

# Implications of strong sustainability for the measurement of the economic importance of ecosystems: the Ecological Sustainability Gap (ESGAP) accounting proposal

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## Abstract

*Two main methods have emerged in the environmental economic literature for seeking to take environmental impacts into account in economic analysis, described by the terms ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ sustainability (Neumayer, 1999). The former assumes broad substitutability between natural produced capital by giving monetary values to natural capital (e.g. through such concepts as inclusive wealth). The latter regards such substitution as limited and is more oriented to expressing environmental objectives in terms of physical targets (e.g. the maximum temperature rise from global warming). The indicator framework ESGAP (environmental sustainability gap) expresses a strong sustainability approach through the definition of scientifically derived sustainability standards that would guarantee the delivery of important environmental functions. It thereby seeks to define the ‘safe operating space’ (Rockstrom, 2009) within which important environmental functions would continue to be delivered. The paper presents a calculation of the ESGAP indicators for 28 European countries, and considers the relationship of this approach with the System of Environmental Economic Accounting.*

## Keywords

*Weak sustainability; Strong Sustainability; SEEA EA.*

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