

# MEMO HOW TO ORGANISE A CONFERENCE



**BELGIAN BIODIVERSITY PLATFORM** 



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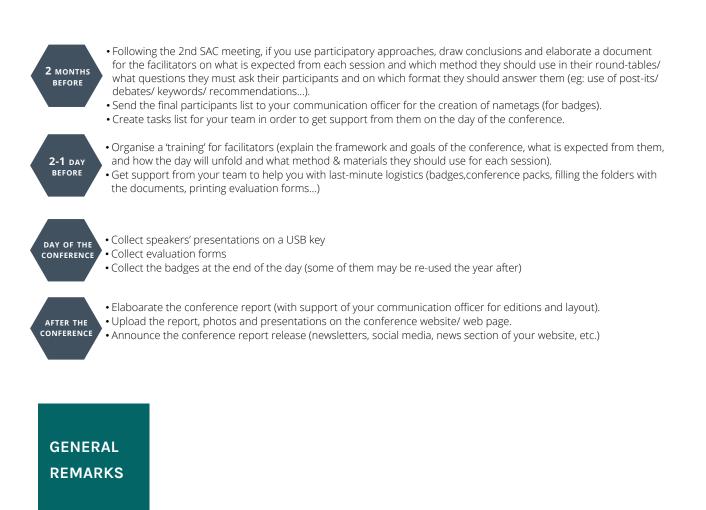
### NOTES

The guidelines and annexes contained in this memo are suggestions. Each event requires different needs, a different timing, and different type of actions.

The 'Responsible for the Conference' is the person responsible for the contents of the conference. The 'Task Planner' is the person responsible for the logistics of the event. Both these responsibilities can be taken up by the same person, or shared among several people: just make sure that the division of tasks is agreed upon from the beginning of the organisation process.

### INDICATIVE TIMELINE





Using participatory approaches (see Annex 1: Participatory approaches) is highly encouraged if you wish to obtain concrete products from the meeting you organise. The point of using participatory approaches is to stimulate and enhance brainstorming, sharing of knowledge, debates, and networking by using techniques that allow for dialogue among participants.

Ensuring interdisciplinary representation is highly encouraged if you wish to obtain results that are relevant for different types of communities related to the issue you tackle in your meeting. You are hence invited to select participants from different backgrounds.

In order to ensure the conference will yield good results, you may invite experts of the topic to take part in a 'Scientific Advisory Committee' (SAC). (see Annex 2: 'Scientific Advisory Committee').

A Task Planner should be appointed in advance in order to prepare a clear division of tasks among your team staff (in case your event requires support for logistics). The task planner will be in charge of preparing the Task List (see Annex 8: 'Task Planner duties & Tasks List'). In some cases, the 'Task Planner' is the same person as the 'Responsible for the conference'. If this is not the case, the 'Responsible for the conference' and the 'Task Planner' should frequently exchange on each other's progress.

Avoid scheduling the conference during public holidays and set a suitable date for you to have time to organise it well.

An IT technician should be present throughout the conference day for troubleshooting (discuss with the conference venue).

A vegetarian option needs to be available at all meals. Other dietary requirements might need to be covered as well upon request by participants (food allergy...).

In most cases, count for 10 to 15% of no show-up on the conference day, so if you wish to have a specific minimum number of participants, make sure to accept extra registrations.

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### PREPARATION & SAC INVOLVEMENT

Elaborate a 'Background document': it should answer the questions (what? who? where? when? how? why?). This document will help you create a framework of what participants will discuss during the event, and the format of outcomes they should produce. Based on this framework, you will be able to draw conclusions on how the day should unfold.

The 'Background document' is to be drafted by the 'Responsible for the conference' and discussed/ edited by the SAC during the 1st SAC meeting (see Annex 2 'Scientific Advisory Committee'). The SAC should help the 'Responsible for the conference' to elaborate a workable design of how the conference day will unfold (which topics will be tackled, how, with which questions, and based on which approach...).

The 'Background document' can be used as a basis for the elaboration of the programme. It may also be used to elaborate a 'Working document' intended for the participants. The 'Working document' should provide clear guidelines on the objectives of the conference and background information (e.g.: definitions of concepts/ explanation of atopic...).

# PARTICIPANTS SELECTION

Ask your team and SAC if they have contacts within the field of the topic of the conference.

Look for organisations that may have a network of contacts in the field and discuss with them whether they could help you to identify participants.

Disseminate information about your event on the net... (News section of your website, newsletter, social media).

(optional) Elaborate a press release in collaboration with your communication officer.

Send the conference flyer (if any) / webpage and the invitation e-mail.

(optional): do a follow-up of your invitation by calling people.

Note: personal emails work better than newsletters / bulk mails, so do not hesitate to send personal emails stating how interesting the conference could be for them given their background.

When you invite someone to be a speaker, set the conditions in advance (i.e. will they receive an allocation? if yes, of which amount? Will they receive a per diem? Will you cover their travel and accommodation costs? etc.)

If they arrive at the airport or at the station on the day of the conference itself, make sure to arrange a taxi pick-up for them.

Speakers should be thoroughly briefed in advance on the theme of the conference, the expertise of other speakers, and the type of focus you would like them to have in their presentation in order to maintain an internal logic between the talks (if necessary, you can write a brief document on the conference theme and main topics that will be presented in order to assess how complimentary a talk could be with another).

Inform the speakers about the importance of sticking to the allotted time for their presentation.

Ask the speakers for their CV (it will be useful to present the speakers in the programme, on the conference day when introducing them before their talk, and in the conference report later).

If time allows, try to ensure the plenary sessions are dynamic: presentations should not be too long and

participants should be given the opportunity to discuss and exchange with the speakers.

If you have a panel of speakers, make sure the chair knows the topic in details and will be skilled to allocate time to all panellists. Do not forget to provide water for panellists.

If you can get support from your communication officer on the invitation flyer contents and layout, discuss your needs/ expectations with this person. If not, make sure that your invitation includes the title of the event, the date and the venue, as well as the link to the conference webpage and the link to the registration form (if you do not have the capacity to develop a flyer/ invitation card, rely on your conference webpage (write a short paragraph on your event with the link to your event page).

Send invitation e-mails to selected persons/ organisations.

Compile the list of participants who registered to the conference.

From your participants list, create a Presence List which will have to be signed on the day of the conference itself, at the registration desk (this presence list will be important for the report of your event: you will be able to add statistics such as number of participants, fields of expertise, gender...).

# REGISTRATION PROCESS

If your IT team has the capacity, ask for the development of a conference website. If not,announce your event clearly on your main website (quick link on your homepage & creation of a webpage dedicated to the event).

If your communication team is in the capacity, request support for the brand identity of the conference (main images, optional logo, layout of the website, colours, typefaces, etc.)

If your IT team has the capacity, request the inclusion of a registration form in your conference website. If not, create other online tools (e.g. <u>Google registration forms</u>).

Elements to include in your registration form:

-Participants contact details (Title, name, surname, function, organisation, nationality, e-mail) -Special diet requirements (food allergy/ vegetarian/ other)

-optional: In case you use break-out group discussions, add a list of themes and ask them to register to the topic of their interest. If your list of topics is not ready yet, you can ask for their field of expertise or interest in an openquestion.

-optional: If your event lasts for more than one day, and if you organise social activities such as a dinner, a guided tour..., add a question on their interest in such activity in the registration form.

For events with international participants, you may need to arrange transportation from and to the airport. In this case, add a question on the dates of their arrival and departure in the registration form. If you also manage hotels booking, you may also add a question on accommodation requirements (special needs...).

Note: If you provide reimbursement of travel costs / per diem to your (international) speakers and/ or participants, make sure to have a reimbursement form ready (see Annex 4 'Reimbursement form'). For any type of reimbursement, make sure to discuss it with the financial department of your institute a few months before the event. They will inform you on how to proceed and which documents they need.

Create the participant badges (with logo of your organsiation and/or with the image used in other communication documents for the event & participant's name and organisation) / ask for support from your communication officer.

Differentiate the badges of the guests and the organisers (e.g. with a colour or a sticker for staff and/or for facilitators).

2 to 1 week prior to the conference day, send a final e-mail to all registered participants with updated information about the conference practicalities, working documents (if any), participants list, social

activities (if any), etc. and ask them to notify if they cancel their attendance.

Set up the registration desk roughly divided into three equal groups, e.g. A-J, J-N and N-Z. Divide the signature list likewise. Arrange badges alphabetically.

Tick the name of each participant to whom you handed out their badge (and optional conference packs/ printed documents), and indicate the way to the conference room.

At the end of the day, put a box on the registration table and indicate that people can leave their badges in the box (badges can be re-used for next events).



The Programme is drafted by the 'Responsible of the Conference' and based on the 'Background document'. The 'Background Document' and the 'Draft programme' are presented to the SAC during the 1st SAC meeting and should be further discussed via e-mail until a consensus is reached.

When you will divide the sessions, make sure to allow sufficient time for each (e.g. if you use participatory approaches, break-out group discussions require quite some time to produce tangible results).

The Programme should include the conference title, date, venue, location, logo(s) of the organiser(s) and partners (any organisation participating in the contents/ logistics/ resources... must be visible on the communication of the event).

Add the time slots and tiltle of each session (presentation/ speech, name and surname, job function, and organisation of the speaker; title of each break-out group discussion, etc.)

optional: Description of break-out groups: title, facilitator, questions to be addressed, expected outcomes.

The final programme should be available online at least 1 month before the start of the conference.

Refer to Annex 5: 'Example of Programme'.



If you use participatory approaches with break-out group discussions, you will need facilitators to ensure the discussions are going in the right track and the outputs are produced on time:

Read Annex 1: Participatory Approaches to get more information about facilitators' role.

To select facilitators, ask for who would accept to facilitate table discussions in your team and ask them whether they have contacts with people who would be willing to facilitate. Also ask the same question in the SAC.

The break-out group facilitators should receive an email a few days before the conference on the type of results expected from each session/question, and they should also be briefed on the day of the conference itself (e.g. in the early morning) or the day before (at the conference room or through a Skype call).

Facilitators may need reporters who will take notes during the discussions. In this case, also ensure reporters are selected prior to the meeting.

Participants should register to the break-out groups in advance, ideally when they register. If not possible, once your break-out groups topics will be set, send an e-mail to your participants and ask them to choose online (you can use a free online tool for surveys such as 'Survey Monkey' or a Google doc).

Participants should be equally distributed in the groups (make sure that interdisciplinarity is taken into account in order to avoid having tables filled with experts of the same discipline).

All the equipment should be prepared in advance (make sure you have post-its, markers, flipsharts, etc.)

Ensure water (and if possible, coffee and biscuits) is available in the break-out group rooms.



Prepare a 'Practical Information' document so that participants can easily reach the conference venue. The document should include: the address and map of the venue, as well as the itinerary from airport(s) and main station(s) to the venue / nearby hotels.

Optional: information on hotels in the area of the venue.

Contact details of the person in charge of the conference (name, email, mobile) and any other practical details, see Annex 6: 'Examples of Practical Information'

# CONFERENCE PACK

The Conference Pack should be prepared a few days before the conference. If you have bags and folders of your organisation, put all the documents in it. If not, let the participants take the papers from the registration table. Documents include:

-The final conference programme

-Participants list (Name, organisation, country, e-mail address)

- -(optional) Background documents to be used for discussions
- -The leaflet of your organisation
- -Other communication products of your organisation (e.g.: notepads/ pens/ USB keys...)
- -(Depending on the audience and if budget allows) A funny gift (e.g.: plant seeds/ book for children on the topic of the conference/ small chocolate boxes, etc.)
- -(optional) Handouts of powerpoint presentations
- -(optional) Welcome note from the director of your organisation presenting the goals of the meeting and why the theme is important
- -(optional and only for a 2-day event or more) Information about local transport (from/to: airport, venue, hotels, social activities...), address of the conference venue + map of hotels suggested by e-mail prior to the event

-(optional) Evaluation forms

- -(For a 2-day event or more) Contact details of the person in charge of the conference (name, mobile number, e-mail)
- -(optional; important for a 2-day event) Map of the city.

# EVALUATION FORMS

Refer to the Annex 7: 'Example of evaluation form' and customise it depending on your needs. Generally, the form should include questions on:

- -Overall evaluation of the conference (information received prior to the conference, conference programme, conference venue and facilities, local transport, food).
- -Speakers' presentations and break-out group discussions, facilitation, contents of the conference discussions, results, plenary sessions. Provide some space for comments.
- -Possibility to add a 'global mark for the conference' (1 to 5 points ranking system). This could be used as 'performance indicators' in the annual reporting of your organisation.

Evaluation forms may be put inside the Conference Pack or they can be distributed at the end of the day (e.g.: on the chairs of the plenary room during break time).

# RUNNING THE CONFERENCE

### LOGISTICS

-Use the template powerpoint presentation of your organisation (if any).

- -If budget allows, hire a photographer to cover the event.
- -Make sure that the people at the registration desk have the presence list.
- -Save all powerpoint presentations on USB stick (useful to publish them online post-conference).
- -Prepare boxes to collect evaluation forms & badges at the end of the event.

#### CATERING

- -Choose decent food for your participants and remember to offer vegetarian options.
- -Ideally and if budget allows, choose organic & local food, without plastic packaging.

### COFFEE BREAKS

- -In the morning, welcome your participants with coffee, tea, orange juice and biscuits/ pastries/ fruits. -Ensure water, coffee and tea for break times.
- -Remember to order some food for the coffee breaks. Biscuits and fruits are a good option. Depending on budget, you may order organic biscuits and local fruits.

### DINNER

- -(optional only for more than 1-day meeting) The conference dinner can be formal or informal. Participants should be informed about the location and time in the conference programme, as well as how to reach the dinner venue.
- -Ensure that a vegetarian option is available (and other dietary options if requested by participants).
- -In the case of a 2-day event, it is appreciated to organise a short excursion prior to the conference dinner. If the event takes place in Brussels, you may contact the Tourist Information to book a tour guide of the city.

# POST-EVENT ACTIONS

Make a statistical analysis of the evaluation forms received in order to understand the level of satisfaction of the participants and to consider their suggestions.

If time allows, write a brief 'Lessons learned' document that you will share with your team to improve upon your events.

Keep the contacts of your participants for further communication with them (and share your list of contacts with the communication officer of your organisation).

In terms of post-event communication, send a 'Thank you' e-mail to the participants for their participation, and a separate personalised one for your guest speakers, as well as for the facilitators.

Publish the conference programme, participants list, all presentations, and photographs of the event on the conference website, on your organisation's website, and on social media.

Write the report of the conference in collaboration with the SAC and participants (it is advised to send a draft version of the report to the participants before publishing it online).

If your conference report contains photographs, ensure that all participants agree with their image being published on a public report by sending an email to all asking whether anyone wishes not to be on the report (there is a legal right to control the use of one's image to maintain one's privacy).

Once approved, publish your report online (on your conference website, on your organisation's website and on social media).

Inform all participants and facilitators of the publication of your report online by providing them with a weblink and a text introducing the report so they can easily share it with others.

### BUDGET

Use a Budget Template (see Annex 9. Budget template) to build up your event budget. It is based on your budget that you will be able to decide what kind of activities and approaches you will be able to afford, and therefore constrain your programme.

Travel, accommodation and transports costs are covered by the participants themselves, except for the speakers, for whom you may cover their expenses (if the budget allows, you may do so for other international experts invited to the conference).

If your budget does not cover all expenses, consider asking for a registration fee.

The division of costs between your organisation and your partners should be clearly defined and agreed upon at the beginning of the organisation process.



- ANNEX 1: PARTICIPATORY APPROACH
- ANNEX 2: SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SAC)
- ANNEX 3: AUDIO-VISUAL NEEDS
- ANNEX 4: REIMBURSEMENT FORM
- ANNEX 5: EXAMPLE OF PROGRAMME
- ANNEX 6: EXAMPLE OF PRACTICAL INFORMATION
- ANNEX 7: EXAMPLE OF EVALUATION FORM
- ANNEX 8: TASK PLANNER DUTIES & TASKS LIST
- ANNEX 9: BUDGET TEMPLATE

## ANNEX 1 PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

This Annex was produced by Estelle Balian, biodiversity expert of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform. It is divided in three sections:

- 1. General aspects regarding the use of participation and criteria to consider before choosing the participatory process.
- 2. Possible agenda and potential questions used in a participative event.
- 3. Tasks and role of Table Facilitators.

#### 1. PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES AND CRITERIA TO CONSIDER

#### PARTICIPATION PRINCIPLES

We are presenting here a summary of some key principles of participation proposed by *Dr Wilcox* (1994) to identify the basic framework of a participatory process:

The three dimensions for the participation framework are:

-The level of participation: how much the participants know what is expected from them -The process: from initiating, to doing and reviewing

-The people: who are the stakeholders and what are their interests and requirements for involvement.

#### The level of participation

This is a key criterion that should be clarified by organisers. The level of participation follows a five-rung ladder:

**INFORMING:** Telling people what is planned; participation is passive with no empowerment or ownership of planned activities.

CONSULTING: Offering some options, listening to feedback but not allowing new ideas. It is most commonly done through focus groups or interviews.

**DECIDING** TOGETHER: Encouraging participants to provide additional options and new ideas and opportunities for deciding jointly the best way forward. Participatory activities are then more appropriate to encourage joint analysis, planning and decision-making. Stakeholders can then take ownership of the process.

ACTING TOGETHER: Stakeholders with different interests not only decide together but build partnerships to carry it out.

SUPPORTING: Helping stakeholders develop their own agenda by proposing a call for proposals, another event, the creation of a network, etc.

The five levels illustrate that participation can be understood in various ways. It is critical to clarify the level of participation that is intended and achievable, depending on different criteria (e.g.: time allocated for participatory sessions during the event). Otherwise stakeholders might experience confusion and frustration.

The participatory approach we are proposing is more related to the levels of deciding and acting together as participants are stimulated to provide their own ideas and come to an agreement on priorities.

#### THE PROCESS

Your participatory event depends on a process where you need to think through what you want, consider options, work through difficulties and obstacles. There are five steps in this process:

-THE INITIATION & ANALYSIS PHASE: Triggered by some events or people, a first analysis is carried out to identify topics that will be of the highest interest to your participants.

-THE DESIGN PHASE: The most important phase where the process is discussed, the objectives and aims are developed, the potential problems are identified and solutions are considered, the responsibilities, resources, staff, are identified, and an action plan and timeline is agreed upon. During this phase, you will also need to make decisions on how questions will be tackled (what type of techniques will be used by the facilitators to make the participants produce the expected results)

-THE ACTION PHASE: An action plan is implemented and activities are conducted to ensure appropriate invitations of stakeholders, implementation of the participatory approach design, logistics and communication.

-THE PARTICIPATION PHASE: the participatory method is used during the meeting to address the objectives as developed during the Design Phase.

-THE REVIEWING PHASE: An evaluation is conducted to assess if the methods used met the goals. Reporting back to stakeholders is also put in place during this phase, and if budget allows, follow-up of activities is planned.

#### THE PEOPLE

In developing a participation process, it is important to clearly understand who is involved and what their level of responsibilities, involvement and expectations are. Stakeholders have different interests and you as organiser might also have a specific agenda. It is critical that you reflect on the role you have in the process and where lies the power and control.

Some examples of questions that can help understand the context of the participation process and your own role in it (*Wilcox* 1994): -Who are you?

- -Someone in a position of power controlling funds or other resources.
- -Someone with influence because you are planning or managing a participation process.
- -Someone with professional expertise or knowledge.

What do you want to achieve by using a participatory style?

-To try and develop plans that meet people's expectations.

-To give people a say in the plans.

-To give people control over the solutions, to empower them.

Who will have the final say over decisions? -Yourself

-Everyone who gets involved

-A political institution or other body

A major drawback in organising a participation process is often that the various organisers have diverging opinions, are not clear about what they want to achieve, and are not really ready to share control in the decision-making process.

A main task is then to identify the key stakeholders who will be involved in the participatory process and to evaluate potential obstacles and solutions to engage them. Communication to stakeholers should be well prepared. A mapping of the stakeholders can help visualise who are the key actors to involve and whether they are already engaged or easily reachable.

Summary of main tasks suggested by Wilcox:

- 1- Clarify why the participation process is being started and who has the final say.
- 2-Clarify the aims of the process and how progress will be evaluated.
- 3-Identify key stakeholders including community interest groups, civil society, private sector, etc.
- 4-Run a workshop session(s) within your own network or organisation to ensure key people are clear about the purpose of the participation process, the roles and responsibilities, and the answers to basic questions which will be asked when you go public.
- 5-Consider the level of participation (consulting, deciding together) and in the light of that decide how to adapt the method.
- 6-Assess what resources are available and conditions attached to them and adapt the methods and aims accordingly.
- 7-Evaluate technical and administrative services available to support planning and event organisation.

- 8-Review whether your organisation will be able to respond to the feedback (take stakeholders ideas in consideration), and follow through on any decision reached.
- 9-Review your timescale, and prepare an action plan based on the level of participation you chose and practical constraints (number of participants, budget, political constraints...).

#### 2. AGENDA & PROCESS: MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE PROPOSED PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

We propose an invented case study around a participatory event that would have been organised by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform. In this case study, the Platform would like to launch a Community of Practice on "Biodiversity & Urban Planning". The goal of creating such Community of Practice would be to offer scientists, architects, urban designers, transport experts, public authorities, policy makers, and other stakeholders, opportunities to meet, exchange expertise, launch projects, collaborate on current and future initiatives. In this context, a first meeting would have three main objectives: to inform and explain the project, to identify key actors and prioritise activities, and to identify barriers or constraints and propose solutions.

#### PROCESS

The event can last for one or several days and should involve all key stakeholders. The participatory method is based on three principles: Transparency, optimisation of the input from all the expertise present, and legitimacy.

#### METHOD

Participants are assigned to different break-out groups to ensure a good mixture of backgrounds, viewpoints, organisation types and expertise. At each table, a facilitator ensures discussions are keeping on track and everyone has a chance to contribute. Discussion sessions follow a roadmap leading participants from one question to another in order to answer the objectives of the meeting. For each question, ideas are generated and transmitted to a team of people in charge of sorting and "theming" the incoming ideas, and displaying the resulting themes/main common ideas on a screen/flipsharts.

It is possible to organise voting/prioritisation of themes for each question by using paper spreadsheets (e.g.: sticky dots on flipsharts posters) or voting keypads (for high tech version).

Depending on the use of high or low-technology, there is a limit in the maximum number of tables. In the 'low-tech' version, ideas are written on paper cards and transferred manually to the theme team. There should be no more than 10 tables of maximum 10 people including a facilitator. It is best to have more tables with less people than few tables with a lot of people. An average of 5 participants plus one facilitator is ideal.

It is possible to use a 'high-tech' version for which the number of tables and participants can greatly increase. For instance, '21st Century summits' organised by GlobalVoices have gathered up to 9000 people using the support of computers. It was used by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform in 2010 for the event "Positive Visions for Biodiversity". The high tech version requires the support of a professional company to implement the needed technology. For basic events that do not receive external funding/ sponsors, the budget will not be sufficient to cover the costs.

#### NECESSARY STAFF:

- -Lead Facilitator: he/she leads the programme on the main stage and keeps activities on track. -Table Facilitators: they ensure that discussions are flowing in each break-out group and reach the expected outcomes.
- -Theme Team Members: For 100 participants, four to six people are needed for the theme team. They are in charge of sorting out incoming ideas and gathering them under common themes. Their role is important and they should be able to process quickly a lot of information and summarise it efficiently.
- -Area Facilitators or 'Runners': They provide support to the table facilitators in case of problems and bring the idea cards to the theme team table.

#### BUDGET:

The budget depends on the number of participants and whether there are travel and accommodation expenses to cover, the involvement of technology and professional consultants, the access to in-house facilities and staff, the payment of speakers, etc. A strict estimation of the resources is critical and will frame the format, number of participants and outcomes of the participation process. In the budget, communication should also be included to ensure the meeting attracts appropriate stakeholders and outcomes have some impact and are widely disseminated.

#### OUTCOME:

Participants of this event should receive a summary of the meeting results in bullet points as well as main recommendations at the end of the event

-Participants should be kept informed of further

steps taken after the event (e.g.: regarding the Community of Practice creation) and should be involved in future consultations and meetings.

#### EXAMPLE OF EVENT PROGRAMME

9h00- 09h30 Opening by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform & Speech by local authorities

9h30 - 10h00 First round table, presentations, two introduction questions: "Why did you come to this meeting?" "What means Biodiversity & Urban Planning for you?" The questions should be answered with the round table of presentation and it should go quickly.

10h00 -10h30 Coffee break / Theme Team works on first question

10h30 -11h00 Presentation of other Platform Communities of Practice and results of the first questions

11h00-11hh15 Introduction to the participative process and objectives of the meeting

11h15-12h00:

First session on: "What benefits a Belgian Community of Practice on Biodiversity & Urban Planning can bring to the community?"

-First phase of brainstorming

12h00 - 13h00 Lunch

13h00-13h15 Results first session and voting (voting will be possible if equipment is available)

13h15- 14h

Second session: "What activity would you promote in particular in the Community of Practice?" -First phase of brainstorming

-Second phase of discussion on some of the brainstorming ideas

14h00-14h15 Quizz on the local urban specificities (e.g. funny quizz on Brussels specificities regarding historical/ recent urban planning)

14h15-14h30 Results of second session and voting

14h30-15h30

Third session on: "What are your main questions/concerns about the Community of Practice?" -First phase of brainstorming

-First phase of brainstorming

-Second phase of discussion on some of the brainstorming ideas

15h30 Coffee break

16h-16h15 Results of the third session and voting

16h15-17h

Fourth session: "What do you think should be done to address these concerns, by whom?" -First phase of brainstorming

-Second phase of discussion on some of the brainstorming ideas

17h-17h30 Platform/ Belspo closing remarks and explanation of follow-up and next steps

17h30-18h15 Results Fourth session and if manageable, distribution of final report/ draft final report.

18h15 End of meeting

#### Example of Retro-planning

The preparation phase of the participatory event is critical and we provide here some guidance on the timeframe and retro-planning of activities. See an example of retro-planning online: <u>http://www.biodiversity.be/2276</u>

#### OTHER METHODS

We provide here some information on two other methods of participatory approaches that can be used. More examples and a complete comparison on participatory methods are available in the "Participatory Methods Toolkit. A practitioner's manual" developed by the King Baudouin Foundation (2005).

#### 1/ The world café

"The World Café is a creative process for facilitating collaborative dialogue and the sharing of knowledge and ideas to create a living network of conversation and action." In our case-study of the Community of Practice creation, a world café event can be a first step in assessing what the participants know about the links between biodiversity and urban planning.

#### PROCESS

Round tables are set to create a friendly atmosphere like in a café. At regular intervals (every 20-30'), participants move to another table. A table host or facilitator is assigned to each table and in charge of summarising the previous conservation to the new comers so they can integrate previous ideas and develop them or generate new ones. At the end of the process the main ideas are presented in plenary and follow-up activities can be discussed.

The World Café method is appropriate to engage a large group in an open conversation to share knowledge, to stimulate creative thinking, to explore possibilities for action. It can be used with people meeting for the first time or with people who know each other. The method is not useful if the organisers mainly want to inform in a one-way manner, or if there is already a determined solution they want to put forward. It is also not adapted for less than 12 participants.

For a detailed description of the procedure, please refer to: Brown, J. (2002) The World Café: A Resource Guide for Hosting Conversations That Matter. MillValley, CA: Whole Systems Associates.

An important aspect is the format of the questions. It is often more effective to ask people open-ended questions that invite the exploration of possibilities and to connect them with their values, rather than focus them on obstacles and "who is to blame". People need to understand and feel connected to it: "A powerful question is simple and clear, is thought-provoking, generates energy, focuses inquiry, surfaces unconscious assumptions, opens new possibilities, seeks what is useful".

For a World Café meeting, a social hospitable atmosphere is a key parameter of success. The most important is for participants to feel in a safe environment where they can express themselves and listen to others. Organisers should start the process by explaining that everyone has the right to give his point of view freely, as the goal is to mix the diversity to generate creativity. The table hosts have an important role in maintaining a friendly dynamics in the conversation and allowing everyone to have a fair share of the talking time and ensuring respect of all opinions. Facilitators should pay attention to the quality of the listening as well as the talking time, participants need to be engaged in listening to others' ideas in an open way. Tables should include between three and five people to have optimal conversation conditions.

The results of the table conversation can be displayed in many ways:

- -A 'Gallery Tour' can be organised during coffee break where table hosts place the flipchart sheets from their tables on the wall so all participants can take a tour of the group's ideas.
- -Participants can also summarise their main insight on one big notepaper and clip it on a blackboard. This can allow clustering of related ideas to plan next steps for the group discussions.
- -Some Cafés create a newspaper or storybook to bring the results of their work to larger audiences after the event. A visual recorder can create a picture book along with text as documentation.

The table hosts can be selected facilitators or they can be designated among the participants. The other participants will then serve as travellers or 'ambassadors of meaning'. The travellers carry key ideas, themes and questions into their new conversations allowing for a cross-pollination of ideas. At the beginning of the consecutive rounds, the table hosts welcome the new guests and briefly share the main ideas, themes and questions of the initial conversation. Encourage guests to link and connect ideas coming from their previous table conversations – listening carefully and building on each other's contributions.

After a few rounds, a session of sharing with the whole group should be organised to identify patterns and possibilities for action. The best is to allow each table to report to the whole group and explain what ideas were most important for them and record them on a common flipchart or on the screen.

Resources, budget and timing:

Usually a world café event would last between 4 and 6 hours depending upon the topic and ambitions of the project. It is possible to organise multiple Café events on consecutive days. The budget and time necessary to prepare will depend on the number of participants but can be quite small for groups of 20-30 participants who do not need to travel and are readily available.

#### CONCLUSION

The method is relatively easy to implement and for small groups does not require high budget. The main pitfall is that conversations can sometimes remain on the same ideas and do not have an incremental thinking resulting in repetitive conversation at the different tables. The table hosts have the responsibility to make the conversation evolve to overcome this risk. The method is also not adequate to develop consensus and to lead to decisions. The objective is more to "share meaning and experience" and to increase the common knowledge on the topic. Participants will not share the same point of view but that they can enlarge their individual understanding and have a better appreciation of the collective situation on the topic and possible actions to carry on.

#### REFERENCES

Brown, J. (2002) The World Café: A Resource Guide for Hosting Conversations That Matter. Mill Valley, CA: Whole Systems Associates. The World Café website: http://www.theworldcafe.com

#### 2/ Focus group

A focus group is a planned discussion among a small group (4-12 persons) of stakeholders facilitated by a skilled moderator. It is designed to obtain information about participants' preferences and values related to the topic and why these are held by observing the structured discussion of an interactive group in a permissive, non-threatening environment.

In the context of the creation of a Community of Practice on Biodiversity & Urban Planning, focus groups can be organised to prepare a larger consultation event. The objective would be to gain a better picture of the stakeholders landscape, their values and expectations. It can also be a follow-up activity after a large consultation event to bring together groups of stakeholders to develop action plans.

#### OBJECTIVES

Focus groups can be used for initial concept exploration, generating creative ideas and assessing stakeholders differences in opinion. They are not effective for providing information to the general public or responding to general questions, nor are they of much use to build consensus or make decisions.

Focus groups are very useful to evaluate the nature and intensity of stakeholders' concerns and values about the issues, obtain a snapshot of public opinion when time constraints or finances do not allow a full survey, obtain input from individuals as well as interest groups, obtain detailed reaction and input from a stakeholder to preliminary proposals or options, collect information on the needs of stakeholders surrounding a particular issue, determine what additional information or modification may be needed to develop consultation issues or proposals further.

#### PROCESS

Focus groups are quite easy to organise as they do not involve many participants. However, much attention should be paid to the questions to be addressed by the focus group and the targeted participants.

At the focus group event, which usually lasts for a few hours, the moderator leads the group through a semi-structured discussion to draw out the views of all the participants and then summarises all of the main issues and perspectives that were expressed. After the event, organisers analyse all results of the focus group(s) conducted and produce a report. Focus groups can be organised in several sessions to have an incremental process and go more in depth in participants' views and expectations.

The preparation consists mainly in identifying the purpose and the expected outcome of the focus group, to assess background information and identify the targeted participants and the number of focus groups required. The moderator should have a set of questions (2-5 key questions) but keep the process flexible and facilitate participants interaction. Questions should be clear, relatively short and use simple wording. Participants should have received sufficient background to minimise assumptions and place them in the appropriate context. The ideal focus group size ranges from 4 to 12 persons, with recommendations ranging between 4-8, 6-10, 7-10 and 8-12 persons. The moderator should have a good knowledge of the topic in order to ask appropriate follow-up questions.

#### RESOURCE, BUDGET AND TIMING

Focus groups require at least one month of planning and the time required for writing the final report. This method is relatively low in cost for each individual event but the total cost will depend upon how many focus groups are conducted on the subject.

#### CONCLUSION

Focus groups are relatively inexpensive and the format is flexible, allowing participants to question each other and to elaborate upon their answers. Sometimes individuals are intimidated and do not dare to express their opinion resulting in a group thinking dominated by a few more dominant speakers. The role of the moderator is then critical to identify this pitfall and create space for each individual opinion.

A focus group needs to build synergy and secure cooperation from the members. Thus, it is crucial that communication be open and trust is built quickly. This helps encourage new ideas. It is necessary to choose the right focus group members, as well as facilitator, in order to make the information flow positively.

#### References

Dürrenberger, Gregor. Focus Groups in Integrated Assessment: A manual for a participatory tool. ULYSSES Working Paper WP-97-2. This can be downloaded at: http://www.zit.tu-darmstadt.de/ ulysses/docmain.htm

Einsiedel, A., Brown L., & Ross, F. (1996). How to Conduct Focus Groups: A Guide for Adult and Continuing Education Managers and Trainers. University of Saskatchewan: University Extension Press.

#### **3. TABLE FACILITATORS: ROLE AND TASKS**

The table facilitators are key for the success of participatory processes.

Description of the role of a table facilitator:

- -At the beginning of your session, ask for a very brief round table (only name, discipline or expertise, organisation), no more than 10 minutes.
- -Listen, question, note, write on computer, distil ideas.
- -Prepare idea cards (clear handwriting, understandable, short simple and clear sentences), place them in little holders. Use the motto of "one card, one idea" and make sure there are not too many cards with similar ideas. It is important to receive the support of several of the table participants and to have a clear formulation to write a card. Cards should be sent to the Theme Team on a regular basis, not all at the end.

- -Note other key or striking ideas not directly in line with current task ("Joker" card).
- -Help bring discussion back on track when people get sidetracked.
- -Make sure that one or two people do not dominate the discussion. If someone is silent, see if they would like to contribute.
- -You can contribute your own thoughts, but do not abuse position.
- -Draw attention to interesting ideas from other tables, as the summary will be displayed on screen during the discussions.
- -Keep track of time, always very short, nobody gets much time to speak.

In short, the facilitator will help to start and maintain discussions going, and report ideas to the Theme Team (runners will pick up cards on the card holders), who will distil the ideas in near-real time and display them. The display should help move discussions along and to keep the discussions at the various tables coherent.

Facilitators must not abuse their position and remain neutral to the discussions. Furthermore, they will be responsible for noting all views, including the ones different from their own.

Facilitators will keep track of the time, which is always very short. Given the number of people around each table, nobody will have as much time to speak as they might like, so comments should be brief, focused and to the point. Facilitators may find themselves with the difficult task of asking participants to make their point and allow others to speak.

Similarly, since everybody is present at the workshop to help construct something, and had to prioritise it over some other activity, out of respect for other participants we ask people to focus on the discussion and not to use laptops to work on other things.

If there is a vote or poll using spreadsheets or keypads, facilitators should ensure that all participants on their table vote. The results of the vote will be displayed in near-real time.

Facilitators should be provided with a brief and preferably attend a short training session before the event to better understand the objectives, the process, and their roles.

Contents of the brief for facilitators:

- -A summary of the meeting goals
- -A brief description of the working space, number of tables and number of participants per table -A Description of the Method
- -A description of expected outcomes, timing and techniques to be used for each session.
- -Identification of support people designated in the participants: a reporter to help take notes, a time keeper to keep an eye on the time.



SAC

The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) is composed of 4 to 10 people, including experts on the topic to be discussed during the conference. The SAC should be composed of different profiles. The SAC aims at supporting the conference planning and design:

-Provide input on the 'Background document'

- -Suggest ideas for the Programme
- -Select participants to be invited
- -Suggest ideas for the topics to be discussed during the event and on the format of the event.

The SAC is intended to be a helpful support in making decisions pertaining to the direction the conference should take. They ensure the proper scientific consistency of the conference and provide input on how to make sure the goals will be reached.

Ideas of topics to be discussed during SAC meetings:

- 1. What is your vision? What would you like to accomplish in this event?
- 2. What would be, in an ideal situation, the results of this meeting?
- 3. What is the fundamental purpose of this event? Why is this event organised? What

makes this event unique?

- 4. How will the success of the event be measured?
- 5. Will the results of this conference be in line with your organisation's mission and vision?
- 6. What kind of methodologies could be use to reach these goals?
- 7. Is your projected budget aligned with our goals?
- 8. Is there adequate time to prepare for the event?
- 9. What can each member of the SAC contribute to this event?
- 10. Regarding the programme, what would the members of the SAC think if they had to be participants themselves? Do people really care about the chosen speakers? Will the speakers' messages be relevant? Will the techniques chosen be adapted to the expected outcomes?
- 11. What could the expectations of the participants be?
- 12. What are the communication activites planned to promote the event?
- 13. What is the plan for the follow-up of this meeting?
- 14. What kind of impacts will your event have on your organisation / on participants?

# ANNEX 3 AUDIO-VISUAL NEEDS

To run a conference, you will normally need the following:

- -1 microphone for speakers
- -2 microphones for the plenary (to be used for questions from the audience)
- -1 podium for the speaker
- -2 screens (1 on the left, 1 on the right) (size: 2 metres; necessary when you have more than 4 lines of chairs, which is the case when you invite over 70 participants)
- -Sound system
- -1 beamer for the presentations
- -1 small screen (usually 32 inches) in front of the speakers (at his/her feet) for them to see their presentation and a remote control to change slides
- -1 stage (if you plan to have a panel discussion)
- -1 IT expert in the stage-management (the stage-management is the small area, usually within the conference room, where someone manages the sound, the light, the screen connection to the USB key where presentations are stored, the microphones, etc.)
- -You can organise a web-streaming of your conference but this will be more costly

Best is to get the speakers' presentations by email a few days before the conference, so that the event team can make test with the presentations. It is not compulsory, except if the speakers has a short movie within their Powerpoint presentation (this does not always work and tests the day before are highly recommended).

### **REIMBURSEMENT FORM**

### **EVENT INFORMATION**

### Event title:

Date of the event:

City and country:

### PERSON TO REIMBURSE

Name:

Country:

Organisation:

Address:

Arrival date:

Departure date:

I agree to receive a per diem of ...... Euros/day to cover accommodation, food and local transports.

Bank name:

Bank code:

SWIFT or BIC code:

IBAN Account number:

Date:

Signature:



Preliminary programme

#### **Conservation Research Matters**

Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2013

Belspo, Avenue Louise Louizalaan 231, 1050 Brussels

08:30-09:00	Registration & coffee					
09:00-09:40	Welcome & introduction Dr. Aline Van der Werf, Belgian Biodiversity Platform - BELSPO Dr. Sonia Vanderhoeven, Belgian Biodiversity Platform - DEMNA, SPW Dr. Kristina Articus-Lepage, Belgian Biodiversity Platform - ULB					
09:40-10:00	<b>Dr. Thomas Brooks</b> , Head of IUCN Science & Knowledge 'Biodiversity conservation knowledge products and the science-policy interface'					
10:00-10:50	Participatory Process I: Research Priorities Facilitated by Estelle Balian, Belgian Biodiversity Platform - RBINS					
10:50-11:20	Coffee break					
11:20-12:00	Continuation of Participatory Process I					
12:00-12:30	Plenary reporting on research priorities					
12:30-13:30	Lunch – illustration of Bio-Gr by André Heughebaert, Belgian Biodiversity Platform - ULB					
13:30-13:50	<b>Dr. Steven Dessein</b> , General Director <i>ad interim</i> of the National Botanic Garden of Belgium 'Red Listing Plants: How and why does it matter?'					
13:50-14:10	<b>Dr. Lynn Dicks</b> , University of Cambridge 'Working together to protect biodiversity: processes that generate effective collaboration'					
14:10-15:30	Participatory Process II: Challenges in conservation					
15:40-16:00	Coffee break					
16:00-16:30	Plenary reporting on conservation challenges					
16:30-17:30	Closing of event					
	_					
	Biodiversity.be					



# PRACTICAL INFORMATION

#### VENUE

belsp

The meeting will be held at the Belgian Science Policy Office (<u>BELSPO</u>). Location: Avenue Louise, 231 - Brussels, Belgium.

#### ACCESS

BELSPO is located near by 'Bailli/Baljuw' stops (3 minutes walk). This neighbourhood is easily accessible by public transport.

#### FROM TRAIN STATIONS

-From Brussels Midi/ South Station

Tramway 81: (direction Montgomery) get off at 'Bailli' stop.

Metro line 2: (direction Elisabeth) get off at 'Louise/ Louiza' and from Louise stop, take the Tramway 94 to 'Bailli'.

Taxi: circa 10 min journey, depending on traffic (10-15 Euros).

-From Brussels Central Station

**Bus 29:** (direction 'Hof Ten Berg') step down at 'Parc'. From 'Parc', take the **Tramway 93**, and step down at 'Bailli' stop.

-From Brussels Nord/ North Station

**Bus 61:** (direction 'Montgomery') and step down at 'Botanique'. From Botanique stop, take the **Tramway 93** (direction 'Legrand') and step down at 'Bailli'.

#### FROM SN BRUSSELS AIRPORT

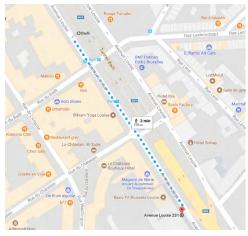
Train: Take the train to Brussels Midi/ South station (20 min. journey) From Brussels Midi Station, take the **metro 2** and step down at 'Louise/ Louiza' stop. From Louise stop, take the **Tramway 94** to 'Bailli'. By taxi, ca. 45 minutes journey depending on traffic (around 50 Euros).

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please consult the following websites: For train services: <u>www.sncb.be</u> For public transports in Brussels (bus, metro, tram): <u>www.stib.be</u>

#### ACCOMODATION

Hotels can be booked online on websites such as booking.com: https://booki.ng/2xLjbq3



3 min. walk from Bailli to BELSPO: 231, Avenue Louise



### **EVALUATION FORM**

Thank you for attending our meeting! We hope you were satisfied with our event. Thank you for providing feedback on your evaluation of the meeting.

	Excellent	Rather good	Acceptable	Poor			
Prior to the meeting							
Communication on the goals of the conference							
Communication on the proceedings of the							
conference							
Communication on practicalities							
Conference day	Conference day						
Programme & proceedings of the day							
Relevance of the approach to tackle the topic							
Quality of the plenary sessions							
Quality of the break-out group sessions (if any)							
Presentations and discussions							
Informative quality and appropriateness of the							
keynote speakers' presentations							
Informative quality of the organisers'							
presentations regarding the goals and							
proceedings of the day							
Quality of the discussions in break-out group							
discussions							
Logistics							
Registration desk efficiency							
Food & drinks							
Venue							
Timing (was the allocated time for discussions							
convenient?)							
Time of the year convenience							

#### Additional comments, feedback and suggestions

### In which field do you currently work?

Policymaking - Natural sciences - Social sciences - Government/public administration -Private, For-Profit - Private, Non-Profit - Consulting - NGO - Other (please specify)

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Thank you for your feedback! We hope to see you again in our events! Visit <u>www.biodiversity.be</u> for more information and follow us on Twitter: Biodiversity\_be

# ANNEX 8 TASK PLANNER DUTIES

The Task Planner is the responsible for ensuring that logistics matters are taken care of. Both functions of the Task Planner and the Responsible of the Conference (focusing on the contents) can be taken up by the same person. If not, ensure collaboration between the two persoons.

#### PRIOR TO THE EVENT

- -Be involved from the beginning in drafting the programme
- -Be in regular contact with the Responsible for the conference (if different from the Task planner)
- -Be in contact with the venue contact point (get all information about facilities, procedures, and specific needs...) and make sure to manage all that is needed (rooms booking, requests for coffee, tea, water, etc.)
- -If budget allows, hire a photographer or select a colleague for the event and keep them informed on your needs
- -Book flights and hotel rooms for the speakers, in collaboration with the Responsible for the Conference
- -Check material to bring/buy for the conference (folders, promotional products...) & order more when necessary
- -Prepare a task list for your colleagues so they know where and when they will need to help you (e.g. for the creation of badges, for the registration table set-up, for receiving the food from catering companies on the day of the event, etc.)
- -Elaborate an evaluation form
- -Create the list of participants based on the registration file
- -Create a signature list for registration + signs with letters to ease the work of the registration desk
- -Create badges (with coloured sticky dots if needed for break-out groups)
- -Create welcome slides and choose music (if appropriate to the audience
- -Create a slide with your logo (to be shown on the screen in between plenary sessions/ presentations...), save it on a USB key, and give it to the IT even support of the day

- -Organise an ad-hoc meeting to discuss the tasks list (keep colleagues informed also about what they will be asked to do during the conference day)
- -Prepare a badge box to display on the registration table at the end of the day (the badges may be re-used for other events)
- -Buy gifts for speakers (if appropriate and if budget allows)
- -Book taxis for the speakers (if required)
- -Print out all documents needed for the Welcome packs
- -One/ two day(s) prior to the conference, prepare the Welcome packs.

#### ON THE EVENT DAY

- -Set up registration desk and be there with at least two colleagues
- -Get the Powerpoint presentations and hand them over to the multimedia team (who will take care of showing them on the screens) (do that the day before the meeting if possible)
- -Check in advance the meeting rooms to ensure all is set (computer & screen in all rooms if needed; coffee, tea, water & biscuits in all rooms...)
- -Make sure that the photographer receives all the information on your needs
- -Check that coffee-break, lunch (and dinner if any) are delivered on time
- -Be around all the time to respond to any request or emergency
- -Collect evaluation forms at the end of the conference
- -Make sure that speakers are on time to leave
- -Book taxi for speakers (if not done in advance).

#### AFTER THE EVENT

- -Participate in the elaboration of the Conference report
- -Process the evaluation forms and present the results of the satisfaction level of the participants to your team
- -Create a photo gallery and add them to the conference website.

# ANNEX 9 BUDGET TEMPLATE

A budget template will help you to manage all the costs involved in the organisation of a meeting. This is an example of a budget template for events:

		Budge	t for events		
Expenses					
				Estimated	Actual
Total Expenses				€0,00	€0,00
	Estimated	Actual		Estimated	Actual
Site			Food & drinks		
Room and hall fees	€0,00	€0,00	Lunch	€0,00	€0,00
Site staff	€0,00	€0,00	Drinks	€0,00	€0,00
Equipment	€0,00	€0,00	Cookies/ pastries (AM & Breaks)	€0,00	€0,00
Tables and chairs	€0,00	€0,00	Dinner	€0,00	€0,00
Totals	€0,00	€0,00	Cuttlery	€0,00	€0,00
			Other	€0,00	€0,00
Speakers			Staff	€0,00	€0,00
Speakers fees (incl. Total of spea	€0,00	€0,00	Totals	€0,00	€0,00
Travel (for all speakers)	€0,00	€0,00			
Hotel (for all speakers)	€0,00	€0,00	Multimedia		
Taxi (for all speakers)	€0,00	€0,00	Photographer	€0,00	€0,00
Other	€0,00	€0,00	Sound system/ lighting	€0,00	€0,00
Totals	€0,00	€0,00	Video team	€0,00	€0,00
			Totals	€0,00	€0,00
Participants					
Travel	€0,00	€0,00	Prizes/ Gifts		
Hotel	€0,00	€0,00	Prize	€0,00	€0,00
Taxi	€0,00	€0,00	Gifts	€0,00	€0,00
Other	€0,00	€0,00	Totals	€0,00	€0,00
Totals	€0,00	€0,00			
	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		Miscellaneous		
Publicity			Office supply (flipsharts, post-it, etc)	€0,00	€0,00
Graphic design work	€0,00	€0,00	Office supply 2	€0,00	€0,00
Printing cost 1	€0,00	€0,00	Office supply 3	€0,00	€0,00
Printing cost 2	€0,00	€0,00	Post-event publications	€0,00	€0,00
Printing cost 3	€0,00	€0,00	Telephone	€0,00	€0,00
Printing cost 4	€0,00	€0,00	Transportation/ deliveries	€0,00	€0,00
Printing cost 5	€0,00	€0,00	Stationery supplies	€0,00	€0,00
Postage	€0,00	€0,00	Other	€0,00	€0,00
Totals	€0,00	€0,00	Totals	€0,00	€0,00

