

## **Conclusions from the eEIONET work conference 2003, Sofia 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2003**

### **Overall summary:**

#### **The meeting achieved successfully the below tasks:**

- a) Informing all participants very clearly about EEA's activities around Reportnet (business processes, content and tools), data service, CIRCA and the other electronic tools we offer to our network
- b) Encouraging several countries to engage deeper into structured and quality based reporting, using Reportnet tools
- c) Triggering ETC data managers to support us with the Data Dictionary (quality assurance processes - training included)
- d) Showing the role of EEA's data service as a central place for our European data products
- e) Providing practical tips and solutions around data flows / CIRCA issues and other technology implementations in bi-lateral talks
- f) Bringing the cooperation with Balkan countries up one level: They are now technically equipped and know about concepts and tools which will be followed up nicely by the detailed training for some of them in late September in Belgrade
- g) Performing a good example for cooperation with UNECE by continuing the initial networking with EECCA countries, enabling to build up capacities for information and probably data exchange in the near future. This will most likely be based on the voluntary support by some of these countries.

#### **Key issues arising from the meeting (following the same areas):**

- a) More needs to be done on the organizational side to properly discuss, accompany and at some point of time implement an improved reporting system
- b) We need to package our tools more clearly so that we can indicate to interested countries what they can get and use for national purposes at which time
- c) We need to convince the critical ETC / ACC and the corresponding air project managers in EEA to define clearly their relationship to the quality assurance processes as supported by the Reportnet tools and to identify their European products as part of EEA's data service

Tasks around Reportnet need to be clearly included and budgeted in all ETC technical annexes. This is actually well under way and feasible now based on the progress made in the Reportnet system.

- d) We need to encourage continuously the provision of ETC data to the data service as well as its usage by our clients
- g) Further work with EECCA countries will be based on successful funding-rising and will have to include further in harmonizing methodologies in environmental monitoring. It is proposed to get into a structured discussion – following the ideas around the European Environmental Information System - with UNECE on who does what in the field of environmental information and data collection and dissemination.

#### **Chairman's conclusions by session:**

##### **Conceptual issues in Reportnet data flows and development (Svetlana Zhekova)**

Both the presentations and the discussions of these block session have brought up the issue of a more streamlined and harmonised information flow on European level. Bridging the gap between the *needed* and the *available* information through practical application of the developed Reportnet tools was the main focus of the session, on the basis of which we have agreed upon the common goal of *delivering once in a shared web based system* country information that is *to be used by many clients for policy making*, rather than providing data just to be stored or just to have it available.

It was emphasized that the achievement of this common goal is a process to be driven not only by the international organizations as users of country data, but also on national level. Examples were given of advanced international cooperation (in the air and nature protection sectors for instance) and hope of a more *pro-active role of the countries* in the process of streamlining the data flows has been expressed several times throughout the session.

##### **Extending network and applications (Stefan Jensen)**

The session was discussing the various activities dealing with the different players in EEA's closer and wider network. Additionally, EEA products for these clients were explained and instruments and best practises of cooperation on a country by country basis were given. It became clear that good progress can be achieved through e.g. twinning measure being geared at rolling out EIONET approaches to

countries. Discussions unfortunately also showed the difficulties in applying presently available funding schemes to the EECCA countries.

### **Building and managing content for Reportnet (Tim Haigh)**

Key to the success of Reportnet is content. I see two kinds of content - Content from the countries in the form of dataflow deliveries and a second kind: the information, or content in the Reportnet databases that helps countries to provide good quality deliveries. The presentations made on ROD, the Data Dictionary and GDEM show status of the efforts that the EEA is making in delivering Reportnet. ROD is the most mature module of Reportnet. The ROD presentation looked at the history of ROD in the framework of the policy cycle and what countries can expect to be able to use the tool for.

Both the Data Dictionary and the GDEM have been discussed extensively before now. Rarely has there been the clarity of understanding that has been achieved at this conference nor the level of consensus. This is a key take home message for the EEA: the current ideas and priorities are correct and in synch with what our audience wants to see happen.

### **Data handling by the European Topic Centres (Hermann Peifer)**

Reportnet: a suite of web-based tools supporting transparent data reporting in EIONET

Centralised services at EEA for web-publishing of environmental information:

- Data service
  - Centralised web service maintained at EEA
  - Established in 2000, content steadily growing
  - Keeping track of data used in EEA reports
  - Sources: Data collected in EIONET via ETCs, Data from international organisations, specific data collection exercises (Kiev report)
- Map service
  - Centralised web service maintained at EEA
  - Established in 2002, rapidly growing, easy to use
  - Offering powerful map services for visualising local and remote data sets
  - Present a map in your web environment by sending a request with defined parameters (maptype, zoom, colours, ...) to this EEA service
  - Low development cost for connecting remote databases to the central map service
  - Try it out: [map.eea.eu.int/help](http://map.eea.eu.int/help)

Role of European Topic Centres (ETCs)

- QA/QC work not properly represented in Reportnet 'football', tasks are falling in a no-man's land in between national repository and European data warehouses
- Data validation, data quality, quality checks and quality assurance: all done extensively by ETCs, however all of this work is done outside the Reportnet tools. This is true for all topic areas: Air and Climate Change, Water, Nature Protection and Biodiversity, Terrestrial Environment
- A quality assured, aggregated European data set delivered by ETC to EEA Data service is more than the sum of 38 data packages delivered by EIONET countries to the national repository
- After countries have delivered their national data: ETCs are performing:
  - Simple checks (data type, unique identifiers, permissible values, ...)
  - Intelligent checks requiring domain expertise
- Simple checks could be implemented in Reportnet environment, the backbone for Reportnet based quality checks would be an operational Data dictionary
- Intelligent checks would remain in the near future within the responsibility of the ETC, carried out in their local environment
- Quality assurance in terms of scientific soundness can only happen on the national level

### **CIRCA groupware (Hermann Peifer)**

CIRCA: the web-based groupware tool of EIONET

- The new version 3.2 is ready for EIONET, new features have been presented,
- A fresh CIRCA 3.2 installation takes 30 min, various options for migrating content
- Upgrade shall be executed this year with support from EIONET Helpdesk
- Countries that do want to upgrade in the near future, i.e. in 2003: AT, BE, BG (yes, but ...), CZ, DE, EE, FR, HR, IE, MK, NL, SI, SK
- nfp-cs node will directly receive a fresh CIRCA 3.2 installation
- Countries that have discontinued CIRCA services: SE, DK, GB

- Countries that will discontinue CIRCA services:  
GR, CH (yes, but: re-evaluation of CIRCA benefits and possible restart in early 2004)
- CIRCA future at European Commission:
  - The near future for CIRCA 3.3 (2003) is clear, there are plans for CIRCA 3.3-B and 3.4 in 2004.
  - There is a wishlist for additional features in further versions, however ...
  - The current CIRCA roadmap does not go beyond CIRCA version 3.4 in 2004.
  - The outcome of the CIRCA development conference in December 2003 and the results of a CIRCA end-user survey (requested by EU Member States) are important for the CIRCA future.
  - The end-user survey will start in October. EIONET's end-users would very much like to be invited to participate in the survey.
- CIRCA future at EEA:
  - EEA will continue to use CIRCA in the foreseeable future.
  - There are no plans to abandon CIRCA, however ...
  - EEA will continue to scan horizons for suitable open source groupware tools offering similar (or better) functionality.
  - Heavily used at EEA, varying usage patterns in the countries
  - One option would be 'CIRCA Light' offering core CIRCA functionality in a base installation plus offering additional features as add-on packages in a modular approach.

### **Information technologies for EECCA countries (Stefan Jensen)**

The session was used to continue the activities of the UNECE WGEM "tools and guidelines" ad-hoc working group. A UNECE consultant delivered training in installing and initially using the WinCDS as the metadata collection tool. The purpose of the exercise is for the EECCA countries to document the availability of Environmental Information and Data to be possibly exchanged over the coming years. The session was also used to communicate the EEA approaches around data deliveries (Reportnet CDR), State of the Environment reports (CDR) and some first steps into the usage of CIRCA. UNECE actually continued the session in the afternoon, which showed both, need and demand for this training activity. EECCA countries were encouraged to make voluntary deliveries to the EIONET using the Reportnet system based on the priority data flow umbrella.

### **Reportnet Data Dictionary training (Tim Haigh)**

Approximately 16 participants (both ETC data managers and NFP representatives) attended the Data Dictionary workshop. A detailed review of the application was presented by Jaanus Heinlaid and Mette P Lund, including the Import tool, editing functionality and the pdf export of dataset specifications. The participants followed the presentations on eight computers and try-out the functionalities as they were presented. The participants were positive and happy to see the achievements of the application. The data managers commented that it would be a useful tool in the data flow management process. Several from the national level expressed the wish to have a copy of the application for their own purposes. The possibility to use the application to harmonise data elements across dataflows was also extensively discussed. Whilst the application offers considerable potential to facilitate this, the way in which this could be effectively achieved was not clear.

### **ZOPE in EIONET services (Soeren Roug)**

The purpose was to show some of the technology EEA uses in various projects. Notably Zope and Java. First was a short overview of Zope history and principles for those who are strangers to Zope. Next applications developed for EnviroWindows and Biodiversity were presented. For large database-driven websites the EEA uses Java, and Corrado Iannucci presented when to use Zope and when to use Java. Finally, as an example of Java use, EUNIS was demonstrated. EEA announced a two-day Absolute-beginners Zope training course in late October or November.

### **Extending Network and applications – Plenum and Summary (Stefan Jensen)**

In this final session, all chairs were invited to summarise the outcome of their respective sessions. An overall summary was provided along the lines of the one in this document.

The eEIONET work conference 2004 was announced, which will take place in the French/Swiss border region – during the CERN's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary – in October 2004. The French IFEN will be especially supporting and been integrated into this event.