

The Mistra EviEM review process

1. Proposals for topics

Suggestions for topics to be reviewed may come from the EviEM Executive Committee (ExComm), from stakeholders such as agencies, ministries, research councils and non-governmental organisations, and from scientists, for example through the Environmental Committee of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences or scientific associations. Special calls for suggestions are made in conjunction with annual workshops with stakeholders, but the Secretariat will accept additional proposals at any time.

The suggestions are discussed and elaborated in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including both decision makers and scientists. Based on the input from them, and using the selection criteria approved by the ExComm (cf. Appendix 3 to the minutes of the MCEE 1 meeting, *Criteria for selection of topics to evaluate*), the Secretariat assesses each proposed topic as potentially suitable or not suitable for a systematic review, based on which topic for pilot studies are selected by the secretariat or the ExComm.

2. Pilot study

The Secretariat conducts pilot studies on suitable topics. The pilot study contains a general introduction to the topic and identifies relevant stakeholders. In addition to the mandatory and optional selection criteria, each pilot study considers the following issues:

- Whether the topic has been reviewed before and, if so, whether significant new information has been published since then.
- The focus, amount and relevance of existing scientific literature.
- Comments from key stakeholders and end-users.
- Whether a review would be timely for the users of the results.

The Secretariat defines question(s) suitable for systematic review, or concludes that it is not possible to formulate a reviewable question on the topic.

3. Approval of topic(s)

On the basis of the pilot studies, the ExComm decides on topics for full-scale systematic reviews.

4. Appointment of a review team

For each of the selected topics, the Secretariat proposes a person to chair the team of experts that will conduct the systematic review. The review chair is appointed by the ExComm. To avoid delays, this appointment may if necessary be handled by email.

Together with the review chair, the Secretariat then proposes 3 to 5 experts as members of the review team, taking gender balance into account. The experts are appointed by the ExComm. Each review team will also include a representative of the EviEM Secretariat, acting as project manager. In addition, a statistician will be available to each team for consultations and statistical analyses.

5. Planning of a systematic review

At the first meeting of the review team, a draft protocol is developed. This is a detailed plan for the systematic review, including a refinement of the questions to be answered, criteria for the inclusion or exclusion of studies, and how literature searches are to be performed. The draft protocol will be published online and is open for anyone to comment on for approximately one month. The ExComm and relevant stakeholders are specifically invited to comment on the protocol at this stage. Based on the comments received, the review team finalises the protocol.

6. Protocol published in Environmental Evidence

The ExComm decides if the protocol was developed in accordance with the established process for conducting EviEM systematic reviews. The protocol is then sent to the journal *Environmental Evidence* for peer review. If accepted without any comprehensive changes, the final protocol will be published in *Environmental Evidence* and on the EviEM web site. If major changes are necessary, the ExComm, in consultation with the review team, will discuss these changes and how to move forward.

Along with the protocol, a communication plan for the project will be developed. This plan will identify who the main stakeholders are and how they will be reached, what the report could be used for and how to facilitate the usage of the results, as well as what the main channels to use to communicate the results. ExComm approves the first part of the communication plan. This plan will be further developed and amended at a later stage in the review process.

7. Conducting the systematic review

Guided by the final protocol, the review team conducts a systematic review and writes a draft report, including a summary. In most cases, this work should require a maximum of one year. During this stage, no influence from stakeholders is allowed.

The draft report will be sent for a semi-public review to relevant stakeholders and the ExComm. Based on the comments received, the review team finalises the report.

8. Report published in *Environmental Evidence*

The ExComm decides if the report was developed in accordance with the established process for conducting EviEM systematic reviews. The draft report is then sent to the journal *Environmental Evidence* for peer review. If the report is accepted, without any comprehensive changes, the report is published in the journal. If major changes are necessary, the ExComm, in consultation with the review team, will discuss these changes and how to move forward.

9. Dissemination of results

Mistra EviEM makes the final report available online as well as publishes and disseminates summaries and factsheets in English and Swedish. Findings from the review may also be published separately by the review team in other scientific journals.

10. Acknowledgement

The roles played by Mistra and the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences are acknowledged, but a disclaimer makes clear that the conclusions reached in the report are not necessarily endorsed by these organisations.