Habitat Classification :

  EUNIS represents a flat system in terms of its database, but has a hierarchical presentation in the form of a classification with definitions of class units. Thus, in terms of use of the EUNIS habitats database, different hierarchical and non-hierarchical class structures can be derived. The Classification is available on the web, the database to come in 2002

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- the challenge for EEA data and its use of classification systems :

  The EEA analysis and presentations in reports are based on indicators. A major focus of further development for the EEA spatial work is producing analyses and indicators based on combined CLC and EUNIS habitat classes: for example, to derive data for EUNIS grassland habitats and forest types aggregated from conversion of CLC data to habitat data or to provide a picture of CO2 sink properties of the landscape, based on forest distribution.

3. For further EEA information, see :

EEA homepage	http://www.eea.eu.int/
EEA use of CLC	http://www.natlan.eu.int/
EUNIS Habitat Classification	http://mrw.wallonie.be/dgrne/sibw/EUNIS/home.html
EEA use of CLC and EUNIS habitats	http://natlan.eea.eu.int/applications.htm
EEA all present public indicators	http://themes.eea.eu.int/all_indicators_box