

Report



Executive Committee Meeting

20 February 2015– Szentendre, Hungary

A1. Main outputs and outcomes

1. The participants endorsed:
 - a) The Secretariat report regarding the activities of the last quarter of 2014.
 - b) The schedule for 2015
 - c) the validity and conclusions of the training needs assessment.
 - d) the training plan for 2014-2015 with some comments and suggestions.
 - e) the regional players inventory, that will serve as basis to seek synergies at national and regional level. The participants also provided further information to complete it.
 - f) The terms of reference for the creation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to prevent, detect and investigate environmental crimes with some reservations regarding the strict time frame proposed. The time frame is to be considered indicative.
 - g) The Themis Network communication plan¹.
2. Concrete proposals of the ILECU Network and INECE on how they can contribute to the training plan for 2014-2015

A2. Follow up actions

1. Start the implementation of the training plan for 2014-2015.
2. Develop dialogue with INECE and the ILECU Network to bring their contributions to the trainings to full fruition.
3. Start the necessary back-office work and research for the draft of the SOPs according to the approved terms of reference.

B. Session by session

¹ The comments to and endorsement of the communication plan was done by written procedure due to lack of time at the meeting. Countries submitted their feedback until the 28th of February as agreed during the meeting.

Session 1 – Welcome and opening, Marta Szigeti Bonifert (REC), Katharina Maier (ADA), Gordana Kozuharova and Aniko Nemeth (REC)

Marta Szigeti-Bonifert, Executive Director of the REC, opened the meeting by welcoming and congratulating all the participants for making the Themis network a success story. She saw Themis as a very good example of national ownership and of a bottom-up approach that produces results, also pointing out that achieving success “together is easier than alone”. Katharina Maier from ADA noted Themis relevance due to its transboundary character and to its ability to cross different policy levels from Ministry officials down to NGOs. Gordana Kozuharova mentioned the possibilities for synergies with other processes in the region, such as the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and its SEE 2020 Strategy, and encouraged for further cooperation with other REC projects, namely those under ENVSEC, and other regional initiatives as desirable and necessary. Aniko Nemeth took the chance to fully welcome the Republic of Moldova into the fold and to greet the partners. She introduced the agenda and the participants approved it by unanimity.

Session 2 – Secretariat report on 2014 activities, Aniko Nemeth (REC)

Aniko Nemeth, on behalf of the Secretariat, presented the report on the activities implemented between the 1st of October and the 31st of December 2014. The main activities were to develop cooperation with other network partners such as IMPEL, EUROPOL, INTERPOL and ILECU Network, and to prepare the implementation of the 2014-2017 work plan. This included collecting data and preparing a training needs assessment, a 3 year training plan, an inventory of key players in the Themis Network member countries, developing a new communication strategy (including a new website), among other back-office activities.

While some participants expressed their gratitude for the provided translation, concerns were raised on the need to ensure that all local languages are made available, including Albanian and Romanian. This will should also be the case for regional and sub-regional trainings where local experts with wide experience would not be able to participate without translation.

The Focal Points were invited to summarize the recent development in their respective countries. In Macedonia, an IPA project on environmental enforcement was started, as well as a twinning project focusing on the local level. The drafting of the planned new law on inspectorate and of the integrated risks management system will be assisted through other projects. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, two strategic projects financed by SIDA have been completed, while one UNEP proposed project on protected areas is in the pipeline. A law on forestry, until now non-existent, is expected to be adopted, also based on official data to be extracted from a forestry programme and inventory funded by the World Bank. In Montenegro, work is in progress regarding a national strategy on greenhouse gases. The EC is also funding a new IT system that will allow different institutions (environmental, health, etc) to be connected and exchange data. An IPA project on Strengthening the Environmental Protection System in Montenegro, especially with regards to the development of Natura 2000, will start soon. In Kosovo, the climate change strategy has been finalised, in the meantime, a project on climate change supported by UNEP is ongoing. Other projects are being implemented in Kosovo, including one on land survey financed by GIZ, and another on waste management funded by the EC. In Serbia, the transposition of the liability directive is in progress, while the full transposition of the Water Framework Directive is expected to be achieved by 2017. The Natura 2000 programme has not yet been completed in the country. During the past year, one of the emerging needs of forestry in Serbia is related with natural disasters. In Moldova, where a new government has just been appointed, the priority remains the implementation of the EU-Moldova association agreement, with the drafting of necessary strategies and laws.

Session 3 – Training needs assessment, Bruno Mesquita (REC)

Bruno Mesquita presented the results of questionnaires received from over 50 respondents from multiple institutions within the Themis countries. Some of the most important findings were that environmental crimes, nature protection, biodiversity, rural development, pollution control, transboundary issues, organisational development and ethics and transparency issues are priority topics where further training is needed and that the most desirable training methods were study tours to learn from other organisations' experience, exchange programs, workshops, pilot exercises (joint law enforcement actions)².

Session 4 – Themis Work Plan 2015, Aniko Nemeth and Bruno Mesquita (REC)

The training needs assessment led to the preparation of a 3-year training plan by the Secretariat, covering the period 2014-2017, which was introduced to the participants. The plan divides the trainings in three groups i) Regional trainings on management, nature protection, and horizontal cross cutting issues, ii) Sub regional trainings on transboundary issues in water, protected areas and environmental crimes, the INECE seaport initiative and forestry enforcement policy, and iii) National trainings and law enforcement actions. The following comments were made during the discussion of the proposed training plan:

- The issue of prevention and mitigation of natural disasters (such as the floods that had important impacts on Serbian forests) was proposed as a topic to be covered by Themis in the scope of the subregional trainings.
- Florije Kajiku from Kosovo pointed out the need for taking international knowledge to the national level, hence the importance of national trainings.
- The question was raised on how rural development will be covered as a new topic under Themis.
- Jo Gerardu reminded the need to keep emphasis on compliance and enforcement activities.
- A the train-the-trainer component was emphasized as important by Katharina Maier. It is an important element to improve sustainability, particularly at sub-regional level.
- Zineta Mujakovic suggested to learn from the mistakes of other countries, not only success stories (e.g. from countries that had to pay penalties for non-compliance).
- Dusan Kerin, representing the ILECU Network, described the simulation exercises implemented under the project, inviting the Themis members to come as observers to the next exercise, and suggesting that the next topic for simulation could be linked to environmental crimes so as to involve more closely Themis. In addition, he made references to the exchange of experience circles, where 2 representatives from one country visit another country to learn about their procedures, and to the ILECU yearly summer academies based on case studies and simulations of police investigation and exchange of information, which could easily cover environment as a topic.

Interest was expressed to host the different trainings at sub-regional level:

² More details are available in the training needs assessment itself.

- Training I in Macedonia.
- Training II in Montenegro, but the timing needs to be checked first against a same topic training to be organized under ECRAN in Montenegro. The training might also take place in an inland port.
- Training III in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The institutionalization of the trainings issue was raised by Katharina Maier clarifying that it is necessary the commitment of both the countries and the Secretariat to ensure the training results are sustainable and used at an institutional level. Ms. Aniko Nemeth intervened to say that the Secretariat will support the institutionalization through a training toolkit that will provide how-to and materials for each administration to run training programmes independently and through the creation of standard operating procedures, which not only provide a structure to build multiagency cooperation but can also double as training materials³.

The initiative to develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) was received with some reservations from the countries because of the short deadlines, the high workload involved, the need to clarify the split of responsibilities, and complexity and diversity of the topics to be covered. It was proposed to push back the deadlines and to scope each SOPs to the countries capacities, or start with one country and to use the said SOP as a model for the other countries. It was agreed that the Secretariat will take lead in the task of drafting the SOPs, with the countries assistance, and that the deadlines as they stand should be looked as indicative.

The draft of a new website for Themis was presented, while the new communication plan was circulated for comments that countries could send to the Secretariat until the 28th of February 2015.

Session 5 – Mapping exercise, Cecile Monnier (REC)

Cecile Monnier presented the preliminary research made in the form of a table showing the different players present and active in the network countries⁴. The Themis members were encouraged to complete the information already found. The inventory is an open document to be added to when needed.

Jo Gerardu informed the participants about the new developments concerning INECE, including the ongoing governance structure changes, the correspondent programme, the progress made with the SESN project, the organization of INECE 10th Conference, the publishing of the Special Report on Next Generation Compliance, as well as the INECE's contribution to a book on environmental enforcement networks. He also mentioned the upcoming Next Generation Compliance conference to take place in Rotterdam on April 21 and 22, 2015, to which Themis members and Secretariat are invited.

Session 6 – Closing remarks, Gordana Kozhuharova and Aniko Nemeth (REC)

The meeting was closed by Gordana Kozhuharova and Aniko Nemeth who both thanked the participants for their contributions, and acknowledged ADA for its support. It was also reaffirmed that all suggestions and concerns were duly noted and will be taken into account in the planning of the project.

³ As a set of instructions, the SOPs can be used to train new staff in the proper methodology and workflows.

⁴ More details are available in the inventory itself.