

Eionet Workshop on Soil - Brussels, 18 September 2007

MINUTES

Participants

Eionet: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Rep, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey

ESBN: Arnold Arnoldussen, Christine le Bas, Endre Dobos, Pandi Zdruli

JRC: Arwyn Jones, Luca Montanarella, Marc van Liedekerke

DGENV: Claudia Olazabal, Luca Marmo, Nik de Wit

EEA: Jock Martin, Anna Rita Gentile, Charlotta Colliander Golding

Introduction

The scope of the workshop was to inform the EIONET on the latest developments around soil policy, soil assessments, the European soil data centre (ESDAC), possibilities for network collaboration and national activities on soil information. The attached agenda provides further details in this regard. The aim was to start a process towards a wider collaboration on soil data and reporting across the relevant institutions and specialised networks. Within this context, the specific objectives of the workshop were the following:

- keep the Eionet up-to-date with the activities of the "Group of Four" and raise awareness;
- understand from selected countries how their soil activities are developing;
- initiate a discussion on how the Eionet (and ESBN) could work within the "Group of Four" context

The workshop was organised by the European Environment Agency and hosted by DG Environment. In total 45 people participated. The delegates included EIONET representatives from 22 countries, members of the European Soil Bureau Network Steering Committee (ESBN SC), representatives of the Commission services (DGENV, JRC) and the EEA.

The workshop included an extensive information session and a brief discussion. The agenda was organised along four main issues, encompassing the three main strands of European soil work: policy, data management and assessment perspectives; and a national activity session, where several countries reported on their activities on soil policy, monitoring, reporting and assessment.

A brief account of the workshop is reported below. More details can be found in workshop presentations, uploaded to the Eionet Land Use Circa Interest Group:

http://eea.eionet.europa.eu/Public/irc/eionet-circle/te/library?!=/workshop_september&vm=detailed&sb=Title

(internet link).

Summary

Jock Martin opened the workshop and introduced the objectives. The participants were asked to consider the proposal to hold regular meetings once a year to build the connections among European soil networks.

Claudia Olazabal introduced the reporting obligations (ROs) foreseen in the Commission's proposal for a soil framework directive (SFD). The ROs proposed in the SFD include:

- identification of risk areas
- programmes of measures in risk areas
- publication of inventories of contaminated sites (to be made accessible to the public)
- national remediation strategies
- other minor obligations (awareness raising, measures to limit sealing)

ROs have the only scope to check the compliance with Community legislations and therefore they are linked to implementation in the Member States (MSs). The Commission recognises that this is a very sensitive issue, and, in order to help the process, it is gradually moving from bilateral reporting to the request of making information available on the national systems. Other information could be provided by countries on a voluntary basis. Countries should make available data for the whole country.

In relation to the timeframe for the SFD, a first reading is expected this autumn; a second reading will may be needed. This means that the directive will not be adopted before 2009. As a consequence, transposition by MSs is not expected before 2011 and policy measures will not be in place before 2015-2016.

Technical details on data exchange formats, implementation of data flows, etc. will be tackled by comitology or decided within the Common Implementation Strategy. There is also the possibility to make the data exchange formats an obligation.

Regarding the data management aspects, Luca Montanarella illustrated soil activities at the JRC, while Mark Van Liedekerke provided an overview of the ESDAC organisation and implementation plan. JRC confirmed that they were now prepared to take over responsibility for management of the contaminated sites data flow in ESDAC and also announced that they will recruit more people to support the data centre, including for the contaminated sites data flow. Participants from Eionet welcomed this development and invited the Group of Four partners to clarify further the transition process.

Arnold Arnoldussen, chairman of the ESNB, described the activities of this network and how ESNB's activities could potentially support ESDAC and complement those of Eionet. He saw ESNB as having roles to: deliver and improve data; advise DGEnv and JRC on policy points and ESDAC developments; contribute to research through Framework Programme activities; and address challenges around modelling, functional mapping, and data integration.

In the discussion, DGENV was identified as a main client of ESDAC. The EEA and the Eionet are seen both as users and potential information providers. Not all data in ESDAC will be made public, as there are some restrictions issued by data providers. In order to take into account this aspect, privileged users will be recognised.

The user issue was further discussed by Jan Voet (Belgium) which pointed out that the data providers (i.e. the countries) should also be considered as main clients/ users of the data. This would provide a compensation of their efforts. He also pointed out that the two networks (Eionet and ESNB) have a different nature: Eionet is a network of national environment agencies, while ESNB is a scientific network. In order to make full comparison there is need to exchange more information on how the two networks work.

Anna Rita Gentile presented the EEA perspective as a user of ESDAC. The EEA needs soil data to support its work on soil integrated assessments. The results will be used as an input to the next State of the Environment Report foreseen in 2010. Jock Martin specified that in this context the EEA task is to identify ecosystems goods and services towards the 2010 target (halting biodiversity loss). The land use data centre, which is one of the five data centres under the responsibility of the EEA, will support this task. Land is considered by the EEA as a horizontal theme connecting different issues. The implications for the Eionet on the handing over of the priority data flow on contaminated sites to the soil data centre (ESDAC) and the work on soil country analyses were also discussed.

Jan Voet pointed out that the main issues to put on the table would be whether the JRC will accept the way the Eionet works -for example whether it will continue to use tools developed for the Eionet (e.g. Reportnet)- and it will keep the same human interface. Luca Montanarella asked the EEA to provide an up-to-date list of the relevant Eionet members, as they could not retrieve it from the internet. Jan Voet pointed out for the JRC that the NFPs and not the EEA maintain national contacts.

The information session was closed by the presentation of soil national activities by Austria, Belgium, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland and Switzerland. Bulgaria provided a written presentation after the meeting.

Austria presentation concentrated on the availability of national data, and in particular the national soil information system (BORIS) and the national contaminated sites register. BORIS contains information from the national forest soil inventory, the provincial environmental soil inventories and special investigations. The presentation also introduced the development of national soil indicators and soil reporting activities.

Belgium focussed on contaminated sites and soil remediation programmes in Flanders, and the new decree on soil remediation and protection, to enter into force in 2008.

The written presentation from *Bulgaria* included the national system for the monitoring of the environment and the soil monitoring network. Information is collected on heavy metals, POPs, the storage of obsolete pesticides, acidification, salinisation. Other activities include modelling and mapping of water and wind erosion, and the inventory of contaminated sites. Regulation on contaminated sites is very recent (2006). A national register is envisaged.

France provided details on pressures, state and responses for several soil threats, including erosion, soil contamination from diffuse and local sources, sealing, salinisation and compaction. The presentation also

described national and European reporting activities and the work of the national group of scientific interest GIS SOL. The group has the task to coordinate national soil monitoring activities and the national soil information system.

Hungary presented soil assessment activities in relation to contamination, erosion and landslides, and the national soil information system (TIM), in place since 1992.

The Netherlands described progress, costs and benefits and the new national policy on soil remediation. The balance between the costs and the benefits to the society of the activities carried out within the national soil remediation programme and the opportunity to continue the current level of investment are still a subject of discussion in the Parliament.

Poland focussed in particular on monitoring programmes in agricultural soils. Data on contaminated sites are not currently available but the national environmental protection law (2001) contains provisions for the establishment of a contaminated land inventory at the county level, to be made publicly available and accessible through the Internet.

Switzerland provided information on the National Soil Monitoring Network (NABO: <http://www.nabo.admin.ch>), which is in place since 1984. A national database, connected with a GIS and providing tools for spatial assessment, NABODAT, will be operational by 2009. NABODAT will enable the production of thematic maps of soil functions, using pedo-transfer rules. As an example, it would be possible to produce regional background values for heavy metals in topsoil.

Soil carbon sequestration activities in Member countries were also mentioned.

The discussion which followed touched several subjects, which are summarised below.

Soil country analyses:

- the completion of country questionnaires required considerable time to the countries, in particular because of the detail and amount of information involved, the need to gather information from different experts and services or because in conflict with other national priorities. For example, Austria pointed out that 50% of the pilot questionnaire could be easily compiled, 30% could be compiled with some research, 20% would be almost impossible to compile without big efforts.
- the EEA prompted the countries to complete the questionnaires to the extent possible and ensured that it will make use of what the countries would be able to provide.
- Austria asked the EEA to explain the reason why the questionnaire included socio-economic aspects and how this information will be used in the country reports.
- the JRC underlined that a summary of the ESN report on Soil resources in Europe could have been included in the questionnaire as pre-filled information.

Poland pointed out that there was a potential need for a topic centre on soil.

Greece expressed the need for harmonisation of soil monitoring systems.

Follow-up

1) EEA to inform the member countries on how it will use socio-economic information in the soil country profiles and in particular in the integrated assessment of the soil environment following the DPSIR framework.

2) The three organisations in the Group of Four will come back to the NFPs on the follow up and how to improve the process which started with this workshop. In particular:

- why there is a need for this process
- establishment of a regular dialogue with NFPs on soil/NFP soil meetings
- strengthening the links between Eionet and ESN and ESDAC

3) The NFPs to inform the EEA on what they would like to see happening in one-year time.

**Eionet Workshop on Soil,
18 September 2007
9.00 to 17.00
DG Environment, Room C,
Avenue de Beaulieu 5, Brussels
FINAL AGENDA**

9.00-9.30 Registration

9.30-13.00 Morning session

9.30-9.45 Tour de table

9.45- 10.30 DG ENV – The policy perspective

Claudia Olazabal - "Progress with the Soil Framework Directive and next steps"

10.30 – 11.15 JRC – The data management (ESDAC) perspective

Mark van Liedekerke - "ESDAC: Structure and implementation plan 2007-2009"

Arnold Arnoldussen - "ESBN and Eionet, strengthening the links?"

11.30 – 12.00 EEA – The assessment perspective

Anna Rita Gentile - "The EEA as a user of the soil data centre for integrated assessments"

12.00 -12.30 Country representatives – National presentations: The national systems for soil monitoring and assessment in the context of the implementation of EU soil policy priorities.

Sigbert Huber (Umweltbundesamt, Austria), Els Gommeren (OVAM, Belgium)

12.30-14.00 Lunch

14.00-17.00 Afternoon session

14.00-15.15 Country representatives – National presentations: The national systems for soil monitoring and assessment in the context of the implementation of EU soil policy priorities (continue)

Fabio Wegmann (Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland), Veronique Antoni (IFEN, France), László Adam (VITUKI Kht, Hungary), Kees Versluijs (RIVM, The Netherlands), Gursel Kusek (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Turkey)

15.15 – 17.00 Discussion and conclusions

17.00 Closure of the meeting