



Creating a Network of Knowledge for
biodiversity and ecosystem services
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1st BiodiversityKnowledge conference
Discussing the Network of Knowledge approach for Europe
and its links to international processes

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Session 4: Technical aspects for the operations of a Network of Knowledge
Reporting back from the Break-out groups on different aspects of the NoK :

1. Break-out group on Participation

Soon available

2. Break-out group on Governance and transparency

It was recognized that only when the actual context and mandate of the NoK is specified, concrete suggestions can be made. There was a strong wish for the KNEU consortium to come up with theoretical but specific mandates so that the work can further progress. This allows the project to consider several different ways of setting up the NoK and then to present the pro's and cons of each perspective.

The presented 5 point summary:

Role of funders:

It's important that funders get a real role in the process of the Nok, but this role should not interfere with the independence of the NoK. For instance, funders can be involved in a review process, but there still needs to be a group of experts selecting which comments to include and which points to skip. This serves the purpose of creating commitment, understanding what science is required, where gaps are and opens up more options for agenda setting and funding possibilities.

Development of the NoK:

The NoK should not be developed as an individual entity but rather linked to its specific setting. This setting includes political and research initiatives, research councils, project groups, EU commission,... One way might be to give representatives of the setting a place in the governance structure. Also the composition of the secretariat could represent the regions in Europe, or the secretariat could be placed over several bodies, or dynamically moved between bodies.

The EU will be more willing to fund integrative initiatives than separate new bodies.

Dressing up the NoK:

The secretariat of the NoK should be light. Time and budget allocation should on the one hand be invested in credibility and quality assurance, and on the other hand point-demand-based when it comes to dealing with questions.

Funding the NoK:

The framework or main organization should be core funded by central funding from the EU, because not all countries will be willing or able to contribute individually and to secure the core independence of the NoK. Additional funding can come from the dealing with the requests.

Addressing gaps

How should the governance of the NoK deal with the existing unbalance in terms of disciplines, geographical range and missing data? It is not the task of the NoK itself to solve this issue, but it should flag where there are gaps or problems. The hope is that these gaps will then be addressed and capacity building can take place by governments or related bodies.

Full description of remarks

The main aim of the NoK is to help decision makers and to make the process of knowledge transfer more efficient. This should remain the aim, even when the NoK develops agenda setting issues. The target is always public policies. For this purpose the NoK both brings together both scientists and subgroups such as IPBES, government bodies and NGO's. Given the main aim for the NoK the policy makers should be involved in decisions somewhere.

Even though the main target audience are the decision makers, there are foreseen side effects that are desirable. Projects will bring different experts together that are currently not exchanging ideas (as is indicated by the lacking of linkage in the knowledge landscape). Additionally, collaboration and knowledge gaps will be identified. Knowledge holders themselves also hope that it will be possible to find colleagues holding specific knowledge.

The Setting of the NoK

There are several questions about the actual aim of the KNEU project, the positioning of the NoK and its relation to all the initiatives already going on.

KNEU got funded before it was sure that IPBES would be raised. KNEU therefore opted to develop a NoK which is useful for IPBES, but which is also useful for other policy science interfaces. The suggestions and NoK prototype developed in KNEU are therefore wider applicable than only IPBES. This theoretical setting, however, makes it difficult to come up with more concrete suggestions. To be able to formulate concrete suggestions, it is required that the aim for the NoK, its setting and its mandate is more concrete. This could be done either by choosing one option (e.g. placed with IPBES) or by looking at several individual options.

There is a strong wish and expectation that the KNEU project will do this in the next step of the development of the NoK.

Linking NoK to its EU context

The NoK should be linked to its international setting of bodies and initiatives. The NoK should not be developed as a separate entity or form another bureaucracy layer, but rather tie into existing initiatives. The question is how this could be best done. An option is to involve representatives of these bodies, research councils (IPBES, Diversitas,..) and initiatives in the governance structure, e.g. in advisory boards. Other options is to place the secretariat of the NoK within the same building of research councils or other bodies, or even spread over several bodies. The secretariat could be representing a spread of regions in its composition.

The knowledge holders have wishes that may not always be in line with the wishes from policymakers. The wish to be agenda setting as a knowledge holder is an understandable one, but it is one that should be put forward with care and the recipients have to be willing to receive this information. The knowledge holders believe that the NoK should have the aspiration of combining themes: marine, fresh water and terrestrial.

Funding and allocation

There should be a central EU-funding because not all countries will be individually able or willing to finance the NoK. The core of the NoK should be long term, centrally funded to ensure continuity and proper management. The requests could be financed by the requester or the system of IPBES could be followed, meaning that financial contributions are not ear marked to specific projects.

The secretary can be light in terms of composition and budget allocation, whereas aspects for the quality assurance and credibility of the NoK should be of high priority. The budget allocation for requests can be more point-demand.

The GBIF experience that databases can not depend on voluntary time and date contributions only. The whole should be managed and rewarded.

It is unclear who will do the choosing and who will pay for the work done in the NoK. For the IPBES it is the governments in the end that decide and they also pay. This may not be desirable for an “independent” NoK because it will not allow for the economically or politically “undesired” questions to be asked. Or questions which are relevant to mainly poor countries to receive less attention even though the biodiversity related issues may be more crucial.

Dealing with gaps

NoK can not solve problems or gaps in data, disciplines or geographical distribution. The methods available for the NoK, is firstly to aggregate and make accessible data which are already known (but maybe including grey data as well). However, it is a task for the NoK to flag problems and gaps from its experience in dealing with requests. By communicating about this, it is the ambition that the NoK can contribute to make progress from the given starting point through spin-off research investments in missing knowledge and data, capacity building by participating in projects, and other developments mostly outside the NoK. It is a hope that by highlighting the geographical unbalance within Europe when developing reports, the lagging countries may be brought to average data level through a European motivation.

Role of the funders

The funders need to have a role in the process of the NoK to create commitment, possibility to exchange knowledge informally, offer agenda setting issues and develop understanding about how policies develop and what science is required. The role of the funders should not affect the independency of the NoK. The UK example shows that this is very well possible, where funders have a role in the review process but an expert panel decide which comments to take in an feedback on which arguments are not based on advocacy. The later also being communicated to the person providing the input. What will work depends on the level of independence the NoK will be looking

3. Break-out group on Relevance to policy

Soon available

4. Break-out group on Quality assurance

Soon available