



Creating a Network of Knowledge for
biodiversity and ecosystem services
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Recommendations of the Nordic European Biodiversity Knowledge workshop concerning the Network of Knowledge

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Biodiversity Knowledge is aiming at creating a Network of Knowledge (NoK) for biodiversity and ecosystem services in Europe. For this a broad range of knowledge and experiences need to be included, a regional aspects within Europe need to be taken into account. Such regional aspects are discussed in three regional workshops in October and November 2011. This document summarizes the recommendations from the workshop for Nordic Europe. The participants of the workshop, and thus contributors to this paper, are listed in the annex.

The following eight areas and main points were considered important by the participants:

1) Possible approaches of what NoK could be doing:

- Multidirectional /social network approach
- Database interrogation
- Client to NoK

8 votes

- NoK should not be restricted to a top-down approach, i.e. when funding determines the questions to be answered. It should also facilitate the bottom-up approach where scientists and NGOs are organizing themselves to deliver something. It would be very interested to compare the questions raised in a top-down approach with the one raised in a bottom-up approach
- In a bottom-up approach, manager could go to a network to get a list of people working with this subject area across Europe (organized in knowledge hubs such as the European Wildlife Network), they could create working groups, arrange funding, refine the

questions through existing knowledge (BISE consultation?) and then pose the refined question to the NoK that organizes a systematic review.

- Nok should have parallel approaches to ensure interactions in addition to the unidirectional way
 - o NoK could have an internal virtual forum but it would add some costs
 - o All NoK results should be open access in an easy way with labels and clever search engine: self-learning system. Help-yourself NoK.
 - o NoK could use the Community of Practice as a model.
 - o NoK could provide advice on best practices and could advise on various aspects of programs and practices.
 - o How to achieve multi-directionality
 - Aspect 1 – contributing to a review process will allow the contributor access to the other contributor’s knowledge
 - Aspect 2 – insight into client question will help researchers identify relevant research topics
 - Aspect 3 – knowledge gaps will be identified and used to stimulate research priorities
 - Aspect 4 – dialogue between client and scoping group during question definition and contract negotiation
 - Aspect 5 – client can be included on the way to ensure NoK is fulfilling his needs
 - Aspect 6 – during communication of results
 - Aspect 7 – policy makers may be pulled in as experts in some contexts.

2) Scale issue (At which scale should the NoK be operating / which type of questions)

7 votes

- Issues of scale, funding and quality are all interconnected.
- NoK should answer questions at the European scale but considering international, anyway questions should have higher relevance than national.
- NoK could answer questions from non-European clients if the questions are relevant to Europe
- NoK could extend the access to European experts knowledge to all countries (e.g. European expertise on Africa)
- NoK should use existing local/national/regional networks : It could create claim forms for experts to directly engage in the Nok
- NoK should build a map of experts on different issues

3) Cost / funding concerns

7 votes

Sources of fundings

- NoK should start by evaluating the minimal cost of its functioning (few staff as possible in the secretariat and advisory board)
- There are two funding routes: donor vs clients. NoK might need both routes
- NoK needs some funding for the basic structure: e.g. coordination role of the NoK needs funding for the maintenance of the network, and for planning and fundraising activities (through overheads?). Those fundamental funding should be secure at least for 5 to 10 years.
- NoK would need a secretariat but could try to place it within existing structures to save money. If specific hosting country, this one could take care of the basic cost.
- NoK would need some top-down long term support, e.g. for the secretariat.
- NoK could ask for membership fees
- Clients to the NoK could be asked to find co-funding, depending of the size of the question
- NoK might need to get the influential organisations on board to increase its reputation. European Network of Conservation Agencies or other cross-European organisations might be interested in funding the NoK process if they see the added values of it. Until the system proves its added value, they could consider contribute something small to secure a start-up fee.
- NoK should think of targeting rich clients at the beginning for the first case studies to have enough resources to prove the concept.
- NoK might think of IPBES as core-funding
- NoK should be concerned about perception of independence towards funding if it is run like a consultancy, it should also be concerned with possible competition with private consulting
- NoK could request governments or research councils to give some contributions to a common sponsorship pot (ESF model)
- NoK could have different levels of fees depending on users: higher for commercial
 - o NoK could have a common sponsorship pot with fees
 - o The client question is answered if he pays the fee
 - o Independency can be ensured by the common pot and by the transparent process
 - o DG environment or those clients using most NoK could have contract with Nok: Nok on demand/Yearly subscription to be able to use the services or Service level agreement.

Users of fundings

- NoK would need both a physical and virtual interaction platforms, virtual/e-platform may also need to be assisted with funding for communication technology
- The processing of questions could work on a mixture of paid and voluntary involvement, the principle of no-cost participation should be preferred though
- The processing of bigger questions needs to have some funding schemes; experts should be paid, at least through availability process. NoK could consider internal binding process to some experts depending on the size of the question.
- NoK might consider the need to subsidize the requests from European “poor” clients
- Raising a problematic to the NoK should be free
- Those who initially invest into the NoK or the “frequent users” of the NoK could get some free or discounted request
- NoK should secure money for events, workshops, meetings, helps by maybe some in-kind contributions.
- Reputation and prestige might be enough enticement for participation of managers and researchers with their knowledge and resources. For that NoK should ensure the high profile of the product to motivate people to contribute.
- Peer reviewers should not be paid
- Working group leader would need to work full time on this and should then be paid
- Scoping group and client negotiate costs and product in iterative process.
- NoK should not pay all contributors, but then will have to limit how much people are asked to take part and how much time the participants are expected to give
- Travel costs for networking to facilitate knowledge access should be paid

4) Transparency and peer-review

5 votes

- NoK as a new network would need to build trust, peer-review and transparency are key for credibility:
 - o Being reliable, transparent, understood, quick, deliver frequently not to be forgotten, should not be modest about your products, authoritative
 - o Products should have high standards
 - o NoK would gain in transparency if it is perceived independent to the funding
 - o NoK should offer a service to the clients, which involves as many perspectives and knowledge as possible
 - o NoK would need a process to ensure the relevance of the results but that it is not steered by the policy makers
 - o NoK would need to systematically report back to the clients on their results

- Peer review: scientists and other experts called for peer review should not be involved in the process. Adapted to the scope of the answer and the funding
- Peer-reviewers should not be paid

5) Ownership /Who is responsible of the results; the clients or the researchers?

5 votes

- Ownership will depend on how the Nok will be funded which depends on the clients.
- NoK should clearly define at the beginning whether the clients will own the results, define the ethics of the use of the results and acknowledge who pays for answering the question
- Nok should stand with the principle of public information: the reports that results from the Nok include the authors, so client is free to use it
- NoK coordination body should be responsible for the results:
 - o The peer-review should be more a quality control adapted to the answers depending on the complexity or amount of work it requires
 - o NoK should communicate uncertainties, transcribe the results not only from a scientific point of view, adapt the language for the client and provide help to interpret the results
- Ownership could be bottom up approach, i.e. the community would take ownership

6) Screening of requests (criteria)/Scoping process

5 votes

- NoK should keep the speed in the process as they would need to keep having some screening at the desk
- NoK should provide already on its website all the outputs to give answers
- NoK would need to have a set of first selective criteria at the desk:
 - o Scope/Scale: Prioritization should be based on the nature of the issue (e.g. how many countries are experiencing the concern? But would questions related to artic areas for instance be tackled by Nok? The issues should not be too broad or too restricted and should not depend on fashion subjects only
 - o NoK should focus on the feasibility of the request (Cost, timeframe...)
 - o Nok should be flexible to drag in the relevant expertise
 - o Not should be restricted to European questions but relevant to EU biodiversity

- NoK should deal with topics about BD and ES, relevant to EU, not local topics and topics for which it is easy to find the answer on google. The NoK should make use of experience, up to date information
- NoK should study the ethics of the questions
- NoK could establish a simple grid: too silly, too simple, outside of scope, too long, too expensive
- NoK should be transparent on what sort of questions people can ask to the Nok, on the selecting criteria and on the screening experts (it should not be only administrative)
- NoK should be transparent on the background of the people who screen the requests and the screening people should be aware of the scope of the NoK
- After posing the questions to the NoK and the scoping work, if the question is not refined enough, the secretariat could advise the client to first go to an existing knowledge hub to help posing the question

7) How iterative? Identifying knowledge gaps feeding into research agendas

5 votes

- NoK should integrate feedback on gaps within the NoK process: i.e. planning section for scoping exercise to identify limited knowledge
- NoK should be tied to the cost –funding aspect: when questions arrive to the NoK which cannot be treated because of lack of knowledge, it should be directed to the research funding
- NoK should exercise some lobby work to make sure knowledge gaps are addressed
- NoK should establish contacts with the research funders to be able to pass on these priorities, and to identify whether there are proposals that have not been funded on these gaps so far.
- NoK could maintain a list of the knowledge gaps: i.e. questions still to be answered. NoK would become in a way a reference for funders that can validate the topics they fund based on this list.
- NoK should elaborate some principles for qualifying what goes to this list of knowledge gaps; it should not just be a list of good ideas. Stakeholders should get involve in establishing these principles
- Ensuring work in this direction (feeding into research agenda's and priority setting) will result in getting the interests from the research community

8) Added values How do add value to existing networks

4 votes

NoK will be successful if it provides the following added values:

Group 2 only answered directly this question

- NoK should clearly state its ambitions and limits
- NoK should phase in of ambition and costs: NoK should work on its reputation to help funding coming in and allowing more ambitious activities
- NoK should highlight people's participation – peer review panel and editorial board = both incentive to take part and key for establishing NoK's credibility
- NoK should build on what already exists and learn from what has, and has not, worked elsewhere
- NoK should represent a client interface. NoK should put client in contact with experts to directly negotiate the greater depth analysis needed. NoK should help facilitate client access directly to existing networks, i.e. should provide some type of network access for clients to contact directly experts for specific questions
- NoK should build a meta-network, i.e. networking networks, but also involve non-networked individuals
- NoK should be working at international scale
- NoK should involve a diversity of knowledge – not just peer-reviewed, and should include collecting new field data if possible
- NoK should direct you to an existing knowledge hub for you to discuss, refine and fund your question and issue

The red line of the discussion during this regional workshop in Copenhagen especially focussed on ensuring the added value of having the NoK by

- including a social dimension to it (e.g. the network of networks approach, and the inclusion of local knowledge as well as scientific knowledge)
- making explicitly use of and recognition of the existing knowledge hubs
- secure the added value of participating both for funders, clients, but also for knowledge providers by a transparent process, a clear and fast process and a feed-back loop into research agenda's and priority settings.

**Further information on BiodiversityKnowledge, and especially
the Network of Knowledge prototype, can be found at
www.biodiversityknowledge.eu**

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Final Attendance list

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