

Final Minutes

Wednesday 27th August

Participants:

- Dr. Hartmut J. Streuff, Andreas Czepuck, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU), Germany
- Fred Kruse, Coordination Centre PortalU, Lower Saxony
- Thomas Schultz-Krutisch, UBA, Germany
- Elisabeth Freitag, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Austria
- Johannes Mayer and Rudolf Legat, UBA, Austria
- Ian Clark, Henk Kalfsbeek, Meropi Paneli, Hugo de Groof, DG ENV of the European Commission, Unit G3

Note: The minutes of the meeting are presented as annotated agenda below. Powerpoint presentations are attached in separate files.

10:30 Welcome and Introduction

1. Developing the European environmental information system through SEIS, INSPIRE and GMES: SEIS Commission Communication and follow-up (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/seis/index.htm>)

- EC will briefly update on its own activities/initiatives to promote the SEIS project and its implementation
- What is the outlook for the FR and CZ presidencies vis-à-vis the SEIS?
- How uptake of SEIS by these presidencies can be promoted?
- What is the uptake in the MSs following the SEIS Communication (Report from EEA's country visit)

Ian Clark, HoU, DG ENV/G3 welcome the DE/AT delegation, introduced the SEIS project, its scope and objectives, the approach taken for implementing SEIS (power point is attached). IC highlighted the following points:

The adoption of the Commission Communication on SEIS has made SEIS more visible and helped clarifying the intentions of the Commission vis-à-vis an approach for building SEIS:

Feedback from Member States have been received so far via the EEA's NFP and EEA's Management Board which was positive. However, as per today the FR and CZ Presidencies do not intend to issue Council Conclusions on the SEIS Communication which is unfortunate. Any action of DE/AT to this end would be helpful.

IC Informed that work is progressing on a detailed implementation plan (IP) to deliver overall SEIS objectives and a legal proposal (LP) to modernise reporting requirements under Community environmental law. The key elements of the draft LP are:

- Paper reporting to be replaced by obligation to make information available using web-based technology
- Obligation to set up national web-based one-stop shop registers providing access to the required information

- Periodicity of information obligations to be reviewed; in some case replace by obligation to keep information up-to-date
- Streamlining/simplification/repeal of reporting obligations where appropriate

The aim is to deliver legal proposal early in 2009. An Impact Assessment should accompany the legal proposal. We count on your support in provision of some facts and figures to back up the legal proposal.

A SEIS Task Force has been established to shape the stakeholders participation in these processes, offer an integrated discussion platform and further advance the development of the IP and LP. It will have the first meeting on 29th September in Brussels at MSs level only.

2. Developing the DE/AT's SEIS: Current activities and futures plans

Preparation of a national SEIS Implementation Strategy, readiness of DE/AT for SEIS implementation related to

(1) data, information and metadata

(2) infrastructure and eServices

(3) Organisation and policies (co-ordination and institutional cooperation at various levels)

(4) Links of DE, AT SEIS with the respective national eGovernment action plans and digital platform, implementation of INSPIRE (directive 2007/2/EC), Aarhus convention and Directive 2003/4/EC (via e-tools) and GMES (Global Monitoring for Environment and Security).

(5) What are the DE and AT challenges and future plans?

<http://www.inspire-geoportal.eu/>

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/aarhus/index.htm>

<http://www.gmes.info>

Germany:

Fred Kruse, PortalU Koordinierungsstelle, Lower Saxony, presented the PortalU application in DE. It is a one-stop shop portal, the central gateway to publicly-owned environmental information in Germany. It is open to everybody, 24 hours a day, free of charge. It was developed to implement the access to the public information directive (Directive 2003/4/EC). It is based on connected metadata registries and implements SEIS principles of a distributed (decentralized) system. The one-stop shop approach was the only way for giving access to connect (at the moment) more than 2 million web sites together.

For the moment PortalU provides access to federal and state level web sites. There are 2 Pilot projects (at Lower Saxony and Baden-Wuerttemberg) for connecting municipalities to PortalU. After these pilots, the necessary adjustments will be made to also allow the local level to connect with PortalU. Furthermore work is underway to incorporate and implement INSPIRE metadata by the end of 2008. PortalU is linked to the German Geoportal thus allowing access to environmental geodata from both sides.

PortalU does not provide direct access to monitoring data as such and it is not connected to EU Reporting process. There are plans to these both directions however it is decided to await developments with the SEIS and SEIS specifications in order to further develop PortalU in a SEIS compliant fashion. In principle, Germany welcomes the EC SEIS initiative for a distributed system connecting environmental information management and eReporting systems together to an integrated EU eReporting system. With respect to the German data coming from 16 Laender the compatibility and comparability of the data is a crucial issue. Furthermore the principle of subsidiarity has to be taken into account.

Regarding the issue of connecting the PortalU and SEIS with the German eGovernment action plan, H. Streuff informed that there are currently 3 environmental projects within the German eGovernment strategy plan: PortalU, the PRTR and a waste project. Within the geodata infrastructure a pilot project on protected sites where 20 public services participate was successfully launched. H. Streuff agreed to raise awareness and support on SEIS within the eGovernment community in Germany.

Austria

Rudolf Legat, Umweltbundesamt, Austria, Co-ordination Centre presented an overview of European and Austrian policies and legislation related to the management, sharing and accessibility to Environmental Information. Main legislative drivers for improving the management of environmental Information in AT, the sharing between the public authorities and the public accessibility are Directive on Public access to Environmental Information 2003 and the INSPIRE Directive 2007.

The Umweltbundesamt (UBA AT) is the leader of a coordination centre whose task consists in supporting the information exchange between information providing bodies and in proposing suitable measures to facilitate access to environmental information, as well as in ensuring the high quality of environmental information. In order to fulfil its mission, the Coordination Centre has set up a Working Group on Environmental Information (*Projektgruppe Umweltinformation*”, PG UI) within the framework of Cooperation BLSG (Bund-Länder-Städte-Gemeinden) under the umbrella of “Platform Digital Austria”.

Regarding the availability of e-tools to support the mission of the Coordination Centre, there are currently some e-systems for environmental information management¹. However there is currently neither a one-stop-shop web application in Austria for providing access to environmental information nor a national web-based metadata registry is available.”

Note: according to follow up information provided by Rudolf Legat (UBA AT), the eGov PG UI has got the important task to support (enable) the development of a Central Env Information Portal.

A subgroup is currently dealing with technical, financial and operational aspects of such an one-stop-shop web application. A final document is expected to be ready by end of 2009 to be submitted to the political level for decision.

Austria’s future Environmental Information Portal is aimed to be INSPIRE/SEIS compatible and shall also help to reduce the amount of different local – not compatible - meta information systems.

3. Development of an EU-wide & coherent SEIS Implementation Plan:

- *The role of the SEIS Task Force –preparation of its first mtg on 29/9*
- *How the revision of the Reporting Directive can best support the implementation of SEIS and develop a coherent EU eReporting system for all ENV thematic legislation?*
- *How the existing systems and infrastructures (e.g. PortalU, Geoland-AT can best help the establishment of SEIS? What are the needs and outstanding issues to this end?*
- *Perspective for a joint pilot of the revised European Interoperability Framework (EIF) (Responsibility of DG Informatics) (<http://ec.europa.eu/idabc/en/document/7728>) and SEIS/eReporting Portal: Design a SEIS reporting module according to the new EIF. How the various national/regional env/geo portals would perform to this reporting module?*

H. Streuff recommended to clearly outline the role of SEIS within the new reporting legislation. The role of Reportnet and RoD (EEA) within the process of establishing SEIS should be clarified. The INSPIRE-driven establishment of national GDI’s should be seen as a first and important step towards SEIS. Ian Clark confirmed that indeed the intention is to offer a clear legal instrument for establishing an eReporting system in Europe based on a SEIS in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. Suggestions for a good language to achieve this objective are welcomed. This is one of the reasons that we established the SEIS Task Force and it will be in the agenda of its first meeting on 29th September 2008.

¹ Web sites to support Projektgruppe Umweltinformation” PG UI’s work are:

Austria’s eGov Reference Server: http://reference.e-government.gv.at/UW-UI_Umweltinformation.1024.0.html

Wiki Server of the Federal Chancellery Austria: <http://www.ag.bka.gv.at/index.php/Portal:UIG>

Austria’s HELP.gv.at-portal: <http://www.help.gv.at/Content.Node/166/Seite.1660000.html>

Ian Clark pointed out that it also EC expectations that the good implementation of Inspire will provide an important infrastructure component of SEIS. This is highlighted in the SEIS Communication itself. Regarding the role of Reportnet and RoD (EEA), IC pointed out that these tools (e.g. an adapted ROD) can be helpful in implementing the legal instrument (eReporting) and SEIS in the broader sense and will be considered and looked at in these processes.

4. Communicating SEIS

Meropi Panelli (MP) informed the meeting that the SEIS Communication will be enhanced the coming year with the Establishment of a Technical Support Facility to promote the continued development of the SEIS and eGovernment services in the field of Environment. Two web tools are envisaged:

a. SEIS Europa web site: New pages <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/seis/index.htm>

Some examples of new pages:

- Successful real life examples of pan-European Interoperable services (in environment and other sectors)
- SEIS/eEnvironment Eurobarometer
- Funding Opportunities
- Award opportunities for best practice projects
- Promote SEIS in your country (a tool kit)
- Innovate: develop eEnvironment services
- Increase the environmental PSI market- Business opportunities

Suggestions are welcomed for new pages in the SEIS web

MP pointed out that we also need to develop a benchmarking methodology of eEnvironment Services in Europe in order to assess progress and impact of our policies in the years to come vis-à-vis SEIS implementation and provision of eEnvironment services. It is expected that the Implementing Rules for Reporting and Monitoring of INSPIRE implementation under development will cover the spatial data infrastructures part there other part of the SEIS infrastructure and content that will not be covered by INSPIRE. In a benchmarking methodology SEIS and eEnvironment services should be holistically regarded. *Any background material of already available relevant benchmarking methodologies are welcomed.*

b. Establishment of an eGovernment Environment Community under ePractice Portal to take advantage of Web 2.0 technologies including an eEnvironment Newsletter

EC is also envisage to set a (if accepted a publicly available) database of networks involved in the reporting activities but also other networks related to Env. Information management and eEnvironment/eGovernment services.

5. Conclusions

The meeting offered a useful exchange of information and building a 'working together' basis. The experience in DE and AT will help to build up a SEIS Implementation Plan and in the actual Implementation of SEIS. The SEIS Task Force and its potential technical sub-group will offer the platforms for a structured EC-EEA-MSs collaboration in implementing SEIS in a coherent way in Europe.