



**CONVENTION ON
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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM AND EUROPEAN
COMMUNITY CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM
SECOND JOINT REGIONAL MEETING FOR
CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE
Tallinn, 13-15 December 2005

**REPORT OF THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM OF THE CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY CLEARING-HOUSE
MECHANISM JOINT REGIONAL MEETING FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE**

A. Background

1. In paragraph 4 of decision VII/23, the Conference of the Parties invited developed country Parties to assist developing country Parties, through the clearing-house mechanism, in their efforts to implement and use new information technologies, including the establishment of websites.
2. The Conference of the Parties, in paragraph 7 (b) of decision VII/23 also requested the Executive Secretary to convene, subject to the availability of financial resources, regional workshops as a catalysing mechanism to allow for the interaction of international thematic focal points with the national focal points to further enhance the scientific and technical cooperation goal of the clearing-house mechanism and to build capacities at the national level with regard to use of and access to new information technologies..
3. The European Community Clearing-House Mechanism (EC CHM) was established pursuant to the implementation of the European Community Biodiversity Strategy and in accordance with Article 18, paragraph 3 of the Convention.
4. Within its programme of work, the EC CHM seeks to provide information at a European Community level to address biodiversity-related critical issues such as the protection of ecosystems/habitats and species, including migratory birds, and sustainable use of biological resources, among others. The EC CHM also participates in collaborative activities among national clearing-house mechanisms in Europe to enhance capacities and promote and facilitate the transfer of expertise and knowledge.
5. Accordingly, the Executive Secretary and the European Environment Agency (EEA) together with the Estonian Ministry for the Environment, Estonian Environment Information Centre, with the generous support of the European Commission and the European Community clearing-house project (Inter-exchange of Data between Administrations Programme), organized this meeting to provide

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countries of the region with an opportunity to become acquainted with new information and web-based technologies, namely the second version of the EC CHM portal toolkit. The meeting also offers Parties the opportunity to express their needs and expectations with regard to efforts by the Convention on Biological Diversity clearing-house mechanism and the EC CHM to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation, particularly with regard to the 2010 target, the transfer of technology, the communication, education and public awareness programme and other programme areas and cross-cutting issues of the Convention.

6. The organization of the meeting also responded to the recommendation of the informal advisory committee of the clearing-house mechanism made at its meetings of 13 and 17 February 2004 and 6 February 2005, which requests the Executive Secretary to focus on the use of the clearing-house mechanism to promote technical and scientific cooperation, particularly within the programme areas and cross-cutting issues of the Convention, including the 2010 target, technology transfer, communication education and public awareness and other programme areas and cross-cutting issues of the Convention.

7. The meeting also considered issues relevant to the operation of the clearing-house mechanism under the Convention and the EC CHM in the Central and Eastern and Western European region.

B. Attendance

8. All Parties of the Central and Eastern Europe region for the Convention as well as all countries having participated as member or observer to the EC CHM Steering Committee were invited to nominate one expert, qualified in the fields of management of clearing-house mechanism issues, information-sharing systems, biodiversity information networks and database-management, and/or experience with the clearing-house mechanism by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the European Environment Agency respectively on 10 November 2005.

9. In response to these invitations, participants from the following Parties were nominated by their respective focal points and attended the meeting: Albania, Belgium, Croatia, The Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Norway, Netherlands, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Ukraine, United Kingdom and the European Community.

10. Representatives of the following governmental, bilateral donor and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations participated in the meeting as observers and/or resource persons:

(a) *Intergovernmental organizations*: European Environment Agency (EEA), the European Commission (EC) and the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF);

(b) *Industry*: Finsiel.

11. The full list of participants is contained in annex II below.

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

12. The meeting was opened at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, 13 December 2005 by the Vice-Minister for the Environment of Estonia, Mr. Olavi Tammemäe. He spoke on issues related to the Convention on Biological Diversity, particularly issues related to information exchange and networking. He also spoke on the role of the Estonian clearing-house mechanism. He described its development and launching and the need to share information to assist Parties to fulfill obligations under the Convention. Mr. Olavi Tammemäe wished a warm welcome to participants and thanked them for their participation.

13. Mr. Marcos Silva, Programme Officer, clearing-house mechanism of the Convention Secretariat, on behalf of Mr. Hamdallah Zedan, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, welcomed the participants to the meeting. After an introduction on the new phase of the clearing-house mechanism which focuses strongly on technical and scientific collaboration, he presented a brief

summary on new initiatives within the context of decisions of the Conference of the Parties. He also emphasized projects by the clearing-house mechanism with regard to the 2010 target, technology transfer, and communication, education and public awareness. He then invited countries to use the meeting to identify their priority needs regarding capacities to participate in potential joint initiatives under the Convention's clearing-house mechanism and the EC CHM. Mr. Silva concluded by expressing his gratitude to the European Commission for providing financial support for the meeting.

14. Ms. Ulla Pinborg, EC CHM Principal Officer, also welcomed participants to the meeting and expressed the need for a harmonized vision. She spoke on the objectives of the joint meeting. She also spoke on issues related to the European region and the need for cooperation and joint initiatives. Finally, she discussed the role of the clearing-house mechanism in facilitating synergies, and in establishing a European collaborative network.

ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

2.1. Election of officers

15. At the 1st session of the meeting, on 13 December 2005, M. Lauri Klein of Estonia was elected to serve as Chair and Ms. Jindriska Stankova of the Czech Republic to serve as Rapporteur.

2.2. Adoption of agenda

16. Participants adopted the following agenda on the basis of the provisional agenda circulated in advance of the meeting (UNEP/CBD/CHM/CEE.Reg/2/1):

1. Opening of the meeting;
2. Organizational matters:
 - 2.1. Election of officers;
 - 2.2. Adoption of the agenda;
 - 2.3. Organization of work.
3. Use of new information technologies, including the European Nature Information System (EUNIS) database and the second version of the European Community Clearing-House Mechanism portal toolkit.
4. Joint initiatives between the clearing-house mechanism under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the European Community Clearing-House Mechanism in support of technical and scientific cooperation, particularly the 2010 target, technology transfer, communication, education and public awareness and the other programme areas and cross-cutting issues of the Convention:
 - (a) Joint initiatives to enhance national capacity with regard to achievement of the 2010 target;
 - (b) Joint initiatives with regard to decision VII/29, on transfer of technology and technology cooperation;
 - (c) Joint initiatives with regard to decision VII/24, on education and public awareness;
 - (d) Other joint initiatives in support of the programme areas and cross-cutting issues of the Convention.
5. Implementation of joint initiatives and projects at the national and regional levels;

- (a) Issues related to obstacles and lack of capacity;
 - (b) Existing initiatives and potential for collaboration;
 - (c) Planning for new joint activities and projects;
 - (d) Roles and responsibilities.
6. Conclusions and recommendations.
 7. Adoption of the report.
 8. Closure of the meeting.

2.3. Organization of work

17. At its 1st session, on 13 December 2005, participants to the joint meeting approved the proposed programme of work as contained in annex II to the annotations to the provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/CHM/CEE.Reg/2/1/Add.1)

ITEM 3. USE OF NEW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES, INCLUDING THE EUROPEAN NATURE INFORMATION SYSTEM (EUNIS) DATABASE AND THE SECOND VERSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM PORTAL TOOLKIT

18. Under agenda item 3, the Chair invited Ms. Miruna Badescu, of Finsiel Romania, to speak on the European Community portal toolkit. Ms. Badescu described the toolkit's components and design. She also spoke on the open source software used in the development of the toolkit and that the European Community portal toolkit is freely available to Parties and other Governments.

19. Ms. Badescu then discussed the procedures to install the European Community portal toolkit and the available documentation and help desk to assist national clearing-house mechanisms to more effectively use the European Community portal toolkit.

20. She concluded by speaking on future developments of the European Community portal toolkit, and on the need for input and feedback from users. She also spoke on available resources to assist users, such as the help desk, electronic forums, technical groups and workshops.

21. Following the introductions and presentation, the Chair invited participants to use the European Community portal toolkit and use its many features and services.

22. Participants downloaded and installed the European Community portal toolkit, and tested its features and services.

23. Use and testing of the European Community portal toolkit, including its content management system, continued during the 2nd session of the meeting.

Launching of the Estonian clearing-house mechanism

24. At the 3rd session of the meeting, Mr. Lauri Klein, Estonian Ministry of the Environment, Estonian Environment Information Centre, announced the launching of the Estonian clearing-house mechanism. He spoke on the need to adhere to open standards and solutions, such as that offered by the European Community portal toolkit. He also spoke on the essential role of information exchange in supporting the programme areas and cross-cutting issues of the Convention.

25. Mr. Marcos Silva spoke of the role of the clearing-house mechanism in promoting and facilitating technical and scientific cooperation, and praised the efforts to develop an Estonian clearing-house mechanism. He also discussed issues related to new information technologies, particularly with regard to

access to information needed for effective decision making. As well, he raised issues on how national clearing-house mechanisms would be able to assist Parties and other Governments to achieve the 2010 target, facilitate the transfer of technologies and raise awareness of the Convention at national and regional levels.

26. Ms. Lenka Karova spoke on behalf of the European Commission on the support for achievements to date and for efforts to further develop a clearing-house mechanism, particularly with regard to the 2010 target. She discussed the role of the clearing-house mechanism in making information more easily accessible to policy makers and stakeholders, particularly if the information adheres to common formats and protocols.

27. Ms. Rania Spyropoulou of the European Environment Agency congratulated the Government of Estonia in the development of its clearing-house mechanism. She also spoke on the efforts of the European Environment Agency to bring together existing biodiversity information and make it more easily available. In this regard, she spoke about the activities of the EC CHM to assist stakeholders to find and retrieve information, especially in gathering information located in different organizations and institutions. She concluded by suggesting the establishment of a technical group to discuss issues related to the clearing-house mechanism and datasets and thanked participants for their support of the meeting.

28. Mr. Soren Roug of the European Environment Agency spoke on technical issues related to the clearing-house mechanism, and on efforts by the European Environment Agency to assist Parties and organizations with technical issues and support. He discussed the offer by the European Environment Agency to host national clearing-house mechanisms websites.

29. Ms. Ulla Pinborg, EC CHM Principal Officer, thanked the Government of Estonia for their support of the meeting. She also thanked persons who first supported the work of the European Community clearing-house mechanism such as Mr. Carlos Martin-Novella of Spain and Mr. Hannu Saarenmaa of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility. She also thanked Finsiel for their work related to the EC CHM. She then described new information tools developed by the EC CHM such as the access and benefit-sharing portal. She concluded by thanking persons who had contributed to the success of the European Community clearing-house mechanism, especially those associated with national clearing-house mechanisms and by recognizing the work of Mr. Horst Freiberg of the German clearing-house mechanism.

30. Mr. Corrado Iannucci of Finsiel spoke on the collaboration with the European Environment Agency and the experience gained in the development of information tools and other systems that support a clearing-house mechanism.

31. Mr. Lauri Klein then invited comments from the floor. Mr. Hannu Saarenmaa spoke on other initiatives that promote collaboration. He described the collaborative work of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility in collaboration with clearing-house mechanisms in support of the 2010 target. Ms. Jindriska Stankova of the Czech clearing-house mechanism discussed the use of the European Community portal toolkit. Mr. Severin ten Houte de Lange talked about the work of the Dutch clearing-house mechanism and its capacity-building work to assist developing countries to establish clearing-house mechanism websites. He also spoke on his recommendation for the Dutch clearing-house mechanism to use the European Community portal toolkit. Ms. Irina Merzlyakova representing the Russian Federation clearing-house mechanism thanked the European Environment Agency for their support. Mr. Iurie Maxim dealt with the new information sharing tools developed and used by the Romanian clearing-house mechanism. Ms. Ariana Koça thanked the European Environment Agency and Finsiel for their assistance in the development of the Albanian clearing-house mechanism. Mr. Horst Freiberg spoke on the new opportunities to develop region wide collaboration, especially given the European Environment Agency's offer to host national clearing-house mechanism websites.

32. Mr. Lauri Klein and Mr. Hanno Zingel then officially launched the Estonian clearing-house mechanism. They spoke on the development of the Estonia clearing-house mechanism website and demonstrated its functionality and information contents, especially its databases and resources on the biodiversity of Estonia.
33. The Chair then requested Ms. Miruna Badescu to demonstrate other functionalities of the European Community portal toolkit, including its map-based access to national clearing-house mechanism information.
34. Following the demonstration, the Chair requested national clearing-house mechanism using the European Community portal toolkit to discuss its uses. The representatives of Germany and Denmark demonstrated their national clearing-house mechanism websites and discussed their use in support of the Convention and its programme areas and cross-cutting issues.
35. Comments were made by the representatives from Estonia, European Environment Agency.
36. Mr. Hannu Saarenmaa was then requested by the Chair to demonstrate the use by the Global Biodiversity Information Facility of the European Community portal toolkit. He discussed the modifications to the portal toolkit to support the Global Biodiversity Information Facility's data depository tool, developed to share data, and the directory tool, developed to allow stakeholders to upload data.
37. At the 4th session of the meeting, the Chair invited Finsiel to continue to introduce participants to the functionalities of the European Community portal toolkit, in particular its Really Simple Syndication (RSS) tools.
38. Participants discussed the potential of RSS in making information in the European region interoperable and how to promote its adoption and use.
39. Comments were made by participants from Finland, Germany, Romania the Czech Republic and the European Environment Agency.
40. Following the above discussion, the Chair invited Mr. Ulric Wilson to speak on integrating the ecosystem approach into the clearing-house mechanism of the United Kingdom. Mr. Wilson described the role of the clearing-house mechanism, and its mission in the United Kingdom to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation. As well, he described efforts by the United Kingdom to use the standards developed for the Ecosystem Approach source book as a way to document sources of information available through the clearing-house mechanism and how this approach facilitates access to and retrieval of information
41. Representatives from the European Environment Agency, Belgium, Finland, and Germany made comments on the above presentation.

ITEM 4. JOINT INITIATIVES BETWEEN THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM UNDER THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM IN SUPPORT OF TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION, PARTICULARLY THE 2010 TARGET, TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER, COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS AND THE OTHER PROGRAMME AREAS AND CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES OF THE CONVENTION

42. Agenda item 4 was considered at the 4th session of the meeting, on 14 December 2005. The following items were discussed:
- (a) Joint initiatives to enhance national capacity with regard to achievement of the 2010 target;

- (b) Joint initiatives with regard to decision VII/29, on transfer of technology and technology cooperation;
- (c) Joint initiatives with regard to decision VII/24, on education and public awareness;
- (d) Other joint initiatives in support of the programme areas and cross-cutting issues of the Convention.

43. Following an introduction of Item 4 by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Chair opened the floor for comments and discussion on elements (a)-(d).

44. The Chair initiated discussion by describing efforts by the Government of Estonia, especially with regard to visualization of data.

45. Comments were made by Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, United Kingdom, the European Commission, the European Environment Agency.

46. In the ensuing discussion, some participants were of the opinion that the clearing-house mechanism has an essential role in presenting information on achievement of the target at the national level to promote action by policy makers. Other participants expressed some concerns over achieving the 2010 target, and that we should also look beyond the 2010 target. There were also comments on the difficulty related to incomplete data and information and that one of the key roles of clearing-house mechanisms would be to generate discussion on these issues. There was also agreement that the exercise related to the 2010 target offers national clearing-house mechanisms opportunities to foster cooperation and facilitate access to information and compilation of information.

47. Some participants raised issues on the need to use the clearing-house mechanism to raise awareness and educate the public on the 2010 target, and the need for it to become an essential information resource for the public and academic community. Some participants also stated that exchange of information on best practices to assist decisions makers should be one of the key roles of national clearing-house mechanisms. There was also the view that national clearing-house mechanisms should reach out to children through the development of a children's website. Participants raised issues related to target audiences, especially the media, and how to more effectively reach decision makers by improving the quality of information on national clearing-house mechanism websites.

ITEM 5. IMPLEMENTATION OF JOINT INITIATIVES AND PROJECTS AT THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS

48. Agenda item 5 was considered at the 5th session of the meeting, on 15 December 2005.

49. The Chair invited Ms. Lenka Karova of the European Commission to announce initiatives related to biodiversity by the European Commission, namely the Green Week and the *Communication from the European Commission on Halting the Loss of Biodiversity by 2010—and Beyond*.

50. Ms. Ulla Pinborg, EC CHM Principal Officer, initiated discussion by offering some general ideas on how to implement joint activities in support of the programme areas and cross-cutting issues of the Convention. She emphasized the need to be as concrete as possible.

51. Participants discussed the development of a children's website by the Secretariat, and discussed how Parties in the region could contribute to its development and implementation. Projects in the region were described and its potential for synergies. Participants raised issues related to the digital divide and the lack of access to the Internet by many schools. Other issues raised included the human resources required to sustain an Internet-based educational project. The need for a generic system that could be adapted at the national level and contextualized to local needs was also discussed.

52. The Chair spoke about "the children's corner" on the Estonian Environment Ministry website, and described its interactive activities. He also spoke on the need for non-Internet projects geared for

children. The possible role of national clearing-house mechanisms were discussed, particularly how they could highlight and advertise existing children's initiatives and projects.

53. Some first steps proposed by participants included a RSS page for educational projects and information, the development of workshops to assist parties to implement these types of projects, and to add an element to the EC CHM portal toolkit to assist with such projects. As well, participants noted the need for the CEPA Portal on the Convention's website to publish more information on existing projects to synergize partnerships and more collaboration.

54. Comments were made by participants from Estonia, Finland, Germany, the Russian Federation, United Kingdom and the European Commission.

55. Following the above discussion, the Chair invited participants to discuss other programmes and cross-cutting issues of the Convention.

56. Participants noted the need for national clearing-house mechanisms to make available up-to-date information on the 2010 target, possibly harvesting such information from the Convention's clearing-house mechanism website. Participants also noted the need for the Convention clearing-house mechanism to make available information on success stories from the programme areas and cross-cutting issues, especially on technology transfer and communication, education and public awareness.

57. Comments were made by the Czech Republic, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation and the European Commission.

ITEM 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

58. Participants took up agenda item 6 at the 6th session of the meeting, on 15 December 2005. Experts were also invited to raise and discuss other matters related to the subject-matter of the meeting.

59. There were no other matters raised under this item.

ITEM 7. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

60. The present report was adopted at the 6th session of the meeting, on 15 December 2005, on the basis of the draft report of the meeting, and taking into account amendments made by participants, on the understanding that the finalization of the report would be completed by the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

ITEM 8. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

61. The Chair declared the meeting closed at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, 15 December 2005.

Annex I

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM AND EUROPEAN COMMUNITY CLEARING-HOUSE
MECHANISM JOINT REGIONAL MEETING FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE**

The participants in the Convention on Biological Diversity clearing-house mechanism and European Community Clearing-House Mechanism Joint Regional Meeting for Central and Eastern Europe *recommends*:

1. Technical and scientific cooperation:

(a) Parties with well established national clearing-house mechanisms and the EC CHM should assist those Parties with less established clearing-house mechanisms through mentoring and partnering initiatives and technical support, as appropriate;

(b) The Executive Secretary should organize technical and thematic workshops, subject to available resources, to assist Parties with the use of new information and web-based technologies, including the EC CHM Portal Toolkit;

(c) Parties should contribute technical expertise in support of technical workshops on web-based and new information technologies;

(d) Parties should use their national clearing-house mechanism to develop further activities in support of the communication, education and public awareness programme;

(e) The European Community CHM should be further developed to address activities related to the communication, education and public awareness programme, including the development of activities related to children and youth;

(f) Parties should participate in and collaborate with international initiatives and organizations promoting technical and scientific cooperation, including the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, the Global Taxonomy Initiative, the Global Invasive Species Programme, among others

2. Information exchange and network development:

(a) Parties should consider use of the EC CHM Portal Toolkit to develop and establish their national clearing-house mechanism websites, as appropriate;

(b) Parties should use national clearing-house mechanisms and the EC CHM to publish information on available datasets, databases and assessments in support of the 2010 target and technology transfer;

(c) Parties should strengthen the Europe wide clearing-house mechanism network through their national clearing-house mechanisms and the European Community clearing-house mechanism.

(d) Parties should ensure effective use of new information technologies and the European Community portal toolkit, including by participating in a technical work group connected to the European Community clearing-house mechanism.

3. Funding:

(a) Parties should ensure adequate resources for long-term sustainability of their clearing-house mechanisms

(b) Parties should make more effective use of the Global Environment Facility's Additional Funding of Biodiversity Enabling Activities and other funding institutions or sources to establish and further develop clearing-house mechanisms;

(c) Parties should explore partnerships with the private sector and non-governmental organizations to assist with the development and long-term sustainability of clearing-house mechanisms.

Annex II

Name	Country	Organisation	Address	Email	TEL/FAX
Ms Ariana Koça	Albania	Ministry of Environment	Rruga e Durresit No.27 Tirana Albania	akoca@moe.gov.al	Tel.: +355 4 270 624 Fax: +355270627
Mr Abraham de Koeijer	Belgium	Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS)	Rue Vautierstraat 29 B-1000 Brussels Belgium	Han.DeKoeijer@naturalsciences.be	Phone: +322627 42 67 Fax: +32 2 627 41 41
Mr Kristijan Civic	Croatia	State Institute for Nature Protection	Savaska 41/XXIII P.O. Box 50 Zagreb 10144 Croatia	kristijan.civic@dzzp.hr	Tel.: +385 1 4866 177 Fax: +385 1 4866 186
Ms Jindriska Stankova	Czech Republic	Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection of the Czech Republic	Kalisnicka 4 130 23 Prague 3 Czech Republic	Jindriska_Stankova@nature.cz	Tel: +420 283069250 Fax: +420 222582423
Mr Lauri Klein	Estonia	Estonian Environment Information Centre	Mustamäe tee 33 Tallinn 10616 Estonia	lauri.klein@ic.envir.ee	Tel: +372 673 7577(secr.) Tel/fax: +372 6737576
Mr Hans Erik Svart	Denmark	Danish Forest and Nature Agency	Haraldsgade 53 2100 København Ø Denmark	HES@sns.dk	Tel: +45 39272000
Ms Liisa Roto Tuominen	Finland	Finnish Environment Institute	PO Box 140 00251 Helsinki Finland	Liisa.Tuominen-Roto@ymparisto.fi	Tel.: + 358 40 30 07 23 Fax: + 358 0 40 30 07 91
Dr Horst Freiberg	Germany	Bundesamt für Naturschutz Fachgebiet Z 2.1	Konstantinstraße 110 D-53179 Bonn - Germany	Horst.Freiberg@BfN.de	Tel: +49 228 8491 232 Fax: +49 228 8491 200

Name	Country	Organisation	Address	Email	TEL/FAX
Mr Berta Gábor	Hungary	Ministry of Environment and Water	Kolto utca 21 Budapest H-1121 Hungary	berta@mail.huum.hu	Tel: +361 678 8726 Fax: +361 487 8583
Ms Nora Kabuce	Latvia	Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Agency	Maskavas Str. 165 Riga LV-1019 Latvia	nora.kabuce@lvgma.gov.lv	Tel.: +371 703 2030 Fax: +371 714 154

Name	Country	Organization	Address	Email	TEL/FAX
Ms Ludmila Zavorotnaia	Moldova	Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources	Biodiversity Office 9 Cosmonautilor St., Chisinau 2005 Republic of Moldova	bsapm@dnt.md ; zavorotnaia@yahoo.com	Tel: +373 22 24 20 22 Fax: +373 22 24 20 22
Mr Arild Lindgaard	Norway	Directorate for Nature Management	Tungasletta 2, 7485 Trondheim. Norway	arild.lindgaard@dirnat.no	Tel. +47 73 58 08 08/ +47 916 98 995
Mr Frank Eklo	Norway	Directorate for Nature Management	Tungasletta 2, 7485 Trondheim. Norway	Frank.eklo@dirnat.no	Tel. +47 73 58 05 00
Ms Malgorzata Jankowska-Rózynska	Poland	Ministry of the Environment	52/54 Wawelska Warsaw 00-922 Poland		Fax: +48 22 57 92 555
Mr Iurie Maxim	Romania	Ministry of Environment and Waters Management	Libertatii, no 12 Bucharest 040129 Romania	iurie@mappm.ro	Tel: +40 21 316 02 87 Fax: +40 21 316 02 87
Ms Irina Merzlyakova	Russian Federation	Biodiversity Conservation Center	Staromonetny, 31 Moscow 119017 Russian Federation	info@ruschm.ru	Tel/fax: +7 495 950 3036
Ms Martina Kacicnik-Jancar	Slovenia	Institute of Republic of Slovenia of Nature Conservation	Dunajska 22 Ljubljana 1000 Slovenia	Martina.Kacicnik-Jancar@zrsvn.si	Tel.: +386 1 2309520 Fax: +386 1 230 95 40

Name	Country	Organization	Address	Email	TEL/FAX
Ms Ludmila Zavorotnaia	Moldova	Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources	Biodiversity Office 9 Cosmonautilor St., Chisinau 2005 Republic of Moldova	bsapm@dnt.md ; zavorotnaia@yahoo.com	Tel: +373 22 24 20 22 Fax: +373 22 24 20 22
Mr Severin ten Houte de Lange	The Netherlands	National Reference Centre for Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (EC LNV)	PO Box 30 6700 AA Wageningen The Netherlands	s.m.ten.houte@iccn.agro.nl	
Mr Igor Sirenko	Ukraine	National Ecological Centre of Ukraine	Str Kominternu, 1 01032 Kyiv Ukraine	I_sirenko@univ.kiev.ua	Tel: +380 44 238 6260 Fax: +380 44 238 6529
Dr Ulric Wilson	United Kingdom	Joint Nature Conservation Committee	Monkstone House, City Road, Peterborough PE1 1JY United Kingdom	Ulric.Wilson@jncc.gov.uk	Tel: +01 733 866853 Fax: +01 733 555948

International organization:

Name	Country	Organization	Address	Email	TEL/FAX
Mr Hannu Saarenmaa		GBIF Secretariat	Universitetsparken 15 DK-2100 Copenhagen Denmark	hsaarenmaa@gbif.org	Tel: +45 28751479

Other participants from Estonia:

Name	Country	Organization	Address	Email	TEL/FAX
Mr Hanno Zingel	Estonia	Estonian Environment Information Centre	Mustamäe tee 33 10616 Tallinn Estonia	hanno.zingel@ic.envir.ee	Tel: +372 673 7577
Ms Kai Klein	Estonia	Baltic Environmental Forum	Rävala 8-40, 10143 Tallinn Estonia	kai.klein@bef.ee	Tel: +372 6604 766
Ms Lilika Käis	Estonia	Ministry of Environment	Narva mnt 7A 15172 Tallinn Estonia	Lilika.kais@envir.ee	Tel. 3726262877 Fax: 3726262901

Project associated:

Name	Organization	Address	Email	TEL/FAX
Mr Marcos Silva	CBD Secretariat	Saint-Jacques Street, # Montréal, Québec Canada H2Y 1N9	marcos.silva@biodiv.org	Tel: +1 514-287- 7024 Fax: +1 514-288- 6588
Ms Ulla Pinborg	Consultant to European Environment Agency	Skov- og Naturstyrelsen Haraldsgade 53 2100 Copenhagen Ø Denmark	Ulla.pinborg@eea.eu.int	Tel.:(SNS):+45 39472000 (EEA):+45 33367170
Ms Lenka Kárová	European Commission	DG ENV 1049 Brussels Belgium	Lenka.karova@cec.eu.int	Tel: +32 2 298 11 61

Mr Søren Roug	European Environment Agency	Kongens Nytorv 6 1050 Copenhagen C Denmark	Soren.roug@eea.eu.int	Tel.: +45 33367212
Ms Charlotte Islev	European Environment Agency	Kongens Nytorv 6 1050 Copenhagen C Denmark	Charlotte.islev@eea.eu.int	Tel.: +45 33367231

Name	Organization	Address	Email	TEL/FAX
Ms Rania Spyropoulou	European Environment Agency	Kongens Nytorv 6 1050 Copenhagen C Denmark	Rania.Spyropoulou@eea.eu.int	Tel.: +45 33367121
Mr Anton Cupcea	Finsiel Romania Srl	44A Blvd. Ficusului 71544 Bucharest – 1 - Romania	a.cupcea@finsiel.ro	Tel: +39 06 39 93 53 60 Fax: +39 06 39 93 38 60
Mr Corrado Iannucci	Finsiel Romania Srl	Finsiel Romania SpA Luigi Rizzo, 22 00136 Rome, Italy	c.iannucci@finsiel.it	Tel: +39 06 39 93 53 60 Fax: +39 06 39 93 38 60
Ms Adriana Baci	Finsiel Romania Srl	44A Blvd. Ficusului 71544 Bucharest – 1 - Romania	a.baciu@Finsiel.ro	Tel: +40 21 232 0193 Fax: +40 21 232 9807
Ms Miruna Badescu	Finsiel Romania Srl	44A Blvd. Ficusului 71544 Bucharest – 1 - Romania	m.badescu@finsiel.ro	Tel: +40 21 2320193 Fax: +40 21 232 9807
