

Report of the EPNB

The most recent EPNB meeting was organized aside the Task Force meeting in Brussels, October 2019. At that time, the status of the Annexes to the Guidance Document on National Nitrogen Budgets (NNBs) was presented – all annexes were available for further feedback, except for the annex on “waste”. The “energy” annex was welcomed as a valuable new contribution and considered ready for use. Further consistency checks between annexes were deemed helpful, but the major part of guidance needed by country experts to provide NNBs was considered available and has been accessible to countries via the TFRN web page. Also, the possibility to provide feedback remained throughout.

Progress with regard to the EPNB-workplan 2020-2021, however, has been rather slow and definitely has not been simplified by the development of Covid-19. Moving forward on the waste annex had to be postponed, also the proposed reporting template has not been developed further. EPNB is relying on volunteers or external funding, and the situation has been particularly difficult. Here support by individual experts as well as by member countries would be much appreciated.

Positive developments and experiences have been made towards the recognition of EPNB work globally. As part of the INMS project, NNBs as developed by the EPNB have been introduced as a tool available generally. Global application requires, however, to also look into country situations where (statistical) information is not readily available. Hence, for INMS, a simplified alternative that also operates in data-poor situation has been put forward as an alternative, This alternative, the CHANS model, provides a very straightforward structure, which is based on some preconceived assumptions that improve consistency, but may not reflect reality. Especially when it comes to accumulation of N in different environmental pools, there is a risk that CHANS misses possible pile-up of future hazards. Currently, these issues are subject to scientific elaboration.

In order to further advance the workplan 2020/21, EPNB plans to send out a note to its mailing list gauging the interest of countries to contribute. Open issues cover (see above) the 3 workplan items for 2020-2021

- (1) finalization of the “waste” annex,
- (2) the overall document consistency and
- (3) the reporting template.

A mailing will be sent to the EPNB list in February. It also will prepare for the next EPNB meeting (tentatively in early October 2021 as a hybrid-meeting), aiming to move forward with the open issues. Germany aims to provide support for steps required to complete the Annexes to the guidance document, foremost the Waste Annex, in 2022, and a meeting beforehand could allow to set the terms of reference.

With availability of full guidance in sight, it seems plausible to remind parties of the Gothenburg protocol that NNBs can serve as important and useful tools to establish a consistent view and develop appropriate policies on nitrogen pollution.