

BELGIAN BIODIVERSITY PLATFORM

MEETING RECORD



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TITLE OF THE MEETING

2nd IPBES expert & stakeholder exchange

ORGANISOR OF THE MEETING

Dr Hilde Eggermont, Belgian National Focal Point for IPBES and Scientific Coordinator of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform (BBPF)

DATE AND LOCATION OF THE MEETING

21 November 2016, Belgian Science Policy Office (Belspo), Brussels, Belgium

ATTENDEES

Quentin Groom (Botanic Garden), Hendrik Segers (CBD NFP), Patrick Meyfroidt (UCL), Catherine Debruyne (SPW), Thor Hjarsen (Denmark IPBES Secretariat), Els Martens (ANB), Jeroen Panis (ANB), Hans Keune (BBPF/INBO), Els Van de Velde (LNE), Joost Salomez (LNE), Ann Milbau (INBO), Luc Janssens (CEBioS), Maarten Vanhove (CEBioS), Sander Jacobs (BBPF/INBO), Hilde Eggermont (BBPF), Angelique Berhault (BBPF), Lucette Flandroy (FOD).

CHAIR AND REPORTER

Chair: Hilde Eggermont (BBPF). Reporter: Angelique Berhault (BBPF)

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

The purpose was to:

- Have a follow-up of the last IPBES exchange for Belgian experts and stakeholders of the 30 October 2015
- Provide an overview on the progress of IPBES work programme and latest achievements
- Collect feedback on the functioning of the expert groups
- Discuss the main strengths and weaknesses of the current way of implementing the IPBES work programme and formulate recommendations for improvement
- Introduce the Pan-European network of IPBES national platforms engaging in IPBES

AGENDA POINTS

- Quick recap on IPBES functions and objectives
- Progress in the Work Programme (2014-2018)

- General discussion on the main strengths and weaknesses of the current way of implementing the IPBES work programme (recommendations)
- Reflections from the IPBES Secretariat in Denmark (Thor Hjarsen)
- Brief introduction to the Pan-European Network of IPBES national platforms engaging in IPBES
- Preparation of IPBES-5 (topics & first feedback)

DISCUSSION POINTS

1-Quick recap on IPBES functions and objectives

See attached: powerpoint presentation by Hilde Eggermont 'IPBES infoday 2'.

2-Progress in the Work Programme (2014-2018)

Two full assessments were completed and approved by IPBES-4 Plenary in February 2016:

- Pollination and pollinators associated with food production
- Scenarios and models of biodiversity & ecosystem services

According to the attendees of this meeting, both assessments proved to be useful for Belgian decision-makers, especially the *"Pollination and pollinators associated with food production"*. As for scientists involved in the assessments, they now have a better understanding on the importance of these assessments and their main function (i.e. not to produce 'new science' but rather to make sure that past scientific findings are now re-stated and 'translated' into policy terms in order to be taken up by political bodies at intergovernmental level). Overall, these two assessments are considered of very high quality, very useful and of crucial importance. The Pollination assessment is now also taken up by the CBD with a set of concrete recommendations to be approved at COP13 (Cancun, December 2016). Further work on Scenarios and Models is also approved at IPBES-4. There was a lot of media attention for both assessments (especially the one on Pollination, with over 1200 online news sites in 25 languages, from 80 countries).

The next upcoming assessments (to be delivered by mid-2018) include:

- Land degradation and restoration*
- Four regional/sub-regional assessments (Africa; Americas; Asia-Pacific; Europe and Central Asia).*

First order drafts of both have already become available for review (June 2016)

The *Global Assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services* is to be delivered by mid-2019. This one will build on the Millenium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA 2005); it will also support and supplement the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO-5) though the latter will be more prescriptive in assessing progress towards the Aichi Targets. GBO & the IPBES global assessment are still two separate processes with their own context.

Other assessments are on-hold due to budget constraints, and several other deliverables are on-going.

For more details, see attached: powerpoint presentation by Hilde Eggermont 'IPBES infoday 2'.

A few more issues were explained by Hendrik Segers:

- Reasons for delay also due to understaffed IPBES Secretariat, but now in place
- Pronunciation of IPBES ☺ (as a single word)
- Quite some unused budget, but still not enough to fill the gap in resources
- Global Assessment will be delivered too late to be taken up by the CBD (see also further, section Feedback from policy)
- We can soon expect a call for items for the new WP (i.e. beyond 2018)
- A Questionnaire will be circulated by the Secretariat (as part of the 'review of the effectiveness of the Platform'); it would be good if all could contribute!
- There is a major difference between assessments produced by bodies like WWF (NGOs) and IPBES, as the latter are specifically drafted to be policy relevant + they are accepted by governments (hence have more weight) (see also further, section General Issues)

It was explained that outcome of info sessions (like this one, and the one we had last year), are communicated towards the Secretariat, and towards other National Focal Points (exchange of best practices).

3-General discussion on the main strengths and weaknesses of the current way of implementing the IPBES work programme (recommendations)

Each attendee of the exchange meeting presented their role in IPBES process, how they are contributing to it, and shared their experiences and concerns:

FEEDBACK FROM EXPERTS INVOLVED IN SCIENTIFIC WORK:

IAS assessment, currently on hold (Q. Groom, scoping exercise):

- Belgian experts are looking forward to contribute to it when it will be launched.
- Hopefully, this will be discussed during IPBES-5.

Thematic assessment on land degradation and restoration (P. Meyfroidt, Chapter 3)

- Belgian expert was recruited at a later stage (for Chapter 3), and is therefore relatively new to the process. This shows that there is some flexibility in IPBES, which is not a given for an intergovernmental body. The progress is ongoing and so far, no major issues encountered.

Regional Assessment for Europe and Central Asia (ECA) (H. Keune, Chapter 2)

- There are severe delays in the work, there is pressure, and there is a lack of funding to participate to the meeting.
- There is however good will and motivation among the group of people working on it.
- For now, the work mainly focused on inventories and gathering data; i.e. mainly digesting day-to-day data, and

important work on quality insurance will be needed. For now, the major issue is the lack of recommendations to policy makers. Yet this will require a lot of time and thorough discussions.

Regional Assessment for Europe and Central Asia (ECA) (A. Milbau, Chapter 4)

-The main issue is that there is no time and no resources for scientists to conduct this work.

-Scientists can be appointed lead authors but because the contribution to this work is not recognized as being part of daily work by their own institute/employer (partly because IPBES does not provide funding for it), it is very hard to get the job done.

-As scientist, there is a frustration, a feeling of not being able to provide work to the highest quality level one could do because this work is performed over evenings and week-end, on personal time and therefore never gets on top of priority lists. Yet, this work is very valuable and very important. So scientists very much value it. It just isn't easy to perform it because it is based on voluntary work, which is not recognized and not funded. If time was provided the work expected from scientists could be performed but so far, it is very difficult and scientists feel dissatisfied about the work they provide.

-Fortunately, there is an author meeting once a year. This is an excellent opportunity to get back positive energy, strong motivation, and good will to go ahead, a feeling of happiness and of doing science, which is actually used by decision-makers, but this lasts for a few months, after which, daily work and pressure of other tasks takes over. Without these meetings, many people would have quit already. So this is important to keep.

-Another issue is the late reply of IPBES when experts have questions asked to them. This is not very motivating either.

Regional Assessment for Africa (M. Vanhove, Chapter 5)

-At first, many people felt they were in the wrong chapter because of the broad scope of the assessments, yet scientists cannot be experts on everything.

-There is a need of a second authors meeting for all authors, if one was organized, it would create more dynamic. Indeed, the first meeting was very exciting, but then reviewing comments on excel/word sheets and only through Skype calls (which can be complicated for African counterparts as internet connections are not always reliable) makes it complicated for the group to keep up the momentum. Often many people drop the group or cannot attend and it ends up with just three or four authors talking to each other. If there was a second meeting, it would solve many issues in the African assessment.

-In the subsequent writing process, there is discrepancy of work from different authors.

-The response rate from technical support unit (TSU) is very low.

-Authors do not get a lot of feedback on their own contribution. There is a need of feedback on the work done. Need of feedback of why some of the work was not used.

-There is also a lack of match between needs and expertise.

-It is difficult to combine deadlines with everyday job. Sometimes, deadlines for the day after or a matter of some days.

-There is a need for better links between assessments and chapters.

-A better planning of workload and deadlines would be very useful.

-Earlier communication on next author meetings would also be useful.

Regional Assessment for Europe and Central Asia (ECA) (S. Jacobs)

The first chapter focuses on what is expected from the assessments with guidance for the next chapters and how to present the findings. It is a chapter from which many people ran out, but it is now a good group.

The positive elements include:

-For the second order draft, major changes occurred compared to the first meeting. There are now less issues between the speed of an assessment process and the quality of work scientists want to provide. It is good that scientists are constrained hand in hand with guidance on how to be relevant, as this works better than leaving up to scientists (who tend to keep on researching more and more). Now that authors see the pollination assessments, they understand that their role is sort of making sure that the same statements are re-given to decision makers, by giving the references for their conclusions. At the end, it is just about ensuring that political spheres take up these statements. This puts less pressure on the shoulders of scientists.

-The IPBES conceptual framework which scientists used to not like now are getting used to it and accept it as it is. So the second author meeting gained speed compared to the first one where people mainly mentioned the issue of not having time and funding and were discussing the conceptual framework.

-The CLA is very pragmatic, asking for 2 pages and no more, which helps scientists on focusing their work.

The challenges include:

-No funding but it is now getting better to organize the work despite this major gap.

-How to deal with "values": for scientists, it is very difficult to deal with wording such as Mother Earth and others but there is now more understanding from both sides: scientists are more willing to take these values into account and the other sides are also getting used to the way scientists work. There are semi-official initiatives related to the ECA to make sure that the concepts are harmonized based on screenings of the valuation guide. Even though these are unofficial, they might be helpful for the Global Assessment and regional assessments.

Additionally, two experts were supposed to work on the incorporation of valuation knowledge, as decided during the last IPBES meeting in February 2016. This will be further looked into.

-To include Central Asia representatives remains a major challenge in terms of process, data and knowledge.

-To include Indigenous Local Knowledge (ILK) remains a challenge. For many classic scientists, it is very difficult to do it. Adding ILK was imposed by IPBES. It is not easy but there is a now a task force appointed to add these ILK to each chapter and who did good in the first review part by providing constructive remarks and adding paragraphs on it.

-Experts could use more funding, but also more appreciation and acknowledgement would also be important.

-From a scientist perspective, the review of the First Order Drafts was a bit too light.

- ➔ Scientific experts were disappointed about the lack of feedback and lack of information they received after the 1st assessment. It was a first order draft with a lot of gaps and incoherence even within a same chapter. There also was a clear imbalance among experts working on the first order draft. Detailed feedback was assembled during the stakeholders meeting in Leipzig (PESC3); and BiodivERsA ERA-net also produced digests from the pan-European research they fund. These digests

have been sent to the CLAs.

- During IPBES-4, when the assessments were presented, everyone was surprised of the very high quality of the assessments. The authors were extremely good at responding to the questions of the governments. Governments received proper in-depth feedback. So even though the pollination assessment was very messy at first because no one knew where it was going, the end product was very impressive. So experts involved in the assessments should know that at the end, the work may be very useful even though the organization and lack of funding is frustrating.

FEEDBACK FROM POLICY SIDE

-Policy makers are also to be considered as 'experts'

-Usefulness of IPBES Assessments: The results of the assessments are very helpful for decision-makers. IPBES recommendations are taken up for instance for agriculture.

-Issue with timing of Global Assessment: The Global Assessment will also be very useful but they will come too late for the next Strategic Plan of the CBD.

Indeed, the Global Assessment is to be ready by Mid-2019 but it is quite late for the CBD to review its Strategic Plan in 2020. There might be solutions to be found, because the Global Assessment could partly be built upon the regional assessments which will be ready beforehand but it is not an ideal solution.

→ Policy experts are generally satisfied with the first assessments published by IPBES and find them useful for their work. The main issue is the late release of the Global Assessment.

GENERAL ISSUES

-Gap of experts: There are still major gaps of experts to be filled. There might be a need to improve the communication to get more and diverse experts. For regional assessments, when experts do not reply, then assessments get delayed. There might be a communication issue to tackle. But it is not easy to communicate on it as there are different types of requests for experts taking place at the same time.

-Recruitment of experts: For some of the topics, there is an awkward repartition of experts (in terms of country representation, expertise etc.) – for example in the Task force on Knowledge and Data. To be checked why that is. Might be due to the location of the TSU in South Korea (hence a lot of South Korean experts), There is clearly a need for improvements to be made in the appointment of experts.

Another issue is that governments appoint experts but for developing countries, it is difficult because they are not supported by their own government or institute and can therefore not take part in the process.

-Avoid duplication of efforts: There are other biodiversity assessments that could be taken up by IPBES to avoid duplication of efforts. For instance, Living Planet Report 2016 from WWF and the Global Biodiversity Outlooks of the CBD could help the researchers involved in IPBES, because these are complementary work, they are not competing, and we should try to avoid duplicating efforts.

According to IPBES procedure, these assessments could be taken up if experts working in IPBES assessments would use and review them to integrate them into their own work. Also, there might be a lot of

synergies between thematic and regional assessments. It would be good to look into it to avoid duplication of efforts.

-Budget shortage: There is a shortage of 7 million USD to perform current IPBES Work Programme. Despite the budgetary issue, there has been a very good progress on capacity building and assessments and some of the strategic parts are going well too.

MAJOR COMMENTS FROM LAST MEETING (30 oct 2015)

Compared to the last meeting, some of the issues have been addressed while some others remain to be tackled:

-Lack of credits

This is still an issue but scientists find that contributing to IPBES assessments is positive for their CV and network. Scientists also find that they can draw publications from their work performed for IPBES, which is the best incentive for scientists. There might be an issue however if scientists publish work on how the assessment were conducted as IPBES Secretariat is not so fond of it (still to be discussed).

-Use of e-tools vs face-to-face meetings

E-meetings did not work for some of the Scoping exercises, especially on complex issues - eg. for the assessment on 'Sustainable Use', and the scoping had to be redone with a face-to face meeting.

-Stakeholder engagement

Remains to be seen. Very slow progress regarding the implementation of the SE-Strategy and set-up of the "open-ended network of IPBES Stakeholders". News to be expected at IPBES-5?

-Financial support for experts

At the Belgian level, there is now a procedure in place and we could make it possible to fund some scientists because based on the expertise of the scientists, some bodies such as INBO, LNE and Belspo were willing to cover the costs of this work, but this still remains a major hindrance, especially if more experts would be interested to take part in it.

-Very ambitious work programme

Because of the very ambitious work programme of IPBES and the lack of budget matching it, several assessments and deliverables are put on hold.

-Implications of the actual assessments for human well being, and for biodiversity

Still unclear/remains to be seen.

-Various views on biodiversity conservation

Some improvement has been observed on this (thanks to the work on diverse conceptualization of values; the existence of the conceptual framework etc.)

-IPBES communication to be improved

Some improvement was made (e.g. new website) but there is still room for improvement (more regular updates on websites; better communication towards NFPs etc.)

-Timing of the assessment

Still room for improvement as there is a major issue for the CBD to take in the Global Assessment to be produced by IPBES which will come too late for their update of the CBD Strategic Plan (see above).

-Creating a momentum

IPBES is creating a momentum for biodiversity research, and for raising attention in the policy agenda. This “side-effect” might be as important as the actual assessments

-Imbalance between disciplines and country representation

Improvement thanks to the ‘procedure to fill gaps in experts’ approved at IPBES-4 – but still a major point of attention

-Policy relevance and avoid duplication

The assessments produced so far are considered to be policy relevant. In terms of duplication, IPBES should ensure it takes into account what was produced before, for instance, the Living Planet Report 2016 produced by WWF (see above). For that reason (to avoid duplication), IPBES is also producing a ‘Catalogue of relevant assessments’

-Communication on uncertainties

Still room for improvement, but at least some good guidelines from the first two assessments

4-Reflections from the IPBES Secretariat in Denmark (Thor Hjarsen)

During this exchange meeting, the Belgian IPBES National Focal Point was glad to welcome Mr Thor Hjarsen, the newly appointed IPBES Secretariat in Denmark. Mr Hjarsen was appointed to this position thanks to the efforts of three Danish universities that were keen on seeing a more active involvement of Denmark into the IPBES work programme implementation.

Thor Hjarsen is based in the University of Copenhagen at the center for macro-ecology, evolution and climate. This international research center counts many Danish experts who would be willing to be involved in IPBES assessments.

Since this function was established two months ago, the main goal of Thor Hjarsen was to gather information on how an IPBES national focal point works and was keen on hearing feedbacks from Belgian experts who already took part in assessments in order to understand the current issues and opportunities of this work and therefore have a better grasp on how to motivate a maximum of Danish experts to take part in the process.

5-Brief introduction to the Pan-European Network of IPBES national platforms engaging in IPBES

Hilde Eggermont presented the concept, goals, and current status of the ECA-Network, i.e. the Pan-European Network of IPBES national platforms engaging in IPBES. The website is currently under development and can be accessed here: <http://www.eca-ipbesnetwork.org>.

A communication plan is being set up by BBPF (A. Berhault) to further expand the network. *For more details, see attached: powerpoint presentation by Hilde Eggermont ‘IPBES infoday 2’.*

6-Preparation of IPBES-5 (topics & first feedback)

See the list of topics to be addressed during IPBES-5 in the powerpoint presentation attached: 'IPBES infoday 2'. Dossiers are not yet available so no further details could be provided at this stage

! UPCOMING:

-New calls for assessment may be launched after IPBES-5 (subject to availability of resources). The Belgian National Focal Point will circulate it to Belgian researchers.

-For the “review of the effectiveness of IPBES”, the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) and Bureau decided to work with a questionnaire, which will be sent to all experts. The Belgian National Focal Point will also circulate it to Belgian researchers

-IPBES-5 deadline for registration was extended to 15 December 2016. IPBES-5 is considered to be a relatively easy plenary because most of the work program is on going (whereas the next one will be extremely heavy!). The only difficult issues are the funding issues, the lack of progress of the stakeholders' engagement, and the review of the effectiveness of the Platform

- The Belgian National Focal Point will keep organizing such info sessions on a regular basis (at least once per year). NFP from other countries could also be invited to these meetings (maybe next time the Dutch)

END OF REPORT