

Purpose

This paper sets out a proposed collaboration scheme between the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) and the respective Web2.0 community recently built on epractice.eu (SEISnet), and the Aarhus Clearinghouse for Environmental Democracy on UNECE, hereafter referred to as ACED.

Background

One of the SEIS principles is that environmental information should be, whenever possible, fully available both to citizens and to public authorities. According to SEIS, monitoring and other information-gathering processes, together with the development of electronic reporting tools should be aimed to lead to the greatest possible benefits in terms of the use that is made of the resulting data.

The SEISnet community on epractice.eu has been built in order to support the SEIS initiative and provide targeted members and stakeholders with a communication platform and a dissemination tool in order objectives and results of this uptake to reach the widest possible audience.

At the other end, ACED provides all the necessary material in order to assist users, ranging from citizens to intergovernmental organisations, by granting them access to information and by promoting participation to decision making regarding environmental issues. The resource directory maintains a large number of valuable items pertaining to legislations, related projects, events, information on funding instruments etc. It is believed that increased public access to environmental information contributes significantly to strengthening the protection of the environment and improving the management of natural resources.

It may be concluded that SEIS/SEISnet and ACED share a common vision pertaining to the availability of environmental information. **SEIS/SEISnet is focused at EU level, while ACED operates internationally.** Consequently, a possible collaboration between these two initiatives would join forces toward a common goal increasing the possibilities of achieving the intended benefits. Such a collaboration scheme is proposed in the following.

Proposed collaboration

Collaboration between SEIS/SEISnet and ACED is thought of on the basis of information and data exchange. This works in a bidirectional fashion; the proposed scheme is currently restricted between SEISnet and ACED.

Collaboration facilitator

SEISnet and ACED will identify an interlocutor from both sides in order to ensure open communication channels. SEISnet interlocutor will be the SEISnet community facilitator.

From SEISnet to ACED (*ACED facilitator to implement*)

All following items are meant to be published on the ACED resource directory, the source acknowledged being the “SEISnet community on epractice.eu“. It is also presumed that the related content to be provided to ACED is relevant to the ACED interests.

- **News:** SEISnet may contribute with news items to ACED; topics should be relevant with the ACED taxonomy and should be expected to include, without this being a limitation to, access to information, public participation and strategic decision making.
- **Cases** and project information: Members of the SEISnet community are expected to submit their own cases issued by the projects they are involved in. This information could be hosted under the **Projects** section of the ACED resource directory.
- **Events:** Workshops and events proposed by SEISnet members may be submitted to ACED intended to be hosted under the respective **Events** section of the resource directory.
- **Articles:** In regular intervals (e.g. on a three-month basis), the SEISnet community may disseminate information on results and initiatives undertaken by the community. This may occur, for example, in the form of press releases. Such information could be hosted under the **News** section of ACED.

From ACED to SEISnet (*SEISnet facilitator to implement*)

Content items below are intended to be included in the community’s Newsletter which will be dispatched monthly to all registered members. This eNewsletter could be presented as a joined newsletter of EC and UNECE Secretariat. Any topic pertaining to Information and Communication Technology on environment is considered to lie within the region of the SEISnet community’s interests.

- **Press releases** hosted under the press centre section of ACED could be published in the news section of SEISnet in epractice and included in the monthly newsletter distributed to members
- **Projects** section of the ACED resource directory may represent an interesting pool of **cases** to be published in the SEISnet community in epractice. SEISnet facilitators will investigate this possibility and liaise with ACED interlocutor the way forward.
- Audiovisual material under the **Videos** section of ACED, such as interviews, relevant with the SEIS interest could also be hosted in the SEISnet community under the

ePracticeTV functionality (for example, “*More democracy against fears*”, Interview with Kaj Baerlund, former director of Environment Division). This is an option to be further investigated with the epractice web managers.

- In autumn 2009, a **Workshop** is to be organised by the SEISnet community. ACED will be invited to participate and promote material (e.g. leaflets) during the event. A speaker representing ACED will also be welcome to give a presentation on a relevant subject of his/her choice.

Intended benefits

The main benefit envisaged by the proposed collaboration is the **raise of awareness**. This collaboration is believed to further promote the wider use of electronic information tools as an effective instrument for the implementation of the Convention’s provisions on the dissemination of environmental through electronic means. By multiplying information sources, a wider audience is targeted; an aware audience is more likely to participate and eventually contribute, leading ultimately to the promotion of public participation in environmental decision-making, a vision shared by both SEIS and ACED.

Way forward

Since the SEISnet community is still at its growing phase, information flow, from the part of SEISnet, is not expected to be uniform in the beginning. This is because cases, events and results, as well as the number of community’s members are all expected to attain their maximum features in the course of the community’s lifecycle.

The aforescribed collaboration scheme constitutes only a proposal and it is thus open to modifications, suggestions and fine-tuning by both sides.