

## Summary report of the 7th meeting of LifeWatch Stakeholders Board

*(Lecce, 16-17 April 2012)*

**Members and observers present:** Alberto Basset (Italy), Maurizio Pinna (Italy - observer), Simona Frascchetti (Italy - observer), Thanos Dailianis (Greece), Elisabeth Paymal (France), Juan Miguel González (Spain), Peter van Tienderen (Netherlands), Miklos Kertesz (Hungary), Tjess Hernandez (Belgium), Aline van der Werff (Belgium).

**Apologies:** Magnus Friberg (Sweden), Laura Hoijer (Finland), Angeluta Vadineanu (Romania), Norway, Portugal, Romania, Sloval Republic, Giuseppe Martini (Italy)

**Advisors & support:** Oliviero Spinelli, Jacco Konijn, Wouter Los, Nicola Fiore, Ilaria Rosati

### 1. Opening and announcement

The agenda is confirmed

### 2. Report and remaining actions from the previous meeting, November 2011, Brussels (Annex 1)

The report is approved with few observations made by the SB members.

- Add to item 3b that the 'Note on VAT exemption' was discussed and also sent to the appropriate Ministries.
- Add to Item 5: The LiNC, acting as advisory body for consultation and coordination on distributed services, will be supported by the Service Centre. Saverio Vicario will temporarily chair the LiNC.
- Item 7b: change text into:
  - b) Coordination of distributed construction within countries.
    - From the provisional LifeWatch office in Spain the coordination of distributed construction will be directed at core technology support for distributed activities, legal arrangements between distributed activities and LifeWatch ERIC, and the overall coordination from the statutory seat of the supporting activities in the three countries.
    - In Italy it is planned to have the first two meetings of LiNC (scientific information exchange with all interested countries) to take place in the next months chaired by the start-up LiNC chair person, Saverio Vicario.
    - The Netherlands is establishing a start-up support team to assist countries that are planning to develop specific virtual labs.

Mr. Los will incorporate these text changes.

About the remaining issues:

- The SB members (entering ERIC) were invited to suggest a member for the financial review committee. No proposal received yet.
- The SB members were invited to suggest a name as contact for the LiNC (formerly 'Champions' meeting): for Italy Saverio Vicario, for Spain Juan Miguel González.

### 3. Update about the ERIC application process

- The LifeWatch Statutes & the Memorandum of Understanding II.

Mr. Juan Miguel González apologizes on behalf of the proposed statutory seat for the delays in the process for the ERIC application. The Spanish elections and subsequent reorganization of the Ministry in charge made it difficult to move the process. Nevertheless, the draft Statutes were informally sent to the Commission services with a request for advice. The answer is expected within a week, allowing to start the formal application procedure.

Mr. Basset (Italy) suggests to forward the final versions of all documents also to the members of the stakeholder board in order to be able to support the process and push it if required. He also suggests to update the timetable with the deadlines.

Mr. Hernandez (Belgium) is asking the Spanish Ministry to send a letter to national Ministries (and in c.c. to the SB members ) with the invitation to enter ERIC.

Both requests are supported by the full Stakeholders Board. Mr. Juan Miguel González confirms that this will be done.

Mr. Magnus Friberg has sent earlier a number of Swedish comments to the draft LifeWatch Statutes and MoU. Since the involved national Ministries, and not anymore the Stakeholders Board, is in charge of these legal issues, the Stakeholders Board request Spain to directly interact with Sweden about their questions and recommendations.

- ERIC committee & Process up to ERIC Approval

Countries willing to enter ERIC have to secure their commitment until June 2012 in order to have the Ministry response by July 2012 and be operative in September 2012. Any delays from this time line will result in additional problems in various countries.

### 4. Tour de table on developments in partnering countries

Italy:

- Mr. Basset informs that LifeWatch in Italy has already been funded and the national proposal (13.4 M for infrastructure over 3 years) is in its start-up phase. Italian team is working on the new version of the web community portal and on the implementation of the 'Alien Species' showcase.

The Netherland:

- Mr. van Tienderen informs that the national application has not yet been funded. He makes the announcement that the Netherlands will anyway join the ERIC based on the minimal required financial commitment. The planned site premium will probably become available in two years.

Spain:

- Mr. Gonzalez introduces the executive summary/update about the progress and priority plans on the LW Spain start-up tasks as explained in a hand-out for the meeting.

France:

- Mrs. Paymal doesn't have new information for the SB members.

Belgium:

- Mrs. van der Werff and Hernandez do not have new updates since the last meeting of the SB members.

Hungary:

- Mr. Kertesz informs that Hungary has completed the national application/plan and presented to the Ministry.

Greece:

- Mr. Dailianis confirms that the country will join the ERIC application.

## **5. Progress of start-up tasks (up to ERIC establishment)**

- Mr. Los introduces the status and planning of the start-up tasks.
- Mr. Basset describes the state of the showcase "Ecosystem fragility to alien and invasive species" and communicates that a first release of the showcase coordinated by the Italian team will be available on-line by the end of June 2012.  
The Italian team is working also on the new version of the web community portal that is actually ready and should be updated with the contents coming from the different national networks.  
Mr. Basset asks the SB members to send the information, actually present only for Italy (About us, How to Join, Related Projects, Activities), for the publication. Mr. Basset asks also the scientific leaders for the showcases "Biodiversity in Wetlands" and "Birds migrations" to send a short abstract for the portal community section.
- Mr. van Tienderen inform that a showcase prepared in the Netherlands is ready for release.
- Mr. Gonzalez illustrates the executive summary/update about the progress and priority plans on the LW Spain start-up tasks.

## **6. Principles for entering the ERIC status**

### **6a. Accounting principles**

Mr. Konijn introduces the principles as laid down in the "Spanish Legal Accountancy Framework as applicable to LifeWatch";

The SB members agree with this proposal. A specific question as received from Sweden (annual valuation of non-monetary assets) will be answered by the start-up experts.

The Stakeholders Board invites the Startup team to provide a detailed design of the financial administration system and to propose the selection of a bank to establish a bank account, as well as all other practical matters concerning finance.

### **6b. In-kind contributions**

Mr. Los introduces the principles in annex 3a and some observations coming from Spain and Sweden. Spain made the remark that the Netherlands, Italy and Spain have already committed to contribute with major in-cash and in-kind contributions to the construction of the common facilities.

The text part on relations with major European e-Infrastructures such as PRACE, EGI and GEANT, will be clarified to express that LifeWatch will establish the proper direct relations with these. With respect to the comments of Sweden, the following comments were made:

- Sweden: "The LifeWatch interim management needs to produce an updated and reliable financial plan". Comment: this is being prepared by one of the start-up teams.
- Sweden: "Decisions on using cash funds are under the General Assembly". Comment: This is correct since the annual budgets require approval by the General Assmby.
- Sweden: "Only items considered in the Cost Book are viable as in-kind contributions; at least at this early stage". Comment: This is correct.

- Sweden: "All viable in-kind contributions should be openen for proposals through open calls and accepted after independent evaluation". Comment: The Stakeholders Board requests to elaborate such an approach.

Mr. Hernandez raises the problem of a potential negative impact on the LifeWatch development in case a distributed center is not financed. Mr. Los highlights that this possibility is described in the ERIC. Countries have to commit in advance to the ERIC for a number of years. Bilateral agreements between the ERIC and a country may specify details. The LiNC will exchange information about distributed activities.

The SB members agree to the principles in annex 3a taking in account the different observations. The SB invites the start-up team to elaborate the models for Construction Contracts and Service-Level-Agreements.

### **6.c. Outsourcing**

Mr. Los introduces the principles for outsourcing construction work and some suggestions made by Spain and Sweden.

- Spain: "Where it is said 'several projects currently contribute directly ...', the word 'currently' must be replaced by 'may'". Comment: Agreed.
- Sweden supports outsourcing tasks to third parties whenever possible and cost efficient.

Mr. Los explains that the document only suggest that all the countries should have the same rules.

Mr. Basset specifies that the rules should guarantee the widest participation to the tenders from all EU countries.

Mr. Los explains also that the document is only for the ERIC.

The SB members agree with the principles for outsourcing construction work taking in account the different observations and are inviting the start-up team to prepare a policy report on industry liaisons.

### **6.d Recruitment of (international) staff**

Mr. Los introduces the principles in annex 3c and some suggestions made by Spain and Sweden.

- Spain: "Duration of 5 year short-term contracts must be changed in 3+2, except may be for senior positions (renewable for a second term)." Comment: will be addressed in the Staff Rules.
- Spain and Sweden: "Vacant positions should be listed for at least 1 month or 2 months, and not for 10 days only". Comment: The listing of at least 10 days was already agreed as a text in an annex of the draft Statutes. In practice this will be mostly be 2 months, however the experience in other research infrastructures indicated that it is wise to keep the possibility open to have a shorter period of at least 10 days if this would benefit the ERIC.
- Sweden: "Supprt to staff's families should not be an offered benefit by the LifeWatch ERIC". Comment:

Mr. Konijn and Mr. Hernandez are highlighting that the goal is to attract the excellent people.

The SB members agree with the principles taking in account the different observations and invite the start-up team to elaborate the LifeWatch employment policy with the principles in annex 3c

## **7. Report on related projects**

Meeting on 13 April 2012

Projects discussed:

- LifeWatch (<http://www.LifeWatch.eu>)
- ENVRI (<http://envri.eu/>)
- Creative-B (<http://creative-b.eu/>)
- BioVEL (<http://www.biovel.eu/>)

- ViBRANT (<http://vbrant.eu/>)
- EUDAT (<http://www.eudat.eu/>)

#### Purpose of the meeting

- become familiar with each project's objectives and strategies
- identify the topics of common interest (these can be scientific, technical, service oriented, financial sustainability)
- initial attempt to define the steps to be taken and whom to act
- agree on the process (and time lines) to take up the previous items

It was a constructive meeting and the project representatives agreed on various next steps to further explore and organize cooperation in support of LifeWatch.

### 8. Upcoming workshops and meetings

- 7-8 May 2012                      Rome                      GEO Europe
  
- 21-13 May 2012                  Brussels                  KNEU / IPBES
  
- 6 June 2012                      Ispra                      Joint Research Centres support for ESFRI env. projects
  - Mr. Basset will participate
- 11-12 June 2012                  Hamburg                  ESFRI workshop for exchange projects experiences
  - Mrs. Gomez and Konijn can participate
- 20 June                              Brussels                  ESFRI presentations European Parliament
  - Mr. Revilla will participate
- 2-4 July 2012                      Copenhagen              Global Biodiversity Informatics Conference
- 22-24 October 2012              Barcelona                  EUDAT User Conference

Mr. Spinelli proposes that the participants to the conferences could write a report and share it with the team. The SB members agree with him.

### 9. Next meetings of the Stakeholders board

- Ostende, Belgium, 13-14 June 2012
- Madrid, 20-21 November 2012

Mr. Hernandez proposes to link the meeting in Ostende with the LINC meeting, with a face-to-face meetings

Mr. Basset will evaluate the possibility to link the two meetings.

### 10. Other matters

- White paper biodiversity informatics ( <http://is.gd/WhitePaperChapters> )

Mr. van Tienderen introduces the initiative and Mr. Basset stimulates the SB members to give a contribution.

- Publicity

Mr. Los proposes to establish a process to contact the future users and to promote the LifeWatch activities

Mr. Basset highlights the attention on a call for Workshop of the British Ecological Society with deadline 16<sup>th</sup> July 2012 where the SB members can submit a proposal on a workshop on the LifeWatch showcases. This could be a good opportunity to promote the LW project.

Mr. Spinelli underlines the importance of the Community Web Portal to easily involve Ministries and authorities.

Mr. Los thanks the University of Salento and especially Mr. Basset and his co-workers for hosting the meeting of the Stakeholders Board.