

Report of Steering Committee

European Soil Bureau Network
Plenary Meeting, Hannover
23-24 April 2007

Steering Committee

- Henrik Breuning-Madsen; Winfried Blum; Josef Kozak; Pandi Zdruli; Jaume Boixedera; Erika Micheli; Christine Le Bas; Mark Kibblewhite (Chairman) and Luca Montaranella (Secretariat)

Items for discussion

- Secretariat support
- Activities since London plenary
 - SC meetings
 - Other ESBN activities
- Future activities
- Challenges for ESBN

Reflection at London Plenary

- ESBN anticipates more requests for information and advice
- It is a time for a full-time secretariat to:
 - Act as technical editor
 - Support peer reviewing process
 - Manage project work

Progress since London Plenary

- ESNB support is a formal work item in JRC programme
- Information requests
 - New web site at JRC is very busy
- Full-time secretariat
 - Thank you to Dr Arwyn Jones

February 2006, Copenhagen

- Follow-up to London Plenary – specifically to discuss future mandate of the Digital Soil Mapping WG
- Meeting with EEA to clarify respective roles – especially in relation to European Soil Data Centre

November 2006, Bari

- After publication of
 - *Communication and draft Soil Framework Directive*
 - *Report of Soil Information Working Group (Common Criteria for Risk Area Identification according to Soil Threats)*
- Decision to hold Plenary in Hannover and a workshop for Member State representatives on risk area identification
- Update on the plans for the European Soil Data Centre
- Decision to request that the JRC provides free web-based access to 1:1000000 raster and vector data

Planning meetings for Hannover

- January 2007
 - Agenda and Attendees agreed
- March 2007 (also attended by Wolf Eckelmann, Rainer Baritz and György Várralyay)
 - Focus on workshop presentations

Other activities

- South-Eastern Europe meeting, Zagreb, September 2006
- Summer School, Ispra, July 2006

Future activities

Soil Communication (2006)

“The proposed Directive will require Member States to identify risk areas on the basis of common elements to be taken into account, set risk reduction targets for those areas and establish programmes of measures to achieve them. For identifying risk areas, the Commission encourages Member States to use existing monitoring schemes. Over time a more harmonised monitoring approach and methodology may be developed, [exploiting ongoing work of the European Soil Bureau Network on harmonisation of methodologies](#). Risk acceptability and measures will vary in response to the severity of the degradation processes, local conditions and socio-economic considerations.”

ESBN responsibilities

- Ensure it has scientific expertise relating to risk area harmonisation
- Focus on scientific evidence and process and avoid political influences
- Lead from the front by identifying and qualifying relevant harmonised methodologies (but not necessarily developing them itself)

European Soil Data Centre

- Critical for future protection of soil in Europe
 - providing a framework inventory of European soils
 - demonstrating temporal and spatial trends in soil conditions
 - evaluating efficacy of policy measures
- Critical for wider environmental and societal problems
 - impacts and responses to global warming
 - impacts and responses to economic growth (e.g. sealing)

ESBN responsibilities

- ESBN should provide technical advice, support and oversight for the European Soil Data Centre
 - This may require the formation of a specific committee

New soil information

- Reflections at London plenary
 - Soil information is ageing and still not completely available
 - The development of digital technology is rapid
 - ESNB must adopt and stay at forefront of application of new technology to:
 - Gather new primary data
 - Deliver better and more accessible information

Progress since London plenary

- Some collection of new profile data, but this depends on finance from Member States, which is variable
- ESBN Digital Soil Mapping report encouraged FP7 provisions for
 - Specific open calls for digital soil mapping projects
 - Activity within JRC MOSES programme

Challenges for the ESBN

- To renew and develop its expertise so that its membership truly includes the best scientific expertise on soil resources in Europe
- To be more than a “club” by ensuring that its processes for appointing members and other aspects of governance are well-founded and transparent
- To avoid being captured (and devalued) by political interests (either within Commission or Member States)
- To be supportive to the JRC whilst being a constructive critic of its science e.g. as a peer reviewer

Practical action

- Promote new generation experts in to ESNB and on to SC
 - A question for us all is “Who can replace me and deliver more to ESNB?”
- Be more rigorous in peer-reviewing its projects and outputs, and publishing in peer-reviewed literature
 - The SC should appoint peer-reviewers
- Guard jealously against political interests

Thank you