# Forest Information System for Europe (FISE)

# Initiation meeting

# DG ENV, EEA, JRC, EdW, Tracasa

Location: EEA, room 8.2.30

Timing: 24 April 2018, 10:00-16:00 CET

Participants:

* DG ENV: Peter Loeffler
* EEA: Annemarie Bastrup-Birk, Christian Xavier Prosperini, Sebastien Petit, Andrus Meiner
* JRC: Peter Vogt, Bernd Eckhardt
* Tracasa: Josu Ramirez Mariezcurrena, Koldo Goñi Iza
* Eau de Web: Miruna Bădescu, Andreea Popescu, Tiberiu Ichim

Version: 1.1, including feedback from the JRC

## Meeting Objectives

* Ensure that everyone understands the project’s scope
* Clarify the expectations of all key project stakeholders
* Identify project risks
* Discuss the project plans and detail those for 2018

## Agenda

1. Tour de table
2. Presentation of the project’s goals by DG ENV
3. Review the Project Charter to understand the project scope:
   1. Discussion on the overall approach to the project
   2. Discussion on various deliverables, especially those that should get developed first
   3. Agreement on a provisional schedule for the deliverables
   4. Discuss risks, constraints and assumptions.
   5. Describe and discuss the project roles and responsibilities
   6. Discuss the project plans needed for the project
4. Present any project supporting tools: work standards and flows, Taskman
5. AOB

## Minutes

1. **Tour de table**

The attendees present their activity and backgrounds, and explain their role in the project.

1. **Presentation of the project’s goals by DG ENV and the EEA**

Peter Loeffler presents the project and its history. The project is endorsed by everyone: the Member States, the EU Parliament, the forest sector, the forest administration, the forest industry; in other words, there a big need for information on this topic. It will publish officially endorsed, quality, modelled, and disseminated data, with an emphasis on the data display and presentation.

He thinks the FISE data should be presented together and crossed-checked with other existing data, such as the officially submitted carbon data in the context of biomass, biomass extraction, etc. For instance, the system should allow country queries and country comparisons.

A pilot system is expected to be delivered by the end of this year, to undergo thorough tests. Christian mentions that, because the contracts were a bit delayed, the deadline of the pilot should be in February 2019. Miruna specifies that Eau de Web can organise to deliver stable versions earlier, provided there are specific agreed deadlines. Peter L prefers to have the product ready sooner than later.

Annemarie points out that it is a partnership project, but it is the Commission who is the owner. She proposes to search for a new name for the project. DG ENV and the JRC agree with the proposal. Andrus points out that it should have ‘forest’ in the name, as the portal URL will.

Annemarie also states that the system should be relevant, useful and accessible. Quality before quantity.

1. **Review the Project Charter to understand the project scope:**

Discussions are carried out on the overall approach to the project, the list of deliverables, especially those that should get developed first. Miruna will propose a schedule for the deliverables in the upcoming Project Work Plan document.

Data and datasets:

Regarding the subject of the transfer of data and software applications from to the upcoming FISE portal to be hosted by the EEA, Bernd specifies the applications at the JRC are not complex, so it makes sense to only transfer the data, which should be presented on the upcoming FISE portal by the development teams according to the user stories to be further discussed.

ENV/EEA/JRC agree that the first focus should be on presenting data and information on forest area, followed by Copernicus as a second topic. Bernd mentions the JRC will provide satellite data, NFI data - most current data, Excel sheets and PDF. He says that, for one topic, there are 7 to 17 countries and that they have 6-700 datasets on forest area. Annemarie mentions we should make the most out of the current contract with the JRC and get support in understanding and transferring the relevant data from the JRC.

Obtaining the rights to harvest and publish the JRC database (up to 2006), along with the ICP Forests database, including biosoil (or Forest Focus, possibly collected under JRC guidelines) are pending an agreement between DG ENV and the data owners.

Peter L expresses concerns about showing EEA indicators publicly (14 of them, which Annemarie will send soon) because, as they will be used in the pilot version will have a massive impact over the European support of the project. Andrus points out that it is collected information and not all of them will be used. They will be separated in important and less important.

Miruna proposes as one of the main features of this portal to be a comprehensive search and system of classification (through tagging). The classification/glossary is a feature for which she will make a proposal during the Planning phase. Christian and Andrus mention GEMET as the obvious option for the glossary.

All agree with the need to have a list of high level features that are to be developed. Peter L suggests creating a list of features and individuating data sources for them (starting from the concept paper made in February). Peter L will talk to the interested DGs and, together with Annemarie, will come up with good user stories for the desired features (e.g. map viewers and other data presentation), with focus on the agreed objectives and for each target group. Andrus pointed out that the user stories need to be policy driven.

National data and harmonisation

Annemarie suggests there could be user stories using the national data, comparing country data when the data uses the same standards and it is harmonised, or just showing data per country when it is not. For instance, Copernicus and LULUCEF will have harmonised data. Peter L and the JRC have doubts in what regards the possibility to harmonise existing data and, therefore, the possibility to compare country data. Berndt found that countries currently use different formats, languages, descriptions and standards. They all agree it is a topic in itself, it is not the task of this group, and it will be further discussed and agreed upon. Data harmonisation should be studied, but with caution.

To this end, Miruna suggests as example the BISE portal, which shows a different map for every type of data and, aside from a few instances, it shows country data separately, in order to avoid drawing misleading conclusions.

Andrus added that users must be able to distinguish among three types of missing data: countries that are not in the scope of the interrogation but do report the data (like Turkey for Europe), countries which are in the scope of the interrogation but did not report any data, and countries which are in the scope, did report, but have no actual data to report (like forests in Iceland).

Miruna advises against created silos with FISE data, advocating for keeping data close to source and harvesting periodically, in accordance with the SEIS principles. Tiberiu adds that we should start with the information already present in the semantic databases.

During the review of the list of potential data sources, some corrections were brought to the table from the Project Charter, with specific discussions about particularities such as afforestation, deforestation and reforestation. Andrus mentioned that HRL 6/9/12/15 will be available by the end of the year.

Scope and deliverables

Miruna emphasises the importance of clarifying the list of targeted users and creating user stories to address each group.

Also, in order to keep the portal’s features and content in accordance with the Commission’s expectations, Peter L offered to review the project’s description from the Project Charter.

During the discussions on the “IN” scope of the project, it is agreed that the training days and application transfer from the JRC will be replaced by the understanding the datasets by developers, and the development of a new system from scratch. Bernd mentions the system now in place at the JRC is basic, made to showcase the data they have gathered.

Also on the “IN” scope, Sebastian considers that the INSPIRE procedure is a topic to be fully addressed separately, because it will use a lot of resources in the detriment of the project. IT is agreed that the spatial data will follow the EEA metadata standards, which are INSPIRE compliant.

The full list of items which will and will not be part of the scope is amended and corrected in the Project Charter, with everyone’s input and agreement.

Josu and Sebastian point out that everything is possible in terms of map viewers, so we have to be very specific about the message we want to send with every map/set of information displayed. For instance, to have a map and to "scroll” to see the change/evolution. Bernd asked if we can “zoom” from Europe view to country view, combining the first data with some specific, available data.

Andrus points out that we are not only displaying maps, but help users to better understand the spatial information/datasets through visualisation. Therefore, the term “map viewer” was replaced by “user interfaces that allow interactive exploration of spatial and non-spatial datasets”.

Annemarie emphasised the need for FISE to provide maps that overlay information like water and forest, on a certain area/country, which could prove to be very useful for future legislators, and not only.

Bernd presents the Web Viewers capabilities on the existing FISE Viewer, to serve as ideas for the Web Viewers capabilities to be developed for the new FISE platform to be hosted at EEA. About the current system:

* It has the ability to visualize spatial information on the background of a European Countries Vector Map
* The map scale can be amended by zoom in & out function and panning is possible
* The background layer content can be selected (Google Physical Map, G. Satellite Map, G. Hybrid of both above and Open Street Map background)
* There are ~90 thematically different raster datasets available (distribution of 41 Tree Species, each in two maps, 4 Forest maps, 3 spatial forest pattern analysis and 1 Forest Biomass Increment)

Unfortunately, for none of these raster datasets an overlay vector information layer is available, providing statistical information related to the raster maps showing the distribution of a certain topic (for instance the oak trees distribution in Europe). But Bernd suggests this is actually what a good web viewer of the FISE Platform has to provide – a combination of both datasets (raster data from information level A or B and a vector layer with information level B or C statistics derived from the original raster data).

Ideally, a combination of different topic datasets must be possible too. For instance, a raster dataset showing the distribution of oak trees over Europe. On top of it is visualized the oak tree cover area statistics visualized by a vector layer at country level. These two layers then will be combined with the information of the annual biomass increment, to give an understanding that not necessarily large areas with oak trees in Italy create the same biomass increment compared to more sparsely distributed oak forests in Germany (the conclusion from this example is not necessarily correct, it is just for illustrating purposes).

The above is related to multiple layers being able to be visualized together at the same time (layer principle).

Bernd says it should be a clear distinction in the new system which level of information is dataset is, using the levels from the JRC pyramid. There are 109 datasets of Information level A in the old system.

Annemarie will be the person in charge with the hierarchical structure of the sections, for which a pilot/templates should be provided, and on which the design will be created.

It is agreed that the target users and stakeholders will be reviewed by the Commission, together with the EEA, in the next period; user stories will be created for each user group.

The deliverables which were stated into Eau de Web and Tracasa’s contracts were slightly adapted to the new situation.

Christian proposes the progress report upon a first prototype to be ready in early 2019 (more likely) on at least two datasets of information. Eau de Web will start working on the web design and content structure, understanding the databases and planning the next phases.

The list of features from the Project Charter is updated. Christian mentions the need for cooperation with the Reportnet 3 project, especially to retrieve Article 12 and 17 data, cooperation with Corine Land Cover, the new generation of Copernicus products coming up by 2019.

Andrus proposes adding the Small Woody Features layers and with a very good dataset for rural area, already mapped and in the machine. Peter L emphasised the importance of the connections that could be made through the Small Woody Features.

Other sections from the Project Charter

The constraints, assumptions, risks, governance and stakeholders from the current version of the Project Charter were discussed and the document updated. The next version of the Project Charter will be sent to the attendees together with the minutes. The timing and milestones will be detailed in the following phase, called Planning.

Christian recapitulates the activities to be performed, and clarifies everybody’s roles.

Peter L mentions two important meetings that will have impact on the timing of the project:

1. Standing Forestry Commission meeting - 2nd of June 2018 (to confirm the date) – where Eau de Web should present interactive wireframes for the FISE pilot system, with a reduced set of features (e.g. faceted search); adding the source data by then would be good, showcasing the added value of this project for this Committee and for reporting users
2. Meeting with the National Forest Directors in September 2018, where we need them to endorse the project. Peter L asks if it would be possible to showcase an advanced interface. Miruna is confident that we would provide at least wireframes for what we want to obtain, maybe a portal online with some design and structure; Peter L says this could be a first prototype, as their because the feedback is very important

Bernd provides Miruna with the current version of the dataset with work done by the JRC, which Miruna uploads on the project library.

1. **Project supporting tools, work standards and flows, Taskman**

Miruna presents EEA’s and Eau de Web’s work standards, based on the Agile methodology, which assumes the usage of an acceptance server for frequent deployments of the different iterations, on which developers are looking for feedback and incorporate the stakeholders’ suggestions.

She talks about the necessity to have the upcoming FISE system integrated with the systems that are established in the EEA, for a smooth maintenance on a long run. Eau de Web will do this for the portal in general, along with the non-geographical data published in it, while Tracasa will ensure it for the geographic data and the respective back-end databases.

In the coming two months, a prototype will be provided with the website design and an empty shell on which the content and features will be added.

Christian mentions that longer discussions could be had by emails and later summarised on specific Taskman tickets. In order not to make everything public, the EIONET login will be used. Furthermore, he and Andrus pointed out the new GDPR compliance that needs to be integrated into the project.