



Minutes

15th IMPEL General Assembly

01-02 December 2016

Župné námestie (plaza), historical building National Council of the Slovak Republic

Thursday 01 December 2016

Session 1: Welcome

Chair: John Seager

1. Opening address by Chair of IMPEL

John Seager opened the meeting, thanking the Slovakian Presidency to host the 15th IMPEL General Assembly. He was particularly pleased to see so many other networks attending the meeting, namely ENCA, NEPA, EUFJE, ENPE, Themis, EnviCrimeNet and Europol. Having them at the General Assembly provided a great opportunity to make links and explore further possibilities for cooperation.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted with no amendments.

3. Welcome presentation by Peter Šimurka of the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic.

Peter Šimurka welcomed the participants to Bratislava and wished everyone a fruitful meeting.

Session 2: 'Looking back on recent success'

Chair: John Seager

1. Presentation to General Assembly of IMPEL film

The new IMPEL introduction film was shown. It was considered a useful tool to promote IMPEL to organisations and potential new members who are not familiar with our activities and structure. In addition to the main film, there are also five shorter films dedicated to each of the five expert teams. Plans for 2017 include adding subtitles in French and German to reach a broader audience. The film is available on the IMPEL website.

John encouraged members to share and show the film to national authorities.

2. Presentation on recent success stories

- a) John Visbeen, Nature Protection Expert Team Leader on the development of the 'Enforcement & Stakeholders Information eXchange (E-SIX)' system.

John first expressed how pleased he was to see the huge progress made in the Expert Team. This year there was a successful meeting in Croatia, with a broad participation from IMPEL members, UNEP and NGOs. The sharing of information between law enforcement authorities and NGOs is seen as critical. The Expert team launched a digital platform to share this type of information: IMPEL-ESIX. He explained what the IMPEL-ESIX aims are and what it facilitates. The website includes information from open and closed sources.



The latter is only accessible for people who are registered. Compared to EU-TWIX, which is only for enforcement authorities, IMPEL-ESIX also includes NGO and other stakeholders.

He showed some practical examples of how information was shared between two member countries on illegal activities. John also presented the plans for 2017 for the Nature Protection Expert Team.

Q&A

The Spanish National Coordinators asked what the added value is compared to the EU TWIX database?

John said that its aim was to improve collaboration between authorities and NGOs. This is something that EU TWIX does not facilitate. The ESIX moderator is familiar with EU TWIX. Perhaps the two platforms could be merged in the future? The maintenance and filling of the website requires resources. This is included in the ToR for 2017, but is limited.

- b) Legislative change in Romania & Italy: A change in Nature Protection laws and Risk Assessment - Florin Homorean and Giuseppe Sgorbati.

This session showed two case studies on examples of how IMPEL activities have led to changes in national legislation.

I. Florin Homorean (Romania)

The first Green IRI was held two years ago in the Danube Delta, Romania. The IRI facilitated good cooperation at a national level involving: police, water authorities, environmental authorities and this led to open discussions.

Florin presented what activities were undertaken after IRI:

1. Presentation of the IRI results to the Minister
2. Media coverage
3. The results were shared with other stakeholders and the parliament
4. The results were shared internally

The IRI led to changes to the legislative framework in Romania, for example:

- Limitation on the use of ships and boats in the Danube Delta, in order not to disturb habitats. Now a permit must be held to access the Delta, there are limitations to speed, it is forbidden to drag anchors, chains and ropes etc.
- Changed the penalties for committing crimes (e.g. related to hunting and hunting trophies). Increased level of fines, longer prison sentences and more competent authorities appointed to put in place enforcement measures.
- Changes on how to plan inspection and increased capacity for green inspections

The IRI concluded that too many unplanned inspections were performed by the Romanian authorities. This led to a re-classification of the way they perform inspections, development of inspection plans, sectoral inspections (e.g. logging, mining, power plants), joint inspections (poaching, illegal fishing, pollution). It also led to expansion of equipment to perform inspections (boats and fuel).

II. Giuseppe Sgorbati (Italy) - Vision, tools and practices from IMPEL Risk Assessment activities.

In Italy, a new law came into force that established the National Network System for Environment Protection (SNPA) and the Discipline of Superior Institute for Protection and Environmental Research (ISPRA).

The principle of risk analysis is applied to strategic risk assessment in the perspective of delivering a consistent level of environmental protection in all Italian regions. The Italian system exists of 21 regional authorities and 1 central institute with a coordinating role. The new way of working involves another way of planning and secures separated funding.



The main principles of the new law include; a proper and uniform level of environmental protection throughout Italy, optimisation of the use of the resources, setting priorities and using a proportionate approach and the drafting of a national catalogue of activities.

To determine the minimum amount of activity to be delivered for each of the tasks, each Region has to develop an Index of Territorial Demand indicators (e.g. number of inspections to carry out). Another practical example of how Italy used an IMPEL product is the IRAM tool. Italy officially adopted SSPC (a IRAM derived tool) as an official national tool to plan inspections in 5285 installations under IED. Italy also adopted the IMPEL system of peer reviews (IRIs) to be carried out in their national network of EPAs.

Q& A

Waltraud Petek (Austria) asked how Italy could get the agreement from all the regions to take part? Giuseppe answered that the new law states that the regions should align and take part. Mechanisms are in place to modulate and divide the funding among the regions.

- c) Ana Garcia, National Coordinator from Portugal provided an overview on the recent signing of a Protocol establishing the 'Portuguese National IMPEL Network'.

In September 2016, an official agreement was signed to establish a national IMPEL network to ensure the best participation in IMPEL's activities and coordinate between the nationally involved authorities. This was considered to be the best way to reach IMPEL's objectives and implement at a national level. The protocol available in Portuguese and English is available on the website.

Three main goals of the protocol are to increase:

- i. The knowledge of the implementation of environmental legislation, and its dissemination;
- ii. The cooperation and collaboration between public entities with responsibility for the implementation of environmental legislation;
- iii. The practical and effective implementation of the knowledge acquired.

The signing ceremony and national conference took place back to back with a meeting of the IMPEL board and an engagement meeting with the Portuguese authorities. The Spanish network of Environmental authorities (REDIA) also attended the event.

Ana then provided the General Assembly with some practical examples of how IMPEL activities have supported the Portuguese authorities. The Public Prosecutor's Office is likely to become a member of the ENPE network – this is a direct outcome of the Utrecht conference. Portugal also implemented the IRAM approach as per the IMPEL methodology. Furthermore, Portugal is active in projects from all five expert team areas.

Q&A:

Henk Ruessink (Netherlands) asked how their national network is involved in the preparation for the General Assembly. Ana answered that she sent all the documents to the national network and asked for their feedback. The General Assembly outcomes are also an item at the next strategic network meeting.

Kristina Rabe (Germany) expressed how impressed she was by the way Portugal has set up the network, especially the involvement of the prosecutor's office. How is the collaboration between them and the environmental authorities? Ana explained there is a new unit at the Prosecutor's Office dedicated to environmental areas. For them this agreement was also an opportunity to develop the work of this unit.



John praised this initiative from Portugal and asked the other members to consider a similar approach. He thanked Ana for organising and setting up the event and for hosting the Board meeting that was held back to back. He especially thanked Nuno Banza for his support to the national Portuguese network.

Session 3: Member Engagement

Chair: John Seager

1. Welcome to the new IMPEL National Coordinators

John gave the floor to the new national coordinators to introduce themselves.

Mr. Rafael David Fernandez from Spain introduced himself.

Ms. Nadine Mercieca is the new Maltese coordinator, but unfortunately, she could not attend the General Assembly. Ms. Daniella Sammut provided a brief update on recent organisational changes in Malta on her behalf. Since May 2016 there has been a re organisation which resulted in the separation between the planning authority and the environmental resources authority.

2. National Coordinators workshop

Sigrún Ágústsdóttir, National Coordinator from Iceland, provided feedback to the General Assembly on the results of the workshop held on 30 November 2016. The meeting provided a good opportunity to discuss and connect with the national coordinators. A system of mentoring was introduced. The item of the annual reporting was discussed – a new initiative which aims to show the impact of IMPEL's work at the national level. Giuseppe presented a range of strengths and weaknesses of the Expert Team membership and gave an indication of the level of involvement from the members. He concluded that there remains great variation between the expert teams, but work is ongoing to get broader participation in some expert teams. A discussion took place on the issue of membership fees. The results of which were presented by Henk on the second day of the General Assembly. Finally there was an update from the Secretariat on tools for the National Coordinator and Project leaders.

3. IMPEL Board's engagement with members

John Seager provided feedback to the General Assembly on the Board's efforts in 2016 to engage and stimulate interactions within the IMPEL network. This work is undertaken by the Board to support the dissemination of IMPEL's output to senior management teams. The feedback received so far shows that this work is appreciated by the member countries.

- Portugal - General Inspectorate for the Agriculture, Sea, Environment and Spatial Planning (IGAMAOT)

This engagement meeting was linked with the establishment of the Portuguese national IMPEL network. It was mentioned that it is not always clear at political level what the benefits are of participating in IMPEL activities. If we can demonstrate that it increased the skills and capacity of the people, political support is provided. Nuno gave a practical example: over the last few months the gap between the administration and the public prosecutors has been greatly reduced. Portugal recommends trying to involve the prosecutors' offices more in the IMPEL work. Nuno also mentioned that IMPEL reports are used to inform Portuguese journalists. It helped raise the public perception of some environmental concerns, like an ongoing case of waste imports from Italy to Portugal.



- Sweden – Swedish Agency for Marine & Water Management & Swedish EPA

A new authority in Sweden was established for water issues. This provided a great opportunity for IMPEL and especially the Water and Land Expert team to connect with this new authority. Rikard Janson (Sweden) commented that he also appreciated the meeting with the Board. For the Swedish authorities it created the opportunity to discuss the national coordination as well.

- France – Ministry of ecology, energy, sustainable development, and town and country planning
- The Board was informed about the broad portfolio covered by the Ministry. Authorities responsible for Water and Nature protection also attended this meeting. IMPEL was pleased to learn about the French initiative to organise another Seminar on Lessons learnt from Accidents in 2017.

Jean Luc Perrin (France) expressed the added value of this meeting was having the Board members at the meeting which supported the French National Coordinator to explain the work of IMPEL and the benefits of participating.

John invited the IMPEL members to express their interest in having an engagement meeting with the Board in 2017.

Session 4: IMPEL activities

Chair: John Seager

1. Approval of project reports and activities from 2016

The following reports were considered for adoption by the General Assembly:

- 2016/01 - IED Implementation Guidance
- 2016/05 – Waste Shipment Inspection Planning
- 2016/07 - TFS Conference
- 2016/20 - Financial provision & Legacy Liabilities
- 2016/22.1 – IRI Turkey
- 2016/22.2 – IRI Italy
- 2016/22.3 – IRI Austria
- 2016/23 – Doing The Right Things for Environmental Permitting.

John informed the General Assembly that reports submitted after the deadline of 9 November 2016, will be sent for adoption by written procedure early in 2017.

Comments and Q&A:

The German NC read out comments on the WSIP report, which were sent to the Secretariat and distributed to the General Assembly by emails and via Basecamp.

The Slovenian NC commented that they were part of the project team and that the project team worked hard and intensely on the guidance. They do not wish to amend the report based on the German comments. This was echoed by Simon on behalf of Katie Olley, who was also a team member. The Dutch team member, Marina de Gier, said that the comments were discussed before and it was concluded by the project team that the operational part is crucial to the inspections plan. She also does not support the division between operational and strategic part.



John Seager said he sensed resistance from the project team and asked Kristina to comment. As project teams are independent, there is a disclaimer in the project report and resistance but no support for the proposed changes was voiced, she accepted that the report will not be changed.

Jean-Luc commented on the financial provision report. He considered the tool to be very useful and detailed.

Henk asked whether there could be a revision of how final reports are considered at the GA meetings. They deserve more attention during the General Assembly and he challenged the members on how to generate more attention for the reports – especially for the results and recommendations.

This was supported by Cyprus and Germany.

France suggested developing a summary to accompany a project report. Romania and the IMPEL Communications lead stated that project abstracts are already required once a project is finalised.

Larry Cavanaugh said that comments on the agenda should be made in advance when the drafts are provided.

Chris Dijkens, Vice-Chair of IMPEL, focused on the implementation of the recommendations and suggested this as an item for the next NC meeting: how do we implement recommendations from IMPEL reports? Kristina responded by saying that we could use the national reporting template.

John Seager summarised the discussion as followed: in the past quite a lot of time was devoted to project reports, leaving inadequate time to discuss strategic issues. This led to a re-balance of the agenda. For future GAs this will be considered. He underlined the importance of project abstracts. He reminded the General Assembly that draft reports are extensively discussed within the project teams and the expert teams.

Decision: the following project reports were adopted by the General Assembly without changes:

- 2016/01 - IED Implementation Guidance
- 2016/05 – Waste Shipment Inspection Planning
- 2016/07 - TFS Conference
- 2016/20 - Financial provision & Legacy Liabilities
- 2016/22.1 – IRI Turkey
- 2016/22.2 – IRI Italy
- 2016/22.3 – IRI Austria
- 2016/23 – Doing The Right Things for Environmental Permitting.

Session 5: Strategic Work Programme

Chair: John Seager

1. Strategic Work Programme 2016-2020

John Seager provided a brief overview and reminder of the key elements of our new strategy, referring to the Multi Annual Strategic Programme. A challenge is to put them into practices and use it as a guide for our work. We should remind ourselves of our strategic goals.



Our IMPEL strategy was built on a better understanding of our implementation challenges. Five issues identified to overcome these challenges are:

- a. Working more effectively with fewer resources
- b. Sharing know-how on practical solutions and best practices
- c. Improving the quality and availability of information and evidence
- d. Improving coordination between different actors in the compliance chain
- e. Addressing inadequate penalties for offenders.

The 4 networks conference held in Utrecht, Netherlands, in May 2016, also clearly identified the need to mobilise information and intelligence and connect the authorities. It again became clear that weak penalty and prosecution measures hamper effective implementation and enforcement. Now seems a good time and opportunity to raise this problem.

John reminded the General Assembly about our five key priorities:

- i. Target our work to help overcome the challenges in implementing EU environmental law.
- ii. Engage with and respond to our members' needs
- iii. Further develop the 5 thematic programmes and expert teams
- iv. Build the network and seek new members to contribute to and benefit from our work
- v. Strengthen cooperation with other national, European and international organisations and networks.

He highlighted the good collaboration with the European Commission. He expressed the need for more senior level involvement - for example during General Assemblies. He pointed out the need to consider how to evaluate the impact of projects.

He then opened the floor for comments.

Kristina said there is reason for optimism. Quite a lot of positive developments have happened over the last few years. Now there is a window of opportunity with the European Commission and to join forces with other EU networks. She said to look at the whole compliance and enforcement chain and also be open to new technologies. It is important to further strengthen the fight against organised crime and economically motivated, structured intentional environmental non-compliance and link more with police and customs, prosecutors and judges. She urged IMPEL to strengthen cooperation with and between these other actors.

Alessandro Peru (Italy) thanked the chair for his presentation. He also stressed the importance of building and strengthening the chain and to link with these other actors. This is crucial to address the challenges.

Ana agreed with Italy and Germany. It is important to connect with other networks and to completing the enforcement chain.

Henk reaffirmed what was said. The establishment of 5 expert groups and covering 2 new topics – it takes time to develop. Connect to the appropriate authorities and networks and recognise the importance of national chain of custody. The suggested mapping exercise of authorities in the EU involved in implementing the EU environmental acquis could support this.

Sigrun mentioned that overall we are doing well. She appreciated the value of the network itself and that IMPEL is able to develop activities that address smaller and bigger countries.

John then invited other networks to comment.



Europol said that a representative of Envi CrimeNet would address the General Assembly in the afternoon. ENCA was pleased with this first engagement with IMPEL and expressed its willingness to investigate if there is overlap and identify opportunities to join forces.

2. Measuring IMPEL's Success

- a) As IMPEL's External Evaluation highlighted in 2013, our network has not always been good at 'shouting about' its success stories and much less about measuring and evaluating the benefits of IMPEL membership. Implementing our new Strategic Work Programme fully will mean that this begins to change. John Seager will give an overview of why and how we are going to do this within IMPEL.
- b) Annual Reporting from IMPEL members – Henk Ruessink to provide a summary of the success stories from around IMPEL highlighted in the annual reports from IMPEL members. Please note, that the deadline for this year's country reports was the 25 November 2016 and a full, collated version of the report will be ready in January 2017 and will be circulated by the Secretariat.

John referred to the evaluation of the IMPEL network performed in 2013 by an external partner. This was an extensive and independent evaluation of the IMPEL network. He referred to the table of recommendations in the report which is grouped by communication, participation and setting our priorities. IMPEL has made some very good progress since, and has worked on most of the recommendations. We have achieved a lot since the report came out.

One recommendation from the report is still a work in progress: the Country reporting. The aims of this country reporting are twofold: 1. Get insight about the level of activity in the member countries. 2. Recognise the benefits of IMPEL support when dealing with the implementation challenges at a national level.

Florin Homorean presented to the General Assembly the developments on national reporting. He said that the country reports are important in order to measure our success and then provide an overview of what has been done so far. Following a Board discussion on how to tackle this challenge, the idea of national reporting was presented at the Utrecht conference and input was collected. A template was then produced and members were invited to submit a completed report by 25 November 2016. The IMPEL secretariat drafted a summary report - 19 reports were received. The experiences were also discussed at the National Coordinators meeting, 30 November. There it was concluded that the template is a good starting point. There is a need to clarify some questions. The reports should highlight more the benefits instead of focusing on statistics. A new deadline to submit country reports was set for 15 January 2017. It was suggested to include more detailed information per project on the time spent. It was agreed that the Discussion Group on Basecamp should be used more to facilitate discussions between National Coordinators.

John responded that the national reports are a rich source of information on impact and results of IMPEL. They are also useful for reporting to donors.

Henk said IMPEL needs to consider where to get its information from and to be structural. The aim should be to get similar data for interpretation purposes.

Waltraud said Austria had experienced some problems with getting the information for the national report. She would like to see an example of a report to get an idea of what is exactly required and asked for in terms of detail. It should be clear on what goes into the reports and who will receive the information and for what purpose.



Florin said that besides numbers, we want to collect experiences and best practices from the members - practical examples of how things have improved.

Kristina agreed with Florin. She suggested a change to the wording of the decision and not to immediately accept the current template as we are still trialling it. The overall aim of the report should be to collect benefits.

Berith Nielsen (Denmark) agreed to collect some data to show the impact and effect of IMPEL. This would show our benefits and gains from IMPEL. The template was a good starting point, but it needs further work.

John concluded that the template was a good starting point and tool. Decision requested from the General Assembly is not on the template itself but on the process.

Decision: the GA agrees to go ahead with the process on trialling and improving the template for national reporting. The next deadline for submitting national reports is 15 January 2017.

Session 6: External Engagement

Chair: Chris Dijkens

Chris explained the reason to connect with other networks. There exist 700 environmental agreements worldwide. An effective implementation of these agreements is required to achieve our goals to protect human and health, at all levels. IMPEL cannot work in isolation. We benefit and need support from other networks and organisations. This also creates opportunities for co-financing and uses others skills and know-how.

1. European Commission

- a) Chris Dijkens provided a short overview of the Board's engagement with the European Commission in 2016.

Key partner for IMPEL is DG Environment. Frequent bilateral meetings take place between IMPEL and the Commission. Both parties benefit from these meetings. Notes from these meetings are available on Basecamp or available at the secretariat. They gather valuable input for our work and direction. It helps IMPEL to understand the challenges faced by the Commission.

He mentioned the European Commission's involvement and support in the preparations for the 4 networks conference.

A meeting between the IMPEL chair and vice chair and Director General of DG Environment, Mr Daniel Calleja will take place on 21 December 2016.

- b) Hans Lopatta (European Commission) updated the GA on the European Commission's work on general legislative developments at a European level, paying specific attention to the expected Compliance Assurance initiative.



Hans presented the new Compliance Assurance Initiative (CAI) from the Commission that contains five elements:

- a. Assessment frameworks (e.g. the environmental implementation review)
- b. Toolbox (materials and references on good practices and training. IMPEL's new project on Mapping the environmental authorities is considered very useful for the Commission, training provided by IMPEL)
- c. Networks (IMPEL, EUFJE, ENPE, EnviCrimeNet and inter-cross network cooperation)
- d. Sectors (Waste, Industry and Air, Water, Nature and Wildlife trade)
- e. Financing (LIFE and other funding sources)

The Commission is open to explore the possibilities to find more funding for IMPEL. One option could be to increase the annual LIFE operational grant, but then IMPEL would be challenged with the co-funding rate. Another alternative would be to apply for LIFE project funding for individual projects. The Commission could possibly support the translation of key IMPEL documents. Hans urged IMPEL to also consider other funding mechanisms outside LIFE. Finally, he mentioned the option to co-fund conferences.

The CA initiative is included in the 2017 work programme from the Commission. The Concept of Compliance assurance covers: Compliance promotion, inspection and checks and enforcement. In terms of planning: at the moment internal consultations are taking place; stakeholders' consultations are foreseen for Q1 and Q2 2017.

A stakeholder's conference will take place on 31 January 2017 in Brussels. IMPEL and the other networks are kindly invited to attend this conference. An action plan in the form of a Communication on Compliance Assurance from the Commission is expected in Q3 2017.

Hans then highlighted some topics that are provided in the written update from the Commission, such as Air Quality and the developments around the NEC Directive, a stakeholder's consultation on the extractive waste Directive, Commission's work on the Drinking Water Directive and water use. On the matter of Nature protection, a new online reporting tool called Habides¹, has been released.

As part of the REFIT Programmes, Nature Directives underwent a fitness check. (The final report was adopted at the end of 2016).

The REFIT report on the Liability Directive was adopted but there is still a need for further evaluation. The Commission was very pleased with the IMPEL project on Financial Provisions, which provided useful input.

The EIA Directive: the Commission delivered a guidance² regarding the setting up of any coordinated and/or joint procedures for projects that are simultaneously subject to assessments under the EIA, Habitats, Birds, Water Framework Directive, and Industrial Emissions Directives (streamlining of the EIA procedure). The guidance focuses on certain steps of the EIA procedure and identifies ways of streamlining the different environmental assessments in the context of the prescribed options – joint

¹ Link to tool: <https://www.eionet.europa.eu/software/habides>

² Published in the Official Journal on 27.07.2016, C 273, [<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2016:273:TOC>



and/or coordinated. The document is not binding, and has no bearing on whether the Member States are required to choose between the coordinated and the joint procedure or to combine the two.

The Commission also prepared an informal transposition checklist³ aiming to facilitate Member States in transposing Directive 2014/92/EU. This document, without prejudice to the fact that it presents the sole Commission services' interpretation of the respective provisions, is relevant in particular with regard to the commitment that the Member States have signed for in the Joint Political Declaration of 28 September 2011 on explanatory documents. According to this declaration, in justified cases, the notification of their transposition measures with one or more documents explaining the relationship between the components of a directive and the corresponding parts of national transposition instruments. With regard to Directive 2014/92/EU, the legislator considered the transmission of such documents to be justified.

Q&A:

Spain's NC asked about what the difference between the Environmental Implementation Review (EIR) and the Compliance Assurance Initiative (CAI) was?

Hans said that the EIR is intended to be carried out every two years. The CAI is likely to be adopted at the end of 2017, but this is not a regular repetition like the EIR. The EIR covers the whole EU Environmental acquis, while the CAI only deals with inspections, enforcement and compliance assurance. The CAI learns a lot from IMPEL and is mainly inspired by IMPEL's work over the last few years.

Further written information provided by the European Commission in early January 2017:

The compliance assurance initiative would include developing practical tools to improve how compliance promotion, inspections and enforcement are undertaken and would provide the relevant parameters to be looked at during the next EIR rounds in this respect. It would complement the Environmental Implementation Review (EIR), which aims at agenda setting and facilitating structured dialogues in the Council and bilaterally with Member States on main challenges and at producing biennially for each of the EU-28 a country-specific report on environmental implementation, including compliance assurance. The EIR process would then help the Commission understand better each Member State's approach to compliance assurance.

The chair thanked Hans for his contribution and the overall support from the Commission for IMPEL.

2. THEMIS

Chris reminded the General Assembly of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between Themis and IMPEL, last December in Luxembourg.

On the 10th of November 2016, John Visbeen and Chris Dijkens met Themis and REC. Both our work plans and ambitions were discussed and several opportunities for synergies and joint activities were explored. It was agreed to organise a joint meeting between the Board or a delegation of Board members, Themis and REC to develop an action plan, including activities for joint cooperation (March 2017).

Bruno Mesquita from THEMIS provided a short overview of the Themis Network and the REC. Themis' work over 2016. This included:

- Activities related to sustainability, focusing on synergies and outreach

³ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/pdf/transposition_checklist.pdf



- Involvement in knowledge transfer and capacity building (9 training on multiple aspects, national and regional training)
- Development of tools aimed at management level: how to keep an institutional memory and internal coordination at inter-agency level.

THEMIS' plans for 2017 include:

- Linking up with the Nature protection work of IMPEL (Green IRI and IMPEL ESIX)
- Open for the work of other IMPEL expert teams, like Industry & Air
- An executive committee meeting early 2017. Input from IMPEL is sought to strengthen its governance. Themis will continue to work on tools. In this respect feedback from IMPEL is appreciated
- The development of 7 Standard Operational Agreements, aiming to jumpstart collaboration at inter-agency level
- More training.

About the REC:

- As of January 2017, start the new Director of the REC
- Its work based on political mandates
- The geographical scope of their activities aims more on the neighbourhood regions of the EU and facilitate transfer of knowledge
- The connection with NGO's is important for its work.

Remark from Horst Büther, Industry & Air Expert Team leader: in 2016 many joint training sessions took place on IRAM, supported by the TAIEX programme.

3. European Network of Prosecutors for the Environment (ENPE), EU Forum of Judges for the Environment (EUFJE) & ENVI CrimeNet

Chris opened this section of the agenda with a summary of the Board's recent engagement with ENPE, EUFJE & ENVI CrimeNet, with particular focus on the Compliance Chain Conference in Utrecht 12-13 May 2016.

The evaluation of the conference showed that:

- 75% of the respondents rated the conference as excellent
- There was an overall request for more inter-active sessions
- A strong wish for a follow up conference was expressed
- More participation of senior level management is needed
- Focus more on Nature and Waste
- Plan the next conference back to back to other meetings.

At the evaluation meeting, the following was agreed on cooperation with the other networks:

- Annual meeting of the network chairs and vice chairs will be set up
- Organisation of a next joint conference (possibly in September/October 2017)
- Exchange of networks' work plans and programmes
- Connect the topic leaders
- Liaise with the Commission desk officers
- Development of matrix of contacts and dates of key meetings.

Dr. Fruzsina Bögös, Secretary-General of EUFJE, provided a short overview of the Forum and its activities. EUFJE was created in 2004 and is open for EU and EFTA judges. It aims to increase the knowledge of the judges and to facilitate the sharing of best practice and knowledge. Annually a conference is held where a wide variety of environmental topics are discussed. In 2010 prosecutors were invited and they were



encouraged to develop a similar mechanism. The forum provides input to the European Commission on legislative proposals. The forum was involved in the preparations of the 4 networks conference and the evaluation meeting in September 2016. Without objections, the outcomes of the evaluation meeting were adopted.

EUFJE activities for 2017 include a joint project with ENPE. Four Working Groups are developed by ENPE, and one of them is chaired by the Forum. The next conference will be in Oxford, UK on the topic of Climate Change.

Chris said that IMPEL looks forward to further enhance the collaboration with EUFJE.

Q&A:

John Visbeen asked about training sessions for judges. There are two types of training sessions and EUFJE supports them.

Hans Lopatta commented that there is a training programme for judges promoted by the European Commission - this programme is still running. EUFJE was informed by the European Commission about this.

The Project Executive of the European Network of Prosecutors for the Environment (ENPE), Peter Ashford from the Environment Agency of England gave information on ENPE:

- a. ENPE has established itself as a legal entity in 2016 in Brussels
- b. It is currently working hard to broaden and deepen the ENPE network
- c. It commissioned an academic report about what is missing on the ground when it comes to prosecuting environmental offences. Once finalised, the report will be shared with IMPEL
- d. It works on strengthening its ties with other networks. Like with EUFJE and co-organising the conference. The thematic approach could further intensify; ENPE established four working groups: waste, wildlife, air pollution and cross-cutting
- e. A database with court cases is further developed. This database builds on the database that was developed by IMPEL under the IMPEL TFS Prosecutors project. The database is now being extended to wildlife crime and air pollution.

Q&A:

John Visbeen asked if the database is open for the public. No, it is only open for government officials.

Ondrej Koporec from EnviCrimeNet provided an update of the work of their networks with a focus on collaboration between our networks going forward. He touched upon:

- The background and mission of the network
- The fact that EnviCrimeNet is an informal network without funding
- The outcomes of the 6th Annual General meeting held 3-4 November in Bratislava
- A Slovak initiative on Countering Environmental Crime in the Law Enforcement Working Party (LEWP)
- In network cooperation: EnviCrimeNet received positive feedback on the 4 networks conference
- Challenges for future: to get environmental crime recognised as a priority/serious threat in the EU
- The network strongly promotes intelligence led ways of working.

Q&A:

Florin commented that there are many common points between the networks and opportunities to collaborate at project level.



Nancy Isarin, IMPEL Secretariat, asked if the network will remain informal or if there are plans to become formal and apply for funding. There is no decision yet on this point. It was discussed at the last meeting, but no conclusion was reached.

4. Heads of EPA's Network

[Laura Burke](#), Director General of the Irish EPA, gave a presentation of the recent work of the Heads of EPA's network, particularly the Better Regulation Interest Group (BRIG) which she chairs.

- The Network of the Heads of the EPA, established in 2003, is in the position to provide advice and vision on environmental policies and strategies
- The network facilitates the sharing experiences at a strategic level and meets twice per year
- It is an informal network with 36 member organisations. Information of the participating agencies is available on the NEPA website. This information could help with the IMPEL Mapping exercise
- NEPA works closely with the Commission
- It holds interest groups on specific topics – 9 at the moment. It links with IMPEL on the topic of Better Regulation, the Better Regulation Interest Group (BRIG).

NEPA would like to thank IMPEL for its work on the Financial Provisions project and is looking forward to the follow up work on this.

Q&A:

Chris thanked Laura for the presentation. He asked how we could increase the visibility and participation of senior-level management in our network. Laura answered by saying that we should convince them of the relevance of your work to get them engaged and how it supports the strategic work of the organisations involved. Use both approaches: bottom up and top down. Understand the importance of communication. Make sure that the work of IMPEL is seen as support for the work of the national agencies.

Giuseppe suggested that for future, country engagement programmes should take into account NEPA.

Jean-Luc asked about the top-tier practitioners: Head of Ministries and wondered if is there a network for this group. Laura confirmed there is a mechanism in place for this level.

5. Other Networks

Short introduction to the ENCA Network by Amy McDougall (Secretariat of ENCA)

- Network of Head of Nature Conservations Agencies
- 20 members
- Meet twice per year
- Forum for sharing best practices
- Recommendation on the Nature Directive Fitness check provided to the European Commission
- Thanked for the invitation to attend the IMPEL General Assembly and ENCA is looking forward to connect with IMPEL on Nature Protection issues.

Short introduction by Bruno Cvetkovic (EFEH)

- 43 members worldwide, founded in 1986
- Exchange info on environmental health and Environmental protection among health professionals
- Wide range of issues covered
- Course development
- Twinning schemes



- Sustainability Indicators Framework
- Ideas for cooperation between IMPEL and EFEH.

The final network's presentation was provided by José Alvaro on behalf of Europol. Europol is at a crucial moment as the legal framework is now changed. The SOCTA is now being drafted - this document defines the work for Europol for the four coming years. In the last SOCTA (2013-2017) environmental crime was considered an emerging threat, not a priority. Only when a certain type of crime is considered a priority, Europol can dedicate resource to that crime. He underlined that information destined for Europol should be sent through national Europol units, instead of directly to Europol.

Chris provided a PPT slide summary of the Board's recent engagement activities all other networks closely linked with IMPEL including: INECE, European Federation of Environmental Health professionals (EFEH), ECRAN, Basel Secretariat, ENFORCE, REN, Asian Network, Interpol, AELERT & Dot.Com.

Basel, Rotterdam Conventions Secretariat

On the 15th of December IMPEL Board members will meet the Executive Secretary of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Secretariat, Rolph Payet. An updated MoU will be then signed.

ECRAN Network

Chris read out a word of thanks on behalf of Ike van der Putte on behalf of the ECRAN Network.

INECE

IMPEL (Simon Bingham) attended an INECE workshop on Next Gen compliance in China last October. He provided several presentations on the promotion of good practices in the EU, e.g. on use of technologies and sharing of information.

6. Expanding IMPEL's membership

Chris informed the General Assembly about the IMPEL Board's efforts in 2016 to encourage membership from environmental authorities in Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia & Herzegovina.

Representatives of the IMPEL Board had meetings with environmental authorities in Serbia and Montenegro. The meeting with Bosnia & Herzegovina was postponed to early 2017.

Serbia submitted a letter for application to the IMPEL Secretariat.

**Decision on considering the application letter despite being received after the deadline:
The General Assembly accepted the membership application from the Ministry of Agriculture & Environmental Protection in Serbia with 30 members in favour, and 1 neutral.**

The Spanish NC read out declaration referring to the status of Kosovo*⁴.

The NC from Kosovo* responded that Kosovo* became a member in a transparent way. In all IMPEL communications, Kosovo* is referred to with an asterisk and she reminded the General Assembly that IMPEL's aim is about improving implementation and enforcement of environmental law.

⁴ * This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



Session 7: Organisational matters

Chair: Chris Dijkens

1. Board report on financial state of IMPEL in 2015 & 2016

Nancy Isarin presented a summary of IMPEL's final financial position in 2015 and then to present an interim result of 2016.

Main points on the 2015 budget:

- Almost 100% use of the budget
- Active budget management by the board only possible with timely information by the project leaders
- Some unpaid membership fees in 2015
- IMPEL passed the audit
- Able to divert some money to the reserve fund.

State of play 2016 budget:

- 90% of the budget committed so far
- Small, projected over-spend till the end of 2016, though actions already in place to mitigate this
- The last quarter seems unnecessarily overloaded with activities. The secretariat kindly urges project leaders to bring forward more activities in the calendar year
- All claims for reimbursement and invoices to be submitted by 14 December 2016 to the Secretariat.

Q&A:

There was a comment from German NC on planning of activities towards the end of the year: why not use the reserve fund? John Seager answered the reserve fund is to deal with the cash flow. We need to safeguard the reserve fund.

The problem is more the planning cycle. We have urged many times to plan activities already earlier in the year. Consequences of back loading in the end of the year are twofold: heavy load for the secretariat and not enough possibilities for the Board to perform an active budget management.

Alessandro asked if reserve fund being refilled once the funding from the Commission came in. Yes, that is the case.

There was a question from Gisela Holzgräfe from Germany on the problem with planning activities before the budget is released. Simon answered that funds normally release in January. ToRs adopted 2 December, so nothing prevent project to already start planning meetings earlier in the year.

Remark from Commission: IMPEL cannot start spending money, once the commitment from the European Commission has been adopted, but normally this in January. For the 2017 financial year, it is expected that budget approval will be given in mid January 2017.

2. IMPEL & its future funding strategy:

a) Overview of IMPEL funding

Chris reminded the General Assembly of how IMPEL has funded its activities over the last 8 years since becoming an independent legal entity in 2008. Chris also provided the General Assembly with some



information on recent discussions in the IMPEL Board about its experiences in managing this funding including strengths, weaknesses and lessons learnt for our network.

Key points:

- The level membership fees have not been raised since 2008, while the costs have increased
- The number of ToR's submitted remains high - they cannot all be funded due to limited budget
- The board has improved its budget management, but they are heavily depending on the information on project spending coming from the project managers
- Being more effective and efficient: plan back to back with other meetings or teleconferencing.
- IMPEL closed its office in Brussels to save money for activities
- Considering to use online registration and reimbursement tool to support the project leaders
- We need to raise our income if we want to keep our ambitions.

b) European Commission's LIFE+ contribution to IMPEL

I. A summary of the ways in which the European Commission can help IMPEL

II. Update on LIFE (Enforcement Actions) SWEAP project application

Chris informed the General Assembly of some of the IMPEL Board's recent discussions with the European Commission about how it might be able to help the network expand the reach of its activities to more implementation and enforcement practitioners.

One of the ways discussed, has been for IMPEL to apply for additional LIFE funding. In September 2016, a Written Procedure was launched by the Secretariat and the General Assembly approved the beginning of an application process for the TFS Enforcement Actions programme (called: SWEAP) to grow and deepen its activities by applying for LIFE funding of its own.

Nancy Isarin gave a summary update on progress of the LIFE SWEAP project proposal. This proposal applying for LIFE project funding is based on the suggestion of the European Commission to IMPEL to consider this type of additional funding. The IMPEL 'Enforcement Actions' Project was selected as this is a successful long running project in which most IMPEL member countries participate.

The technical proposal contains 6 work packages:

1. Capacity building and training
2. Co-ordinated inspections throughout the waste management chain
3. Development of innovative tools to support enforcement officers in reporting and targeting
4. International collaboration, communication and awareness raising
5. Intelligence gathering and sharing
6. Criminal investigations and operations.

Procedure and next steps include:

- The proposal was already adopted via written procedure by the General Assembly
- Work to finalise the content of the proposal
- Work to fund sufficient level of match funding signed off (Switzerland and the UK already indicated their willingness to contribute), but more co-funding required (60%-40% co funding rate)
- Engage with partner organisations and Enforcement Actions participants
- Expected deadline for submission September 2017 - start July 2018 (if successful).



Q&A:

Henk questioned the impact of this project on the IMPEL network as a whole. He expressed his concern about the imbalance this project might bring to IMPEL and he wondered about the role of the General Assembly in this matter.

Nancy responded by saying that this project cannot be considered as operational network funding due to different LIFE procedures. If the project is approved, it will generate more funds for other IMPEL activities as the Enforcement Actions project will cease to exist. And nothing stops other Expert Teams or projects, to also apply for this type of funding. As IMPEL is the main beneficiary, the General Assembly will obviously play a role in this case. The SWEAP proposal was already approved by the General Assembly via written procedure in September 2016.

Due to lack of time, Chris postponed further discussion to day 2 of the General Assembly.

Chris summarised the day by calling it an informative day with deliveries from other partners and he thanked the participants for their interventions.

Day 2 – 2 December 2017

Opening day 2

Chris opened the second day of the General Assembly and thanked the host for the dinner.

Continuation LIFE SWEAP project

Chris summarised Henk's comments on the procedure. No other comments came from the floor. Chris then mentioned that the General Assembly, regarding the deadlines for application of such projects, has to go through a written procedure as the deadline for submitting the proposal is before the next GA. Board will draft a short paper with a proposal (process description) on how to go ahead with LIFE project applications.

Henk again commented that he is not against the project, although it is quite a large project. Henk is concerned about the balance of the project compared to other projects and expert teams and he is worried about the management of the project.

Chris said his points were taken.

The Cypriot NC asked if the General Assembly will have the opportunity to see the application beforehand? Clarity on the responsibility of the General Assembly in that Board document would be appreciated.

Chris also took her comment on board.

The General Assembly agreed that the IMPEL Board will come forward with a proposal, containing a process description, early 2017 on how to proceed with LIFE bids.



c) Reserve Fund

Chris updated the General Assembly on our progress towards reaching our target for the Reserve Fund.

The aim is to build the reserve fund up to a level of 150,000 euros. The Board proposed to build up the reserve fund over the coming 3 years, by adding each year 8,000 euros to the fund.

Q&A:

The Italian NC fully endorsed the proposal.

The Danish NC asked if this will have any influence on funding the projects? Simon answered that our project budget is the same as last year, so technically not. Although some project proposals are under some financial pressure.

Decision: the General Assembly agreed with the proposal as provided on reaching IMPEL's target for the Reserve Fund.

d) Membership fees

At the General Assembly in Luxembourg in December 2015, there was agreement to establish a working group to examine IMPEL membership fees. Henk Ruessink reported back to the General Assembly on the findings of this group and present options for reviewing the membership fee level.

Henk explained that the current IMPEL income is based on EU LIFE funding and membership fees with a co-funding rate of 70%-30%. At the moment direct contributions from members to consultants and in-kind contributions do not count as co-funding. He then referred to the IMPEL rules, section 3.1, about the membership fees.

Options to consider:

- Make better use of existing income
- Make the member contributions count more
- Ask more members to pay the regular fee
- Attract more members
- Change the rules on IMPEL fees
- Last option: increase the regular fee.

A questionnaire was sent out to the National Coordinators with three questions:

- a. Would you support a simplification of the IMPEL rules on membership fees?

YES by all 25 NC present at the NC meeting 30 November 2016.

- b. Is the available money enough to fund IMPEL's activities, especially if we use it more efficiently?

Clear majority: NO

- c. If other measures do not improve IMPEL's income situation, would you agree to a rise of the regular fees (max 20%) in 2018 per IMPEL's needs of complementary financing?

12 answered YES

13 answered NO

Chris thanked Henk for his presentation and the ad-hoc working group for their work.



The paper also included a proposal:

- Agree on simplifying the rules by the GA
- Further discussion and work on the suggested considered options to increase the income
- Investigate if there is a need to increase the fees per 2018

The chair opened the floor for comments.

The UK representatives said the following:

- It supports the drive for efficiency
- Member contributions in-kind should be considered as co-funding
- It supports the singular regular fee
- More attention should be paid to non-payers
- How do we prioritise our work?
- IMPEL should develop a business case to show why an increase in fees is necessary.

The German NC provided a more general comment on the feeling from the NC meeting: Would IMPEL profit from more funds? Yes, but feeling room for improvement when selecting projects by using quality criteria. The coming year we should pay more attention on the suggested options to be more efficient and to increase the income. And review at the end of 2017 if these measures were sufficient or not.

The Cypriote NC said that in times of financial crises, it is difficult to consider increase of fees. When asking internally this question, it could start a discussion about the fees in principle and the advantages of being a member in the first place.

The Swedish representative is in favour of simplifying the rules on membership fees, but it may affect fees for subsequent members. He sought confirmation that also subsequent members are to negotiate the membership fees. Sweden believes it is reasonable to increase the membership fees as they have been the same since 2008.

Kristina answered that at the level of project participation, there is no difference between first members and subsequent members. It could be seen that subsequent members have no say in the General Assembly as there is 1 vote per member country, but pay the same amount. The proposal to revise the rules is open in that sense: both first and subsequent members can ask for a reduction of the fees.

The Irish NC pointed out that the discussion should be seen in the context. It underlined the need for timely reporting by Project managers and planning meetings back to back. Ireland supports the simplification of the rules. The business case on increasing the fees should also include the fact that fees have not increased since the beginning. Make the case that increased funding increases the capacity, leading to a better implementation. In that case Ireland is in favour of an increase of fees.

Sigrun from Iceland commented that in 2017 we will learn more about the requests from IMPEL members to negotiate a reduction from the fees from the members – also based on the reports from the Board. She also asked to consider the number of meetings per project in order to reduce costs.



Comments from Chris:

- What are the criteria to use when members negotiate for a lower fee?
- How to monetise the in-kind contributions?
- How to explain better to senior level management that they actually benefit (value for money) from the membership and fees?

The European Commission responded that they are very pleased with the work done by IMPEL. The European Commission is definitely open to consider more funding for IMPEL, but does IMPEL have the absorption capacity to deal with increased budget? Further it is important to differentiate between operational grants and project funds. For the operation grant in-kind contributions do not count as co-funding. He repeated that the European Commission can send letters to the authorities expressing the benefits of IMPEL membership.

Henk mentioned that if all members would pay €5,000, we could match the co-funding for an extra €100,000.

Kristina said IMPEL would have to see what the next year brings. She will investigate possibilities to transfer Germany's regular additional annual payments into IMPEL projects directly to the network. However, this would increase the administrative burden of the secretariat; and it might engender an additional Belgian VAT duty of 21 %, which would be very difficult to justify.

Sigrun asked for more transparency on when and why fees were granted and added a suggestion for the revised text of the internal rules on membership fees: 'the decision on lowering the fees should not comprise the increase of the IMPEL budget'.

Chris thanked again the ad-hoc group work for their work and concluded that no one is against being more efficient. Many improvements have been made by professionalising the IMPEL organisation in terms of project and budget management. There seems common agreement on the singular regular fee for all members and open for negotiations. Suggest to the General Assembly to agree on this proposal as per 2017.

Kristina suggested to facilitate a transitional year for the new membership fees, by agreeing now on a change of the rules, but they will enter into effect 1st of January 2018. Until then, the current text remains.

New text proposed to change the internal rules.

Actual IMPEL Internal Rules (3.1.) on Membership fees:

"The following applies for the financial year 2011 and onwards or until the General Assembly decides otherwise. The membership fee is €5,000 for the first organisation to join from a country, but at least as a minimum €2,000. For any subsequent organisations from the same country this amount will be €3,000, but at least as a minimum €2,000. The membership fee should not constitute a barrier for joining the association. It is open to any country for which these sums would cause difficulty to negotiate with the Board."



To be replaced by the following text as of 1 January 2018:

“The following applies for the financial year 2018 and onwards or until the General Assembly decides otherwise. The membership fee is €5,000 per year. The fee should not constitute a barrier to membership. It is open to any member for which this sum would cause difficulties to negotiate a biennial reduction with the Board. The Board will annually report to the General Assembly about the agreed reductions and the reasons for their granting. The decisions of the Board on biennial reductions shall not compromise the goal of increasing IMPEL’s budget. “

Decision: The General Assembly agrees and adopt with a 2/3 majority the change of the rules per the text proposal above, as per 1 January 2018. For 2017 the current text remains.

Kristina urges the members to indicate early in the year if there is need to negotiate.

Henk volunteered to stay in the ad-hoc working group to continue working on this

3. ‘Discontinuation of Membership’

Chris led a discussion regarding the non-payment of membership fees from the IMPEL members: State Environmental Inspectorate (FYR Macedonia), Hellenic Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Climate Change (Greece) and Federal Public Service for Public Health, Food-Chain Safety and Environment (Belgium).

I. Hellenic Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Climate Change (Greece)

Thalia Statha, the Greek NC, explained that the last two years the ministry was reorganised. Climate change no longer falls under the responsibility of the Environment Ministry. At the moment there is a lot of red tape and the need for several formal approvals for contributions to international organisations. Approvals for the IMPEL membership fees are now in place. The amount agreed is for 2 years, 3,000 euros per year - so in total 6,000 euros. The practical payment should be done by the end of 2016.

Chris proposed to continue with the membership of Hellenic Ministry for the Environment and Energy and review the situation mid 2017. The General Assembly agrees with this proposal without objections.

II. Federal Public Service for Public Health, Food-Chain Safety and Environment (Belgium)

The proposal from the vice chair is not to discontinuation as of now, but seek further information form the Belgium authority on their membership.

The UK representative wondered how lenient should we be towards members after many years of non-paying fees?

Chris responded that it would be fair to ask for a formal clarification from the member explaining the situation. We do not want to lose members.

Cyprus agreed with the UK. It is different if a country is in a financial difficult situation, compared to not responding to official communications from IMPEL. This demonstrates a lack of interest in being an IMPEL member.

Germany proposed a suspended decision. Decide to discontinue membership if after 3 months they not react to IMPEL letters.



This is supported by: Sweden, Cyprus, Denmark, Portugal, Netherlands,

General Assembly decision: 2/3 majority was in favour for a suspended decision to discontinue the membership of the Federal Public Service for Public Health, Food-Chain Safety and Environment (Belgium) if they not respond to IMPEL letters by 31 March 2017.

III. State Environmental Inspectorate (FYR Macedonia)

IMPEL excluded the Macedonian Ministry, but accepted the Inspectorate to become a member in December 2015.

Kristina asked to take into account that for FYROM Macedonia we only have 1 member. Therefore, a discontinuation of the Macedonian inspectorate would affect our quasi-monopolistic status as practitioner's network of all European States applying EU environmental law, as IMPEL would not cover all countries anymore. She proposes to suspend them from any financial support, but keep them on as a member. They should however demonstrate that they are willing to take part in IMPEL activities. This is has support from Croatia and Portugal.

Nuno asked to consider also a suspension of member rights, e.g. like the right to vote.

Kristina commented that this could create some legal insecurity looking to the rules and statutes.

Nuno added that they can express their opinion, but they should not be able to vote.

Chrystalla Stylianou from Cyprus suggested putting the matter on a hold for another year as they are a new member.

Rikard from Sweden stated that excluding members is a delicate issue. We should thrive to treat members equally.

Chris said we could use 2017 for further discussions with FYROM Macedonia and that the matter will come back in the next General Assembly.

Harvey Bradshaw (United Kingdom) endorsed the point that Sweden made: a consistent approach seems fair. Sunset clause: same suspension clause as for Belgium but then per 31 December 2017.

Waltraud commented that the rules state that IMPEL will not facilitate financial support after one year of not paying. Discontinuation of membership is mentioned after 3 years of non-paying.

Chis formulated the text proposal: IMPEL will continue with communications with the Environmental Inspectorate form FYROM Macedonia in 2017 and will report back the next General Assembly. IMPEL will take the 3 years into account when deciding on the discontinuation of membership.

Decision by the General Assembly: a 2/3 majority approved the abovementioned proposal by the chair concerning the membership of the Environmental Inspectorate of FYROM Macedonia.

Session 9: IMPEL work programme 2017

Chair: Chris Dijkens

1. Work Programme 2017

Simon Bingham presented a summary of the work programme. He explained the procedure and the role of the Expert Teams and the Project Management Group.



Funding for projects equally divided per Expert Team. Significant cuts were already made by the Project Management Group.

Question from Slovenia:

Why is the Water & Land Expert Team meeting a separate project? Normally these meetings are back to back with a conference. Answer: to make the different costs per meeting clear.

Germany: wasn't there a limit of 10K that IMPEL would pay for consultants?

Answer by the Secretariat: No, there is no such limit.

Netherlands: 27 projects seem quite a lot for one year. Does this not constrain participation in projects?

Cyprus commented that 20,000€ for a consultant on a 51,000€ project budget, seems quite high.

Decision: work plan 2017 is adopted by the GA, including the attached terms of references.

2. Board proposal on budget of IMPEL in 2017

Nancy presented a summary of the proposed 2017 budget on behalf of the IMPEL Board. For 2017 there is a balanced budget – even 7,000€ get set aside to the Reserve Fund. The main costs for expenditure can be divided over 4 posts:

- Network expenditure
- IMPEL Projects and activities
- Project support costs
- Reserve Fund

The Danish NC asked about Com support for conferences. Hans responded by saying that the Com can support the work of IMPEL in 2017 with the same amount as before and in future most likely through translation and conference facilitation. He emphasized that some projects are regarded particularly useful by the responsible Commission services, like the Landfill project and the 'Financial Provisions' project.

Decision: General Assembly adopts the 2017 budget as proposed.

Session 10: Elections

Chair: Kristina Rabe

1. Election of Chair & Vice Chair (2017-2018)

The UK representative started by thanking John Seager for his role as the Chair of the IMPEL network.

Kristina then explained the procedure of the voting for the roles of Chair, Vice Chair and Expert team leaders and their deputies.

Candidates:

- Ms Ana Garcia (PT)

Ana enjoys full support from her internal organisation to dedicate her time to the role as vice chair. Looking forward to bring forward and promote implementation of EU environmental law at national, European and international level.



- Mr Chris Dijkens (NL)

He enjoys the IMPEL family and the activities of IMPEL. During the last four years in his role as vice chair, he was involved and contributed to the strategic direction of IMPEL. Continuity is crucial for IMPEL. He is available for one year only – this could contribute to staggering the process. He has full commitment from his national organisation to dedicate time for this function. Lastly he mentioned his wide spread experience in chairing in international settings.

- Mr Giuseppe Sgorbati (IT)

He addressed the issue of leadership of the Water & Land Expert Team. He also has got full support from regional authorities and the national level. His experiences cover leading a broad national network of Italian EPAs, covering the whole compliance and enforcement chain.

Voting results for position for the chair of IMPEL:

25 voted for Chris Dijkens

5 votes for Giuseppe Sgorbati

With a 2/3 majority the General Assembly elected Chris Dijkens in his position as new Chair of IMPEL as per 1 January 2017.

Voting results for position for the vice chair of IMPEL:

23 voted for Ana Garcia

7 voted for Giuseppe Sgorbati

With a 2/3 majority the General Assembly elected Ana Garcia in her position as new Vice Chair of IMPEL as per 1 January 2017.

2. Election of Expert Team Leaders and Deputy Team Leaders (2017-2018)

The General Assembly was asked to approve the recommendation from each Expert Team:

- **Industry & Air** – Horst Buether (DE) as Expert Team Leader & Florin Homorean (RO) as Deputy Team Leader.
- **Cross Cutting Tools & Approaches** – Simon Bingham (UK) as Expert Team Leader & Jesus Ocio (ES) as Deputy Team Leader.
- **Waste & TFS** – Marina de Gier (NL) as Expert Team Leader & Allison Townley (UK) as Deputy Team Leader.
- **Water & Land** – Giuseppe Sgorbati (IT) as Expert Team Leader & Paul Hickey (UK) as Deputy Team Leader.
- **Nature Protection** – John Visbeen (NL) as Expert Team Leader & Andrea Slapnik (SI) as Deputy Team Leader.

All proposed candidates were approved by general consensus by the General Assembly.

Session 11: Network Communications

Chair: John Seager

1. Communications

The presentation on IMPEL's Communications work was cancelled due to lack of time.

Nancy just posed the question to the General Assembly to consider becoming a new member for the Comms group as there is current a 'vacancy' for the Waste& TFS Expert Team.



Session 12: Conclusions and close of meeting

Chair: John Seager

1. Date of next meeting

Estonia will hold the EU presidency in the second half of 2017, taking over from the United Kingdom. 16th IMPEL General Assembly will be held in Tallinn, Estonia, on the 6th and 7th of December in 2017.

2. Conclusions and close of meeting

Chris thanked John for his role as chair of IMPEL for the last four years. The Commission echoed Chris. They appreciated his high professionalism and strategic vision. They expressed to continue the same level of professionalism with the new Chair and Vice chair of IMPEL.

John thanked everyone for their contributions. He enjoyed his 4 years as Chair of the IMPEL network and expressed his hope to stay involved in some of the future work of IMPEL.
