



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

UN WATER  
Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6

## TECHNICAL WEBINAR ON INDICATOR 6.3.2

Concepts and methodology for collecting water quality data to enable reporting of the ambient water quality indicator

### **Questions - Technical Webinar on SDG Indicator 6.3.2 Tuesday 6 June 2017 – English Webinars(E1)**

**(Question 1) Are we still in a pilot-test phase or is this already the first real data delivery in 2017?**

The Proof-of-concept phase has finished and we are hoping to get the first data collected this year. We are requesting to receive the data by 31 July 2017, but we realize that this is very short notice, but for some countries it may be possible. We are really now into the first round of reporting but the methodology may be refined in coming years as countries gain experience in using it and we get feedback from this baseline data collection process.

**(Question 2) The size of water bodies may vary from state-to-state. Would it not be better to reference on length of water bodies/rivers network?**

We have discussed this approach intensively. It would be better to scale the assessment of water bodies by size but we have decided against it, at least during this reporting period in 2017, in order not to stretch countries too much in terms of the additional data being required. It was a question of whether the countries would have the information on the size and length of the respective water bodies immediately to be able to scale the assessment by water body size. This might be included in the future update of the methodology, because from a methodological point of view it makes sense to improve the comparability across borders.

**(Question 3) Is it possible to report with less than five core parameters for Indicator 6.3.2?**

In the indicator methodology, we request five core parameters for surface water bodies and three for groundwater bodies, respectively, assuming that most countries would be able to monitor those that are specified in the methodology. We hope that most countries would be able to report on all five core parameters for surface waters and, if at all possible, countries should aim at using all five parameters in the indicator calculations. In principle, fewer parameters can be used but this will reduce the comparability, so we discourage this.

**(Question 4) We are monitoring nitrates in ambient water. Can we report on Nitrates instead of Total Oxidized Nitrogen (TON)?**

While we recommend the use of TON for surface waters because the method is easier, it is up to countries to decide which nitrogen fraction they actually use. Hence, it is perfectly acceptable to use nitrates instead of TON and we leave the decision on the nitrogen analysis method up to the countries. Although it will reduce the comparability somewhat, overall it should give a comparable picture provided countries give the required details for the parameter in the reporting template .

**(Question 5) How is comparability of data delivery ensured when target values are set by each state in a different way and water bodies are designated by states without a common methodology?**

Unfortunately there are no global standards with respect to common globally applicable ambient water quality target values in place. Given the fact that water quality is also very site specific and region specific, during the indicator development it was decided that it should be left up to the countries to decide on the target values to be applied. Countries can use national target values and they can also adapt them to specific water body types or to specific water bodies, if necessary. In many countries there may be legal implications because at national level there might exist already certain water quality standards that might differ from universally-set standards. This entire indicator methodology is work in progress and while we hope that in the future we will continue and finally achieve a common structure of deriving ambient water quality standards, at the moment this is not in place. Comparability of results can only be achieved to certain level with this approach.

**Comment: In 2017 the latest available date are from 2015**

Data from the last three years can be used and the dates will be recorded in the data template.

**(Question 6) Our nation has no district river water uses. Can we use one target value for all water bodies?**

Absolutely. It is up to the country to decide at which level they want to set target values. At the national level for all water bodies, or at the river basin district level down to the specific water body level. For example, in the European Water Framework Directive, countries are asked to develop target threshold values for water body types within reporting basin district/river basin district. In that regard, it is very flexible how countries do that. With respect to the reporting, we would like to ask you to report the target values used for all reporting basin districts in the reporting template. You would need to repeat those target values for all reporting basin districts even if they are the same.

**An additional comment in relation to target values**

Just to highlight the fact that the target values are values that should represent good water quality, and good water quality can vary a lot even within a country (for geological and climatological reasons). Countries should be thinking of target values that actually reflect what is good water quality. If you set your targets too high, you will hardly be able to achieve good water quality at all and, if you set the targets too low, all of your water bodies might be assessed as being of good water quality, which would not be useful to you because it may leave to inappropriate or inadequate management.

**(Question 7) Our country does not have any national standards for ambient water quality, but we do for effluent. How do we go about determining the values?**

We would have to see what data is available and see whether it is sufficient to be able to set target values. We are looking to develop another document which will provide more guidance on the procedure.

**(Question 8) Can Water Framework Directive reporting be used for reporting of the SDG indicator 6.3.2? Should we wait for a new reporting template?**

The answer is yes and no — while many of the underlying data that have been collected for the Water Framework Directive can be reused such as the selection and delineation of water bodies, as well as the delineation of river basin districts as reporting basin districts for indicator 6.3.2, the underlying assessment methodology slightly differs between the Water Framework Directive and the SDG Indicator 6.3.2. The statistical algorithm to assess the quality of a specific water body is described in the 632 methodology with the threshold of 80%, whereas in the Water Framework Directive this is left open to the countries and there's quite a bit difference among countries. If the assessment results of the Water Framework Directive are already using the same statistical approach, they could directly be reused for reporting on indicator 6.3.2 as well, if not, we recommend that you use the Water Framework Directive reporting monitoring data and calculate the indicator using the threshold value of 80%.

Another common question concerns target values used for indicator 6.3.2 and existing values from the Water Framework Directive. In the context of the Water Framework Directive there is one subcomponent on the general physical/chemical characteristics and there we recommend that countries either reuse the target values they use there for assessing the quality of water bodies or use national or existing water-body specific target values.