

**6th GBIF European Nodes
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Meeting Minutes**

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Introduction

Positioning GBIF in European bioinformatics landscape

GBIF is a mature infrastructure where Europe plays a key role in term of data mobilization, publication and use.

The European bioinformatics landscape is rapidly evolving with EU-BON project, LifeWatch ERIC, and other ESFRI-Env infrastructures. In this landscape GBIF is recognized as a key actor for primary biodiversity data discovery and accessibility. Strengthen GBIF Position in the European landscape is more important then ever. GBIF-Secretariat and the European nodes have to collaborate on that.

Compliance to the INSPIRE directive is a must for all European countries.

GBIF Secretariat: Participation update

Olaf Bánki presented the progress from the Secretariat's participation team. This presentation highlighted the need to improve GBIF's business case at various levels, and understand better what each Participant's drivers are for collaborating in GBIF. Several international science-policy initiatives GBIF as a whole is contributing to were discussed. Also new activities such as enabling sample-based data publishing in GBIF as well as the development of a new capacity enhancement programme were highlighted. At the end of the presentation several questions where posed on how to move forward at the regional level:

- Is funding generally perceived as the main barrier?
- Can the diversity of the European Nodes be a selling point?
- Should several Nodes together with the Secretariat take the lead, establish a task group up to GB21 to formulate a European business case /strategy?

A short discussion followed after the presentation:

- The meeting briefly discussed what could be done in terms of engaging GBIF Participants in Europe, especially country Participants that are currently not coming to GBIF meetings in general. It was agreed that several Nodes would assist in helping to engage these GBIF Participants together with the Secretariat.
- Several Nodes showed interest in the activities around enabling sample-based data publishing in GBIF. It was briefly discussed that further exploring the relations between GBIF and LTER-Europe and ILTER would be worthwhile in this context.
- It was briefly discussed whether the European Nodes would still be focused on developing a regional project as tried earlier. The African Nodes have managed to get funding for several years for a regional project, that is focused on mobilizing policy relevant data. The project includes funds for a regional project coordinator who drives

activities in the African regional for this particular project. I was briefly discussed whether this could be a model for Europe as well.

- There was also a short discussion on the need for the European Nodes to speak better as one voice, especially when there are discussions with Heads of Delegations or other policy makers.

GBIF Secretariat: informatics update

Oliver Meyn presented the progress from the Secretariat's informatics team. The presentation highlighted recent GBIF portal developments, and forthcoming portal changes such as around richer occurrence records (including all Darwin Core terms). Some improved figures on the amount of users and data downloads also per country were shown. The presentation furthermore highlighted work around the IPT, several activities around Nodes portals, journal integration and data papers, and some progress in the context of the GBIF work programme 2014.

After this Tools update from the Secretariat, the participants made some remarks or questions on the new GBIF portal:

- It was highlighted that the new GBIF portal is missing basic analytic tools that were available on former portal.
- If you search on the GBIF portal for a species, you will see a map of published records. If you however than go to see the records before download, a map of the search is not available. Hence the download cannot be further narrowed down through a map function. The question was raised whether such a function would be available in the GBIF portal in the future. The Secretariat response was: This is probably the feature that is most requested in the portal. However, this is not trivial to solve and at the moment cannot be addressed.
- In the former GBIF data portal a dataset could be downloaded and transferred to a KML file and the downloaded occurrence records could be shown on a map through google maps. In the current portal this cannot be done. not possible to download as KML
- Currently, in the GBIF portal you can only download data in DwCA format so in CSV files. I have the skills to turn the CSV file into an excel file, but not all researchers/user of the GBIF portal would know how to do this. Could it be made possible to download excel files from the GBIF portal and not only CSV files?
- It was suggested that these services (transformations to excel and KML files) could be developed also by Nodes instead of the Secretariat directly on the DwCA; so it is available for others to pick-up.
- So far, GBIF portal does not recognize taxonomic flaws when indexing checklists It would be nice to offer comparison/compatibility reports between two published checklists. The Secretariat response was: the use case of comparing two checklists which each other should be better scoped, and the Secretariat should come up with the answer to what extent this is technically feasible in the GBIF portal.
- Is it considered moving to Adubon core?

- The question was raised if in general we want to change the portal into an analytic tool?
- INBO made a script based on new webservice that gather basic activity stats (downloads, downloaded records). This might be useful to others nodes and could possibly be integrated in the portal Country Pages.
- In the GBIF portal there is a feedback button to comment on a certain page of the GBIF portal. Is this function being used by the users from the portal, and should there be an additional campaign to highlight the feedback function among users of the portal and/or the Nodes network? The Secretariat response was: The feedback button at the GBIF portal is very much used, and the usage is that frequent that we should not highlight this further. It is already becoming quite some task to manage and prioritize the feedback that is provided.

Preparatory Survey

This preparatory exercise is perceived as very valuable by the Nodes managers. Questions could have been better prepared (eg less open to interpretation). Organizations did not reply because they perceived the Survey as being something for the country nodes.

Network of nodes

Several topics has been presented and discussed amongst the nodes: Node Portal, tools, sensitive data, data mobilisation, Communication tools.

Node Portal framework

Spain made a excellent summary of the history of the Node Portal Toolkit. The current NPT startup does not match European countries requirements. Most countries need more advanced functionalities and therefore are more incline to build their own Node portals.

Sweden, Poland, Finland shown their own portal developments. These projects use different technologies, languages and IT environment.

Other countries are interested by a customization of the ALA portal. But the configuration/customization effort must be evaluated firstly.

Various Tools

France, Germany and Norway shown interesting tools : Harvesting, UIDs, Annotation, Data Quality...

These tools are very often developed based on local expertise (language, technology,...) with little vision of re-use in another context. On the other hand, most of these tools are open source (github) and may inspire reuse by others.

Sensitive Data

Finland and Sweden shared how they tackle sensitive data. A special attention should be taken when a country publishes data on other countries (aka Data repatriation) as they might not be aware of local sensitivity in these countries.

Data mobilization

Paco: GBIF data discovery and download processes are there. But 'Data do not grow on trees'. We must keep our focus on Data mobilisation and cleaning. This is a general perception of all European nodes.

Communication tools

So far, we mainly use [GBIF Elgg CS](#) and a regional Mailman [mailing list for Europe](#). The general feeling is that these tools are sufficient for our communication.

EU Initiatives

Lifewatch

Are we happy with the MoC between GBIF and LifeWatch. There is no central Secretariat for LifeWatch and this is making the communication with them difficult. It should be easier when the creation of the ERIC will be done (official status)

Portugal: has a commitment in LifeWatch via PROBIOTA.

Denmark: ESFRI in Denmark is a combined packages for contributions to both LifeWatch and GBIF – this box is opened soon again – view of the universities and the ministry of science to combine this

France: discussion with the Ministry of Science: how do they see the relationships. Lifewatch and GBIF should work together if France enters in Lifewatch. Interesting but expensive (cost repatriation in ERIC system).

Spain: there was a process to include GBIF in the list of recognized international organizations of the country – such a process could be done by others

Sweden: Interaction between GBIF (museum) and LifeWatch Sweden. Species gateway – Artdatabanken – observational data and GBIF collected specimen/collection data. There are different avenues for publishing data. Artdatabanken – also working on taxonomic data – dintaxa on Swedish taxa only

Belgium: When the ERIC will be there, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform will take the role of National Service Center: communicating Lifewatch to Belgian research community.

Finland: Idea is that LifeWatch is responsible for environmental data

Spain: GBIF is the discovery system also for LifeWatch – there are no different avenues for the data. Silos of data providers: GBIF organism data

OpenUp!

What are the plans to connect the images to GBIF?

- In Darwin Core no connection to images right now but it is supposed to change in the next months.
- Secretariat to facilitate contact with OpenUp on how images can be published to GBIF as well
- check if the data quality tool developed during OpenUp is mentioned in the data quality hub.

ESFRI-Env

How to promote/manage the relationship between GBIF and ESFRIs?

LifeWatch is the only ESFRI_ENV that mentions GBIF.

GBIF nodes should be offered as in-kind contribution from the countries to LifeWatch.

Actions:

- Use cases: can we see use cases that can be combined with LifeWatch and potentially other ESFRI's
- Make contact with EFRI's representatives in country
- Setup a task group on ESFRI's

EEA

Are there contact points available for each country?

Which Nodes have context to these species lists/original sources of species data at the national level. For the reporting to the EEA the data is blurred 10by 10 km grids.

UK, Norway, Netherlands and Spain help their country to report to EEA.

Actions:

- Make contact with EEA reporting body in country

EU-BON

Work with EUBON on inventory lists around citizen science datasets

Some european nodes are not part of EU-BON but are willing to be involved in the project. The MOU for associated partners is ready to sign if GBIF nodes want to.

Actions:

- Google doc for the action points
- Make a list of priority initiatives and organizations to solve relationships with
- Gap analyses of EUBON: recommendation to the GBIO – Nodes in the work package 1

Sonia: a task is to keep on ongoing projects like EU-BON and see the connection with GBIF (with EUBON potentially the gap analyses).

BioVel

Lots of documentation available, it could be useful for the nodes to prepare data sets before connected them to the portal.

Identifying Use Cases

Documenting the big research questions from the different domains will help to focus; and make sure the data are used. These are the potential use cases perceived by the european countries. GBIF is an excellent data source while generating analyses for formulating/validating good hypotheses.

Vegetation

Subgroup session with (NL, PL, BE, DE, NO)

Plants Community is separate network in Europe, Data stored with TurboVeg. There are really good opportunities to collaborate with them through :

- DwC extension to allow import/export DwC-TurboVeg
- Solve Taxonomic issues with Atlas of Flora europeana

EVA: about 100 data publishers that need to be approached. EVA is more than the TurboVEG users Benefits for them: Data Archival , Showcasing , Data papers.

Potential showcase of Vegetation Data coupled with :

- Pollinators data
- Remote sensing data
- Habitats distribution
- 8-12 May EVA meeting in Slovenia: someone needs to go there to present the ideas and see whether there is interest.

Actions:

Germany: From may the German GBIF funding is ending. So no staff can be made available

Norway: for June report drafted for TurboVeg Belgium: need to move in the coming weeks to

Belspo. More capacity closer to the governing board NLBIF: have some capacity to make

contacts with the relevant people around EVA and TurboVeg Poland: offer contacts with proper

people in Poland, they are underfinanced Finland: do not have budget for GBIF activities, but

can try to mobilize the vascular plant list of Finland and contact the network of Atlas Flora of

Europe France: there is a project called VegFrance that could be relevant – providing

information on this

Check [EUDAT](#) (European Data Infrastructure)

SeaBirds at Sea

See MSDF and ESAS

The European Seabirds at Sea (ESAS) database is a collaborative partnership between the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and seabird researchers in north-west Europe. Approximately 3 million counts of seabirds have been collected from at-sea surveys from ships and aircraft since 1979 following standardised methods. The resulting database is managed by the JNCC on behalf of the ESAS Co-ordinating Group and is not publically accessible; to request data please contact the JNCC Data Manager via the attached link:

<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-4469>

Invasive Alien Species - Freshwater

In the past, the European Nodes did tried to mobilize freshwater data, mainly for [Bio'Fresh](#) project. Although some nodes have had some success, in general this action was not very successful.

We had a very interesting round table to identify the lessons learned based on three questions:

- What have we done for the invasive-freshwater data mobilization?
- Where did we succeed?
- Where did we failed and why?

Negative experiences:

In some countries, GBIF nodes are in competition with other agencies working on these issues. They have their own agenda and priorities. In some large countries, monitoring data are gathered by local authorities (provinces/counties), not at country level. In other cases, these data are very difficult to mobilize: scattered data, poor quality, spreadsheet format, checklists issues, monitoring data gathered into outdated/useless system... IAS experts not very receptive on Data Sharing Standards or sometime only agree to publish data at gross scale.

Positive experiences:

Cross border perspective is a good motivation to gather and mobilize Invasive Species Data. Added values such as nice visualization (eg [CartoDB](#)) also greatly helped to convince experts. Some relevant data were indirectly mobilized through taxon group datasets.

Conclusions:

Although we did encounter some technical problems, cultural and political barriers were more critical. HoDs should help to overcome these barriers by advocating the usefulness of GBIF for Policy relevant data. Nodes supported by Ministry of Environment are probably in a better position than those supported by Ministry of Sciences. Getting Data from Ministries of Agriculture or Fisheries is still a difficult issues.

We should have Communication material dedicated to specific users: Monitoring experts, Ministries,...

Crop Wild Relatives

Habitats/Birds directives

Protected areas

Common Database of Designated Areas (CCDA): GBIF could look at which red lists occur in which protected site.

EU Strategy

Enlargement

Apart from Israel, who joined GBIF in 2013 and decided to be part the European region, no european countries have recently joined GBIF. We are also facing a problem of some dormant countries.

We should take the opportunity of keys european initiatives linked to GBIF (such as Lifewatch and EU-BON) to enlarge GBIF participation in Europe.

Nodes Collaboration

At the moment, most European Nodes work independently with little or no collaborative effort. The main reasons for that are:

- we all have our own work plan and priorities
- we are basically lacking resources
- we have different expertise and use different technologies

Other initiatives (LTER, CETAF, Catalogue of Life,...) are experiencing similar situation. Running an internal SWOT analysis could be consider for the EU Nodes. The Secretariat might consider to start a staff exchange program.

Potential areas of collaboration are huge : data mobilization, technical developments, knowledge exchange, policy work,...

Collaboration must be demand driven: a node will post a request, all others nodes might react to and help if he has the expertise and the capacity to do so. This is perceived as much more efficient than creating a centralized catalogue of (Node staff) skills and capacity. A forum or simple mailing-list would be suitable communication tool for that. It would also serve to inform other nodes on coming activities.

The France-Spain-Portugal mentoring clearly shows that bottom-up collaborative approach delivers excellent results with minimal costs. We would like to repeat and encourage this approach in near future because we are all facing a difficult financial situation. It appear that such collaboration effort are better done with few partners and could not easily be upscaled to the whole region as such.

Actions:

- Create a mailing list open to all European Nodes staff, in addition to the current Node Managers list

WorkProgramme

We didn't had a lot of time to cover this. However we are generally very positive about GBIF work programme and our priorities will feed the Nodes Work Programme.

EU Funding

EU Funding offers a lot of opportunities that are currently underused by the European Nodes. Most of the European nodes are not aware of coming EU Calls. We could help each other by improving our EU calls discovery mechanism. The first step would be to list who is interested by what? And the list of activities we are looking for. Based on that, we should circulate ideas just as Hannu is doing with his current H2020 proposal. Such proposal activity will also be demand driven. Hannu(Finland) is currently working on a H2020 proposal :“Design of a European distributed digitisation infrastructure for natural Heritage.” Several European countries are interested to join and should contact Hannu for more details.

Themes Prioritization:

- Everybody: data mobilization + data publishers
- Everybody: digitization infrastructure
- Everybody: policy relevant data (it depends)
- ¾ on fundamental science issues
- Educational component
- Capacity enhancement

In all cases, we should also involve of non-GBIF participants countries (eg mobilize data from these countries).

Actions:

- Identify the list of themes of potential interest and leader for these themes
- Identify and contact your H2020 NFPs
- Prepare a document presenting GBIF Europe business case (Rui+André)

see EU dot, BHorizons, e-Infrastructures and [Horizon 2020](#)

NodeManagers-Head of Delegation meeting at GB

This meeting with HoDs is welcome by all European Nodes Managers. In some the dialog between Node Manager and HoD runs smoothly, in other not. The format of this meeting is not yet clear: a plenary session with/without Regional breakouts. Since there is no Nodes Meeting this year, very few Nodes managers will attend GB21, this should be taken into account when preparing this meeting.

On the content of this meeting, some ideas have been discussed:

- Definition of **GBIF Core**. How to fund the other activities?
Some tasks falling out the 'core' will fall directly to the regions, but these are at risk of falling off completely.
- Giving the current node capacity/resources and the fact that Secretariat budget is shrinking, new tasks will fall down to the Nodes. The **ability to take up some new tasks** from GBIF Secretariat should be exposed to HoDs. They should help funding these activities.
- This meeting is also a good opportunity to showcase some **success stories**. In Europe, the diversity of nodes is one of our selling point; we could do less on the national level and invest in the Regional level. The advantage is clear; but the disadvantage would be that there is less mobilization of data within the countries.
- HoDs want to clearly see the **benefits of GBIF**, for the research community and for the decision makers. The meeting could focus on GBIF benefits as seen by Node Managers and HoDs.
- How could GBIF node helps to optimize the **biodiversity data flows** between isolated Ministries? In other words setting up the culture and policies of data sharing within the country.
- HoDs should focus on **Regional priorities** such as EEA reporting, LifeWatch, ESFRIs, IPBES (for Europe).

Actions:

- NSG to prepare this meeting

- get a list of HoDs – with their actual role
Where are the country nodes, in term of development path? (spidergrams)

GBIF Core?

We are not happy about the document flow : communication only to the VP HoDs. Nodes (at least in Europe) would like to be engaged in the definition of the GBIF core and its practical implications.

Can we have a Q&A session with HoDs about the core of GBIF?

Practically, what are the tasks that will fall onto the region/countries nodes?

Actions:

- All to discuss this document
- Formulate the standpoint of the Nodes Committee
- Formulate that the Nodes Committee is not happy with the communication around the 'core' GBIF document and the fact that it only went to the VPs and HoDs – there could have been a parallel communication + the process around how to get response from all