

58th Working Group Meeting of the MEA IKM Initiative

Tuesday, December 17, 2019 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM CET

Audio Conference – Geneva, Montreal, Bonn, Nairobi

Report

Meeting Participants

BRS – Osmany PEREIRA
CBD – Kata KOPPEL, Frederic VOGEL
CITES – Helene GANDOIS
CMS – Aydin BAHRAMLOUIAN
ECLAC – David Barrio LAMARCHE
IPBES – Benedict ABOKI
Minamata – Lara OGNIBENE
SAICM – Eduardo Caldera-PETIT
UNEP MAP – Maria Luisa Rodriguez LUCAS

KM Team

UNEP – Eva DUER, Kelly KABIRU, Iddah KAMAU, Peter SPEELMAN, Alexandra FANTE

Meeting Summary

Ms. Duer welcomed participants to the last meeting of 2019 and gave the following updates.

I. End of year; Status of InforMEA Phase II

An important InforMEA development is that the Projects Steering Committee, which will decide on all projects and concepts submitted to the GPGC, will meet on 29 January 2020. This gives the team more time to adjust the concept note, especially regarding archiving, which has been integrated under “technical collaboration” and accepted by InforMEA’s EC focal point. This resulted in the need for a No-Cost Extension into early 2020. The extension was approved in late November 2019, after confirmation that we have spent 90% of the budget for the project period, and the extension into early 2020 would support continuity.

On embedding InforMEA within the UNEP Law Division, Ms. Duer explained that there is now a more strategic collaboration between the flagship projects of the Law Division that look into Collective Intelligence, with InforMEA serving as an inspiration to the Division. There is considerable co-support provided through these projects to InforMEA-related processes, including the procurement of a stronger server and of PoolParty, support for some of the ongoing auto-tagging testing, and other support provided through projects such as the Montevideo V Programme project starting early next year, and the DaRT project. A financial update will be available early next year on where we stand and how the projects are related.

Ms. Duer explained that the InforMEA team is working on upgrading the E-learning platform, responding to several requests from MEA-related processes, for instance the Chemicals Branch of the Economy Division. A new concept has been developed looking at how to better group and develop courses, wherein a user would be able to filter for SDG-related courses and MEA foundational courses (the ones InforMEA members have jointly developed). Eau de Web is already building these features in a Moodle test environment, but this will take time. Also on E-learning, the diploma course clusters are now available, and the Escazu module of a broader course on SDG 16 was launched in time for the UNFCCC COP 25 (2-13 December 2019), where InforMEA had an exhibition space organized with the help of Mr. Lamarche (ECLAC) and Ms. Yang (UNFCCC).

On the status of information exchange and user numbers, Ms. Duer reported continuous growth, the strongest month being October 2020 with almost 40,000 users, mostly from Asia.

Giving an update on engagement with ASSELAU-East African Universities, Ms. Duer remarked that outreach to universities is one of the most important elements of E-learning. There was a Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop held from 22-24 October 2019 at Maanzoni in Machakos County in Kenya, with participants from 12 universities across Africa. The ToT looked specifically at how E-learning tools can be integrated with university curricula, and a report has been submitted.

On the next steps with the InforMEA Tagger and PoolParty, Mr. Pereira (BRS) informed the Working Group that BRS has engaged a consultant, Mr. Santiago Riera, to work on all aspects of PoolParty. BRS is still using the development license of PoolParty, with the system installed on one of their servers. Some controlled vocabularies have already been put in place through BRS and the work that Ms. Alexandra Fante is doing for some of the Working Group members. All those tests are being carried out with the use of the BRS extractor. The team has not yet been able to do any analysis as to how accurate the suggestions are, but this is a priority next step. Mr. Riera will also work to improve the interface, to be able to do the tagging in M-files and to allow InforMEA members to use it with the Drupal module. BRS is still waiting on the new server. In case of delay, the production environment can be temporarily based on BRS's own servers to accelerate the transition to using PoolParty.

Ms. Gandois demonstrated how CITES is using PoolParty.

Mr. Pereira briefly explained that the BRS Tagger presented by Ms. Duer is a script that uses the Drupal plug in based on an API which can be developed by anyone to retrieve suggestions from PoolParty once a structure is set up – taxonomies, thesaurus, and configuration. It is quite easy to use, and even simpler for Drupal because there will be no need to develop a new programming module. Mr. Pereira urged consistency in what InforMEA members use, especially once the group begins tagging and linking.

Ms. Duer introduced Eduardo Caldera-Petit to the group, the new SAICM Knowledge Management Officer. SAICM has shown interest in working together on an E-learning course and is developing a knowledge management platform so will be interested in having a discussion on taxonomy.

Mr. Omare (IPBES) explained that he has been busy this year with the re-development of the IPBES website, and is very keen on partnering, and on making sure that IPBES assessments find their way onto InforMEA, and that they also get tagged.

II. Related processes and updates

Ms. Duer informed the Working Group that the Inter-agency Meeting of Legal Officers of the Montevideo Programme, 26-28 November 2019 in Geneva, brought together legal officers from the MEAs, most of which were InforMEA members. It was an opportunity to discuss strategic linkages between InforMEA and other international public law bodies (such as the WTO) and to seek support and input from other organizations (such as FAO and the Commonwealth) on collective intelligence.

The UNEP Law Division is pursuing more interactive engagement with the government focal points for the upcoming Montevideo V Programme. In this context, a new portal will be developed, the Law and Environment Assistant Platform (LEAP), to moderate and better visualize the process for countries to request technical assistance to implement environmental law. The Platform will contain a knowledge base drawing from InforMEA, including country profiles, ECOLEX, and other sources. There will also be more specific references to Environmental Rule of Law (EROL) assessments, and EROL indicators will be developed to measure progress.

On the joint exhibition space at UNFCCC COP 25, Mr. Lamarche (ECLAC) expressed gratitude for the support and informed the group of the positive feedback received. All the materials and documents received from the group were showcased. On E-learning, ECLAC is happy to see the Escazú module up, and they have received very good assessments from delegates, civil society, and academia in their networks. The next step is to think about how the final course will be marketed.

Ms. Ognibene (Minamata) gave an update on the recently concluded Minamata COP 25, which went well and produced a few notable decisions, such as a first review of the financial mechanism, ToRs for an implementation compliance committee, and an arrangement for the first evaluation of the effectiveness of the Convention. The COP was also an opportunity for participants to meet their future Executive Secretary, Ms. Monika Stankiewicz, who will join the Secretariat on 14 January 2020.

III. Preview into 2020

Ms. Duer summarized some of the areas of focus for 2020. The archiving proposal has advanced, and it is hoped the group will have greater clarity on the scope and extent of EU support, which will be decided in January 2020. In advancing the proposed LEAP Platform, Judicial Portal, ECOLEX, and the FAO commitment to share data, the team will continue working on the legislation and case law schemas, to be able to collect and exchange in a more automated way. On outreach opportunities for 2020, Ms. Duer invited participants to give their thoughts and suggestions.

On the Systems Contract with Eau de Web, Mr. Kabiru informed the group that a meeting with the headquarters Committee on Contracts had taken place and an approval for extension was granted. The contract was originally for \$1.1 million, which was exhausted in a very short time. The extension is for \$890,000. Meanwhile, InforMEA will initiate another solicitation, a condition of the extension, for which terms of reference are being worked out. The team will consult some Working Group members to review the ToRs and to share any specifications for specific tools that may need to be included in the evaluation for a new systems contract.

IV. AOB

Mr. Vogel (CBD) mentioned that his team is brainstorming ways to share their E-learning platform, for their courses to be included on the InforMEA platform. Ms. Koppel (CBD) informed the meeting that a joining PoolParty is a priority for CBD for 2020. CBD is also in the process of writing a knowledge management component of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, which will be shared with the team for review before May 2020.

Mr. Bahramlouian (CMS) explained that at CMS preparing for their upcoming COP in India, in February 2020. A priority for 2020 is also to be able to use and engage with PoolParty. CMS will have a big project after the COP to upgrade all their websites (about 15) from Drupal 7 to Drupal 8. Mr. Bahramlouian pointed out that the InforMEA website contacts hub needs some improvements on searching and filtering; the search function does not provide results, and the sorting is only A-Z based on the first name of the contact person.