



Notes of Meeting (version 04/12/15)¹

14th IMPEL General Assembly

01-02 December 2015

European Convention Centre, Luxembourg

Session 1: Welcome

Chair: *John Seager*

1. Opening address by Chair of IMPEL

The Chair of IMPEL opened the General Assembly.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted with no amendments.

3. Welcome presentation by Director, Administration de l'environnement, Mr Robert Schmit

The Director of Administration de l'environnement, Mr Robert Schmit welcomed IMPEL to Luxembourg.

4. Introduction about recent work with IMPEL & the Regional Environment Center (THEMIS)

As an Observer of IMPEL for many years, Chris said that THEMIS and IMPEL recognise the benefits of working closely together and mutual reinforcing work programmes to improve implementation and enforcement of environmental legislation in Europe. A Memorandum of Understanding is established to highlight this useful and practical partnership.

- a) Presentation by Marta Szigeti Bonifert, Executive Director of the Regional Environment Center (REC)

Marta gave a presentation about the REC and about the THEMIS network. Based in Hungary, REC was established in 1990 and specialises on projects looking at climate change, biodiversity, water management health & the environment, and law, compliance and enforcement. It has carried out over 2000 projects with a total budget of over € 200 million. Marta gave a broad overview of the projects that are being carried out the REC ad THEMIS.

- b) Signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding between IMPEL and the REC.

The MoU was signed by Marta Szigeti Bonifert on behalf of REC and THEMIS, and by Chris Dijkens on behalf of IMPEL.

¹ In annex 2, there is a table of the main action points from this meeting.

Session 2: Implementation Challenge & 2020 Strategy

Chair: *John Seager*

1. Implementation Challenge & 2020 Strategy

- a) Chris Dijkens, Vice Chair of IMPEL, gave a brief overview on IMPEL's Implementation Challenge work.

Chris summarised the work so far. The Implementation Challenge report can be found at:

<http://impel.eu/news/impel-study-confirms-that-significant-challenges-remain-in-implementing-eu-environmental-law/>

- b) Terry Shears, the consultant supporting the Implementation Challenge project, presented phase 2 of the work.

Terry said that the work of the Implementation Challenge project was based on information from several sources:

- Reports on State of Environment (EEA)
- Formal EU instruments (e.g. 7th EAP)
- Reports and web-based information from European Commission (e.g. 'Fitness Checks')
- Consultancy studies
- Consultation with policy units in Commission
- Questionnaire
- Workshop.

Based on the results of the questionnaire, the main challenges in implementing environmental law were:

- Complex legislation
- Overlap of legislation
- Lack of skills at municipal level
- Low level of fines
- Interpretation differs between countries
- Lack of implementation in SMEs
- Inadequate data on enforcement

Specific thematic challenges were:

- Waste
 - Landfill reduction targets
 - Hazardous waste
- Water and land
 - Diffuse source pollution
 - Over-abstraction
 - Hydro-geomorphology
- Nature protection
 - Loss and degradation of species and habitats.

There were some underlying causes for lack of implementation: Insufficient capacity in regulatory bodies (62%), Lack of relevant data, information and evidence (57%), Unclear technical specifications in regulations (48%), Disproportionate cost of implementing legislation (33%), and Unclear aims and objectives of legislation (20%).

The purpose of the second phase of the implementation challenge report was to:

- Develop an improved survey tool and strategy for information gathering
- Gain a better understanding of linkage between implementation challenge and cross cutting area

- Gain greater clarity on causes and occurrence of implementation problems
- Ensure a better understanding of priorities and targeting for work IMPEL programme.

Terry said that the findings of the report had been shared with the European Commission (DG Environment / DG ENV) at a lunchtime seminar and meeting on 13 November where over 20 DG Environment staff attended. There has been discussion that on the WEEE Directive, a possible specific case study could be examined. In the Water and land area, the Nitrates Committee said it was useful for sharing results of projects.

DG ENV suggested exploring how information on the state of soils could be improved, e.g. data gathered in inspections. The European Commission is carrying out fitness checks on monitoring and reporting requirements in EU environmental legislation and so there are potential roles for IMPEL to play. DG ENV also said that IMPEL could look at active dissemination of environmental information to the public, that they planning a recommendation on inspections and compliance assurance; and that they are keen for the number of IRIs in IMPEL to be increased.

Terry said that the questionnaire for the Implementation Challenge work would be reviewed following some various comments on its usability. He also said that he had spoken with IMPEL's Expert Team Leaders about the results so far and how the results could be embedded in the work of the teams.

Harvey asked what options we have for addressing the root causes of the lack of skills in our organisations. In response, John said that IMPEL needs to give a lot of thought to this challenge. Many agencies are under budgetary pressure and have had recruitment freezes and training budget freezes. There are a number of ways to address this such as IMPEL's work on risk based approaches in inspections and helping organisations to rationalise and target their resources. Sharing of know-how in IMPEL is crucial and the sharing of solutions to practical problems needs to be emphasised. Chris added that IMPEL should communicate further with the Heads of EPAs network to ensure that the results of this work can be fully understood and that the members of that network are supportive of the actions that need to be taken to reduce the implementation gap.

There was a discussion regarding the need for the future Implementation challenge work to examine, and gain input from / about, implementation at the provincial /regional and local /municipality level.

Kristina asked about the frequency of maintaining this programme of work. John said that it would not be continuous but could be a regular piece of work not least because the challenges do not remain static. Henk agreed with the principle of carrying out this work on a bi-annual or tri-annual frequency. It was agreed that this work would be managed under the Cross Cutting Approaches & Tools Expert Team.

Alessandro asked whether the results of the Implementation Challenge had been shared with the European Commission. John said that IMPEL had hosted a 'lunch and learn' seminar at DG Environment in November. This was open to all DG ENV staff to come to the seminar and listen to the results of the project. John added that with regard to infringements, it would be useful to know if there are commonalities or trends to learn from to help us direct our work and find out where IMPEL can help to solve practical implementation issues. Alessandro also asked about the 'Make It Work' project which is designed to streamline the policy making process. IMPEL Board has discussed, and is in close contact with, the connections between the Implementation Challenge work and the Make it Work project.

c) Going forward, a five-year strategy.

John Seager gave a presentation on the work of the Expert Teams & how this might be translated into a five-year strategy going forward.

John summarised the key implementation challenges that IMPEL needs to consider going forward.

- Waste

- Landfill reduction targets (for example, half of the member states look set to fail the Waste Framework Directive targets)
- Hazardous waste (for example, indications are that 30% of hazardous waste is unaccounted for)
- Water and land
 - Diffuse source pollution (from agriculture)
 - Over-abstraction (as well as illegal abstraction)
 - Hydro-geomorphology (Artificial canalisation of rivers for example)
- Nature protection
 - Loss and degradation of species and habitats (The policy target to halt and reverse loss and degradation of species and habitats is not being met. Only 17% of species under Natura 2000 are under 'favourable' conditions).

John then asked what our priorities over next 5 years should be and where should we focus our effort? He proposed that we should be:

- Informing policy with practical experience and expertise
- Helping countries to build capacity and get to compliance more quickly
- Coordinating action across borders
- Facilitating communication between different regulators through the compliance chain
- Developing innovative approaches and methods.

John said that a good example of how we inform policy through our experiences of practical implementation and enforcement was shown through IMPEL contributing to the Fitness Checks and the work in Rome (the General Assembly in December 2013) on inspections. On capacity building, there is a huge amount of knowledge in IMPEL and we can help each other by sharing information and help each other get to compliance quicker. We can also enable other states to 'leap-frog' to compliance by learning from other member states. This is much more efficient than if we had tried to work on issues on our own, in our own member states without cooperating through IMPEL.

IMPEL's experiences on coordinating action across borders is shown through our successful cooperation in the Nature Protection and Waste & TFS Expert Teams on the Birds directive and waste/TFS Enforcement Actions. Communication between different actors is key; John said that working across the compliance chain for example with the ENPE and EUFJE networks is very important and this is why we have proposed to hold a Networks Conference in 2016, to build on already established relations since the last IMPEL Conference in Malta in 2013. On innovation, John said that we need to help our resource constrained organisations be more effective. To do this, we can develop tools and approaches such as that in Cross Cutting Expert Team on utilising Technology in Regulation.

In summary John outlined 5 key points that the Board has discussed and agreed should be considered within the next five years. These include:

- Targeting existing implementation challenges
- Engaging with and responding to our member's needs
- Further developing the 5 thematic programmes and Expert Teams
- Building the Network and seeking new members to contribute to and benefit from our work
- Strengthening cooperation with other EU and international networks to improve the links through the compliance chain.

He said that each of the Expert Teams had developed a two-page document summarising their key work for the next 5 years. This had not been circulated yet but would be very soon. John said that he would collate those into one single document and ask the Secretariat to send to the General Assembly for comment and approval.

d) Questions & Answers in the General Assembly.

General Assembly members made several key points in response to John's presentation:

- Berith asked whether coordinating actions beyond our own network was really necessary.
- Waltraud said that IMPEL should focus on, and not lose sight of, IMPEL's core aims and objectives to help improve working methods, tools and approaches at the working level.
- Kristina said that by targeting existing implementation challenges we should listen more to the inspectors and also listen to the European Commission about what they are working on.
- Elen said that the UK was supportive of the comments from Austria, Germany and Denmark. IMPEL is well placed to give feedback to the policy makers on what is working well and what is not. Learning from other networks was also useful in helping us to achieve our goals and objectives.
- Henk said that in TFS & Waste ET for example, working with other networks and organisations is crucial. We cannot tackle waste trafficking for example without cooperation from external organisations like the World Customs Organisation, Interpol or Environmental Protection Agencies in Africa and Asia.
- Rikard said that as long as networking is relevant to help us address our existing implementation challenges then working with other networks is fine. If it goes beyond that narrow scope then it begins to become irrelevant.
- Harvey said that the network could and should do more to mainstream and utilise existing work, outputs and conclusions from IMPEL projects and activities.

John reminded the General Assembly that he would collate the two-page documents from the Expert Teams (and add a cover note trying to build in the points made above) summarising their key work for the next 5 years. He would then ask the Secretariat to send this to the General Assembly for comment and approval.

Session 3: Member Engagement

Chair: John Seager

1. Welcome to the new IMPEL National Coordinators (NC's)

Over the last 12 months since the last General Assembly, there has been several new National Coordinators. The NC's introduced themselves:

- Alessandro Peru from Ministry of Environment in Italy
- Olita Smirnova from State Environmental Service in Latvia
- Ana Garcia from the Inspectorate General (IGAMAOT) in Portugal
- Claude Peters from Administration de l'environnement in Luxembourg
- Justina Aukstinaitiene from the Environment Agency in Lithuania
- Irene Bendicho Olivares from Ministry of Environment in Spain.

There were two more new National Coordinators, Peter Simurka from Slovakia and Sylvia Rangelova from Bulgaria but unfortunately they were not able to attend. Cyril Burda and Nina Simeonova (respectively) attended in their stead.

2. National Coordinators workshop

Henk Ruessink, National Coordinator from the Netherlands, gave feedback to the General Assembly on the results of the workshop held on the 30 November 2015. Thanks to the efforts of Claude Peters, the workshop was kindly hosted by the Administration de l'Environnement in Esch-sur-Alzette. In total 21 National Coordinators participated, as well as Michael from the Secretariat and Guisepe from the Board. The workshop was prepared by a small group of the National Coordinators from GE, UK, IT and NL.

Henk said the objective of the National Coordinators meeting was to exchange the main challenges and solutions to working as an NC in IMPEL; to strengthen ties and foster partnerships with one another; develop and share good practices; as well as to learn more about the new colleagues who have just become NC's.

Henk said that Michael had summarised the new structures of IMPEL and tools open to NC's to help them carry out their role. Kristina explained the variety of roles of a NC as she has experienced: postoffice manager, PR officer, animator/moderator, lobbyist, advocate and translator. Some other colleagues also shared personal reflections on what it is like to be an NC. The workshop then broke up into an intermezzo to carry out a (semi-scientific) mapping of our organisations to understand the structure (centralised vs. decentralised & thematic vs. holistic) of our organisations. The meeting split up into 3 small groups to discuss and share challenges, needs and solutions to being an NC in a more intimate setting. Some key issues highlighted were having to deal with other organisations in your own country dealing with other thematic issues e.g. green; information management and challenges with sharing all of the documents to your IMPEL community in an effective manner; time and resources for the NC job role; contact and support of higher management.

In terms of solutions to the challenges, the following approaches were mentioned: regular meetings to inform other stakeholders in a country; preparation and dissemination of short reports of participants to IMPEL projects; help of the Board to gain 'buy-in' from colleagues in your country; connect to existing other networks in your country;

Henk reported that there had been agreement to make the NC meeting an annual event, most likely back to back with the General Assembly. There was also agreement to establish a 'buddying / mentoring' system whereby new NC's could be teamed up with other, more experienced NC's. This was following a very positive experience shared by Berith from Denmark in which she had teamed up informally with Moa from Sweden and that that relationship had really helped her to better understand the NC role in 2015, her first year in IMPEL. There was also a commitment to aim towards having representation from each country at each Expert Team. Furthermore, NC could take the opportunity to have short ad-hoc exchanges at other regular IMPEL meetings. Henk said he would prepare meeting notes and circulate these in due course. The ideas and actions will subsequently put into practice.

3. IMPEL Board's engagement with members

John Seager provided some feedback to the General Assembly on the Board's efforts in 2015 to engage and stimulate interactions within the IMPEL network:

- Spain & REDIA

Irene said that it was very useful for the IMPEL Board to visit Madrid and to coincide that with the annual meeting of the REDIA network. She said she would recommend this to any other country / organisation looking to build support and knowledge of IMPEL.

- Romanian EPA and the meeting with the Romanian Minister

Florin said that the visit has helped the National Environment Guard gain Ministerial support for NEG's work in IMPEL. He said that there is now a potential opportunity to add the Romanian EPA to the existing (two) members from Romania and that a possible application for membership is forthcoming.

- Letters to encourage IMPEL membership to Montenegro, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Serbia

Chris explained that letters had been sent by the Secretariat on behalf of the Board to Montenegro, Bosnia Herzegovina & Serbia to encourage applications of membership to IMPEL. Chris had also followed up these letters with personal interactions on behalf of the Board. He said he would keep the network informed of developments.

- Meeting with the General Director & Deputy Director in the Czech Republic

Simon said that, during the recent IRI at the Czech Environmental Inspectorate in the Czech Republic, there had been a meeting with the General Director & Deputy Director about the role of IMPEL and how the work of our network can benefit their inspectorate. Simon said that there had been an enthusiastic response and that the results of the IRI had been an example of this.

Session 4: External Engagement

Chair: *Chris Dijkens*

Chris introduced session 4 by giving an overview of the strengths and benefits of external engagement for IMPEL.

1. INECE

John Seager provided a summary of the Board's recent engagement activities with INECE, specifically the recent application to work more closely with INECE through a US EPA funding stream to supply Secretariat services to the network. He said that the IMPEL Board had needed to react quickly and efficiently because the tender had been launched with only 1 month for applications to be sent in. This required a quick turnaround in terms of gaining General Assembly support plus the activities required to actually prepare the application.

Several very important comments were made on this topic:

- Kristina said that sometimes it is beneficial to go a little slower. She also said that there was a potential for legal difficulties with such a move and so taking more time to consider the full implications of an application was a necessary action.
- Rikard said that the Board had not sufficiently demonstrated a clear link between running the secretariat for INECE with the benefits for IMPEL and being more closely aligned with INECE. He also saw some potential financial risks for IMPEL.
- Waltraud said that much clearer information would need to have been given by the Board earlier in the process. That would have helped the General Assembly to make a more informed decision.
- Elen suggested that IMPEL could investigate the possibility of supporting another network's secretariat in future and to help us react more quickly, we could discuss the general outline of how this might be done now so that we could be more 'fleet of foot' and efficient in our decision making in future.
- Alessandro supported the use of the Written Procedure for such processes in future where discussion in a physical meeting was not possible.
- Berith said that decisions should be routed through the General Assembly because there are potential risks that the Board may not be able to identify them in an adequate manner.
- Jean Luc said that there is a strong necessity to evaluate the risks of working with organisations such as the US EPA.

Marta said that the REC would be interested to support IMPEL to work on joint bids for activities such as this in future.

Chris said that the Board will seek a debriefing from the US EPA to more fully understand the reasons why IMPEL were unsuccessful.

2. THEMIS

Chris Dijkens provided a summary of the Board's recent engagement activities with THEMIS including the recent signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between our two networks.

Bruno gave an update regarding cooperation with IMPEL including recent examples of training opportunities taking place as part of THEMIS projects. In 2016, THEMIS will be holding several training

sessions on forestry and trans-boundary shipments of waste. Bruno invited IMPEL representatives to take part. There is also another opportunity to help the THEMIS network develop standard operating procedures on environmental crime. Bruno once again invited IMPEL to participate. THEMIS is about to start a peer review programme of its own and has invited IMPEL to cooperate and collaborate on running multi-disciplinary teams to review THEMIS host countries. Bruno said that if there were IMPEL projects that might be of interest to THEMIS then there might be opportunities for funding and collaboration on these as well. The key areas of interest to THEMIS are: industry and nature protection.

Kristina said that IMPEL should clarify with the European Commission finance team that we can cooperate without jeopardising our own funding streams.

In conclusion, Chris said that practical aspects of collaboration with THEMIS were demonstrated in the sharing of our Work Programmes, Terms of References and schedules for our activities. Joint IRI's are a welcome suggestion and we will consider this for the future years.

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

John Seager provided a brief introductory summary of the Board's recent engagement activities with ENPE & EUFJE. He highlighted, for example, the work that the TFS & Waste Expert Team has done on the *Prosecutors Database* project, which IMPEL has supported financially for the past several years but that now can be handed over to the ENPE network to manage going forward.

Jonathan provided a presentation on the recent establishment and work of the European Network of Prosecutors for the Environment. Founded in 2012, the ENPE network is open to membership of environmental prosecutors from across Europe and it has a Board of 5 representatives from the member states of Belgium, France, Ireland, Sweden and the UK. Jonathan said that ENPE's mission was very similar to IMPEL in that it was to: 'Promote the prosecution of environmental crime by supporting the operative work of environmental prosecutors'. More specifically, to:

- Strengthen trans-national ties
- Exchange information and experience
- Deliver training
- Provide guidance on best practice
- Data collection and analysis concerning environmental law and its criminal enforcement
- 'Completing the chain' with, for example: IMPEL, EnviroCrimNet and EUFJE

ENPE has a 5-year work plan from 2015-20 that is funded through LIFE+. The LIFE+ work is a collaboration between: Environment Agency (UK), Environmental Protection Agency (Ireland), Åklagarmyndigheten (Sweden), Openbaar Ministerie (Netherlands) and the European Union Forum of Judges for the Environment.

The 5-year work plan focuses on the following tasks:

- A strengthened secretariat for ENPE and EUFJE
- Study into non-compliance with environmental law, barriers to prosecution and measures to address these
- Annual programmes of events, conferences and seminars
- Training packages
- Best practice guides
- Website and newsletters
- Database of national judgments, building on IMPEL TFS work.

The key thematic areas to focus on were waste crime, wildlife crime, chemical pollution and prosecution and sanctioning practice.

4. Proposal to hold a joint conference IMPEL / EUFJE / ENPE / ENVI CrimeNet in 2016

Chris summarised the proposal to hold a conference in 2016. The tri-annual tradition of holding a conference in IMPEL is well established and that the proposal is to use the 2016 conference as a way to better connect with our partners in the compliance chain: prosecutors (represented by ENPE), judges (represented by EU FJE) and the police (represented by ENVICrime Net).

The key points summarised by Chris was as follows:

- Date: 12 and 13 May 2016
- Venue: The Netherlands
- Partners:
 - IMPEL
 - EU Network of Prosecutors for the Environment (ENPE)
 - EU Forum of Judges for the Environment (EUFJE)
 - EnviCrimeNet
- Expected participants: ca. 220
- Two main themes:
 - To strengthen collaboration in the enforcement chain
 - To encourage further innovation in compliance and enforcement
- Estimated budget needed: € 140.000
- A small steering group has been established consisting of representatives of each of the four groups above.

There was general support to hold such a conference. Key points raised by the delegates at the General Assembly were:

- Jean-Luc said that it was important to work with other networks like the prosecutors and judges. He gave one small suggestion to the agenda as it stood at the moment: to change the word: 'EPA' in session 3 to 'regulators'.
- Henk mentioned the need to consider cyber crime as an issue in the programme.

Chris said that a couple of teleconference calls had taken place with representatives of the other networks since the version sent to the General Assembly had been posted on Basecamp. That meant that the version being reviewed by the General Assembly was, in effect, out of date and that Michael would re-circulate the draft to gain further comments on the programme. Comments should be sent in by early January but Michael will inform the GA about the deadline in due course.

5. Other Networks

Chris Dijkens provided a summary of the Board's recent engagement activities with other networks including: Heads of EPAs Network, European Federation of Environmental Health professionals (EFEH), RENA, ENFORCE, REN, Asian Network, AELERT.

- John said that he had attended the recent AELERT conference in Australia. He said that the work being carried out by that network was very impressive and showed that IMPEL could learn from them on a number of different areas. It was agreed that Michael would circulate the link to website of the AELERT conference to the General Assembly members.
- John and Chris will be meeting with the Basel Secretariat in December 2015 to discuss the engagement of the Convention with IMPEL, and more specifically the Waste & TFS Expert Team. Allison Townley and Kevin Mercieca, Expert Team Leader & Deputy for the Waste & TFS Expert Team were not able to attend so Nancy Isarin will attend on their behalf and report back to that ET.

- Henk gave an update regarding the SeaPorts projects in the INECE network, the equivalent of IMPEL's Enforcement Actions project but on a global scale.
- Ike said that in the RENA network (now ECRAN), 6 out of 8 RENA member countries are implementing IRAM, a tool developed in IMPEL. Ike said that if representatives of RENA member countries wish to attend the Networks Conference in 2016, then RENA could fund that participation.

6. European Commission

John Seager gave a short overview of the Board's engagement with the European Commission in 2015. There had been two separate meetings of the IMPEL Board with the European Commission in 2015: in March and in November. It was agreed that Michael would circulate the notes of the meetings with the European Commission via Basecamp.

Session 5: IMPEL activities

Chair: *Chris Dijkens*

1. Approval of project reports and activities from 2015

The final project reports 2015/01 IED implementation and 2015/02 Lessons Learnt from Accidents were approved by the General Assembly.

One small comment: Waltraud asked Horst to clarify in the report which parts of the IED Implementation report which package was completed by this year's project and which packages of work will be addressed in future parts of the IED Implementation project.

Session 6: IMPEL work programme 2016

Chair: *Chris Dijkens*

1. Work Programme 2016

Simon Bingham presented a summary of the work programme. One additional note: Simon said that the Deputy Team Leader for the Expert Team on Nature Protection was still vacant and we are looking for a volunteer to take up that role. There were several comments made by General Assembly delegates:

- Hans thanked IMPEL for sending the draft ToRs to him at DG ENV. He had then circulated these to his colleagues who had provided feedback to the Expert Team Leaders. Hans asked if the ToRs could be made more specific on the scope of work (desired outcomes and actual outputs), in particular regarding the ToRs for the IED related projects. The Commission expects further that the Shale Gas project will be continued into 2016 on the basis of an improved collaboration with COM colleagues (e.g. involvement in the project team).
- Henk said the quality of some ToRs was limited. He said that there was a disparity amongst the quality of the ToRs submitted and this needs to be improved going forward. Henk said that we should be clearer in linking the ToRs with the Implementation Challenge work and that we need to be more critical about some of the projects that are recurring year after year. He also added that the programme does not properly reflect the amount of in-kind contributions from members.
- Harvey said that we should be careful to align our projects with the strategic priorities already discussed. For example, the template for the ToR does not address the question: 'Who is the customer?' and 'Who does the project benefit?'
- Waltraud and Kristina asked the question of whether the projects and ToRs had really addressed the question of participation. In future, we need to be smarter and more efficient in ensuring that

projects have identified who will participate. This will help us to prepare the budgets for our projects, and for IMPEL as a whole, more effectively.

- Elen said that the project ToR on illegal killing of birds had a lack of detail especially considering the relatively high expected cost of the consultant foreseen. It was agreed that there would be further discussion with John Visbeen to examine the consultancy cost in further detail.
- Henk asked whether co-funding with the project: 2016/20 Environmental Liabilities, could be sought from the Heads of EPAs network.

The Work Programme for 2016 was adopted.

2. Board proposal on budget of IMPEL in 2016

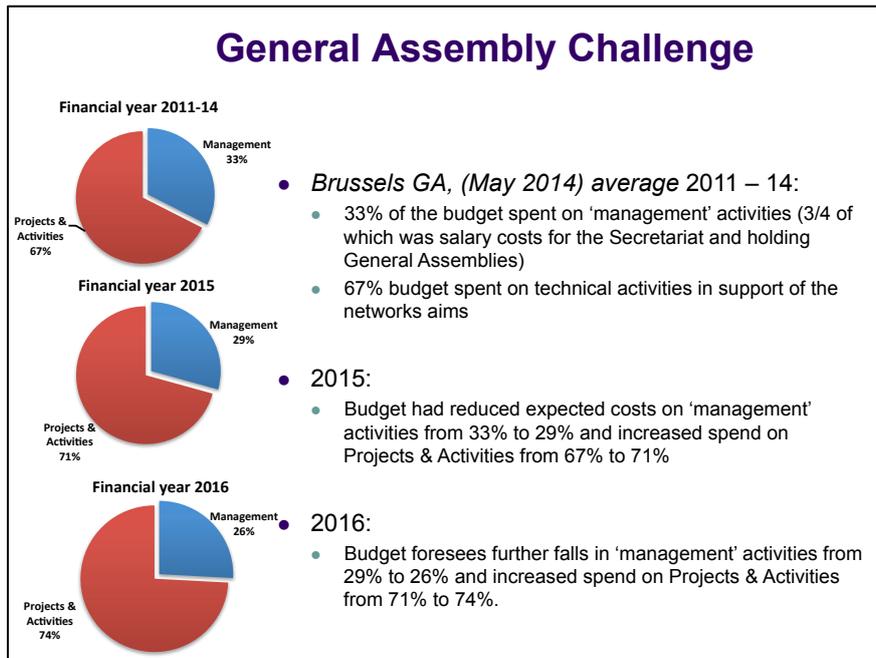
Michael Nicholson from the Secretariat presented a summary of the proposed 2016 budget on behalf of the IMPEL Board.

A balanced budget was proposed by the IMPEL Board. Expected income for 2016 was € 737,000 - € 500,000 from LIFE+ funding and € 237,000 from membership fees. This was slightly up on 2015 due to an expected increase in members. Expected Expenditure was € 737,000.

Expected expenditure was as follows:

- **Personnel costs** - € 130,000. For 1.5 FTE Secretariat. No change compared with 2015.
- **Projects & Activities** - € 426,350. [With the External Assistance / Consultancy costs added in] this is an Increase in funding for projects & activities in 2016 vs. 2015
 - Board activities - € 23,000. Decrease of € 9,000 by holding two meetings back to back with networks conference and General Assembly
 - General Assembly - € 23,000. Decrease by € 4,000 due to less NC's requesting financial support to attend GA's than expected in 2015
 - Communications & Comms Group - € 15,000. Decrease of € 5,000 by only holding one face-to-face meeting rather than two.
 - Networks Conference - € 50,000. Joint conference between IMPEL / Prosecutors / Judges / Police where the total budget is expected to be around € 140,000. The € 50,000 mentioned here is IMPEL's contribution to the total amount.
- **Rental, Equipment and Depreciation** - € 0. Historically used to fund equipment costs (e.g. Computer for Secretariat), rental of meeting rooms for seminars (e.g. with European Commission). Budget now diverted to Projects & Activities
- **External Assistance** - € 42,000. Covers the cost of consultancy costs on two projects: Doing the Right Things Environmental Permitting & Illegal Killing of Birds
- **Overheads** - reduced by 10% compared with 2015 from € 14,000 to € 12,560. Includes items such as phone communications (e.g. teleconferencing), IMPEL website, Basecamp, development, office costs. Reduction has been used to fund an increase in Projects & Activities
- **Other Costs** - € 15,000. Includes items such as accountancy charges, costs for hiring an auditor & bank charges. 'Other Costs' budget remain unchanged compared with 2015.

The budget for 2016 was approved.



After the 2016 had been approved, Michael explained some changes that had been taking place since the General Assembly in Brussels in May 2014. At that meeting the General Assembly had challenged the Board to prepare a budget that reduced what was perceived to be high management costs for the network and to increase funding to projects and activities.

The Secretariat reported at that meeting that between 2011-14, 33% was spent on management activities (3/4 of which was salary costs and holding General Assemblies) and the budget for Projects & Activities was 67%. In 2015, we planned for a reduction in management costs from 33% down to 29% and increased spending on projects and activities from 67% to 71%. In 2016, the Board had presented a budget that goes further. The management activities fall from 29% to 26% and Projects & Activities increase from 71% to 74%.

How have we been able to reduce costs? There is a good sign that several actions that have taken place over the last few years have helped to decrease 'management' costs. These were:

- Closing the IMPEL office – less rent, but also less overheads
- Reducing the number of General Assemblies from 2 to 1 per year
- Asking Countries to fund participation at the General Assembly themselves.
- Streamlined procedures with IMPEL's accountant
- Increasing numbers of back-to-back activities e.g. in 2016, the Board will reduce its costs by € 9,000 (28%) by holding two of its meetings back to back with the General Assembly and the Networks Conference.

Session 7: Opening of day 2

Chair of IMPEL, *John Seager*

John opened day 2 of the General Assembly. No further remarks were noted.

Session 8: IMPEL success stories 2015

Chair: *John Seager*

1. IMPEL success stories 2015

Presentations were made on the positive results of IMPEL work over the last 12 months or so by:

- Allison Townley on Enforcement Actions and Waste Shipment Inspection planning
 - Horst Buether on Industry & Air Expert Team
 - John Visbeen on the 'Green' Management Team
 - Simon Bingham on the Conference on Technology
 - Giuseppe Sgorbati on the IMPEL Soil Conference.
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Session 9: Network Communications

Chair: John Seager

1. Communications

a) General update incl. development of new IMPEL website

Michael gave a general update (on behalf of Nancy) on communications in IMPEL including the work of the Communications Group and a presentation of the new website.

Michael began by explaining that credit for the excellent progress on communications is due to Nancy and the new Communications Group for their hard work.

In 2015:

- Two meetings of the Communications Group were convened: March & November
- 3 E-newsletters (658 subscribers vs. 425 in 2014) had been produced. A 4th newsletter was about to be published in December 2015.
- New: Facebook account (LinkedIn and Twitter already existing). 60 followers on Facebook were registered.
- A meeting with the Green Spiders Network took place in June 2015. The GSN consists of communications staff from Ministry of Environment staff in the member states and is chaired by DG Environment. They have agreed to promote IMPEL news when appropriate and share our newsletter.
- IMPEL's new Website launch due in December 2015
- IMPEL promotional film. A promotional film to showcase who IMPEL is and what we do is due to be ready in early 2016. It contains interview with Horst Buether regarding our work on IRAM, the TFS team on Enforcement Actions and the IRI in Kosovo.
- Update of the IMPEL brochure. The existing brochure produced in 2014 is about to be updated based on the changes made late last year to our organisational structure. This will be ready to download soon.

Michael reminded the General Assembly of the key contact points for each Expert Team:

- Industry and Air: Rob Hayes (UK)
- Waste and TFS: Magdalena Kwarta (NO)
- Water and Land: Alessandra Negriolli (IT)
- Nature Protection: Lenka Nemkova (CZ)
- Cross-cutting and Tools: Suzanne Gauci (MT) and Paul Meerman (NL).

This group, led by Nancy Isarin from the IMPEL Secretariat, made up the Communications group. They are there to support network communications and communications of the Expert Teams and projects.

In 2016, the Communications Group will focus on the following activities:

- Focus more on external communication and promotion with the new tools
- Improve the use of Basecamp
- Revise the project abstracts template
- Professional training on targeted communications.

IMPEL's Contact information is as follows:

Website: www.impel.eu

Email: info@impel.eu

Skype: *impelsecretariat*

Links to IMPEL's **Social Media** functions could be found at:

[LinkedIn](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

The General Assembly made a few comments on the report on communications:

- Waltraud asked whether the Communication's Group could ensure a more efficient search function in the new IMPEL website.
- Kristina asked about several issues:
 - To upload the presentations from this General Assembly. Michael said that he had done so during the course of this meeting.
 - Whether it would be possible to review the text of the new IMPEL brochure. Michael said that the Comms Group had reviewed the text already and was not sure whether they had plans to circulate the draft outside of the Comms Group. He said he thought it would be appropriate though for Kristina to contact the Comms Group directly regarding this matter.
 - Whether Basecamp could be altered to enable a more hierarchical file structure. Michael said that Basecamp was an 'off the shelf' package that we paid a small fee for and that changes to its structure could not be made. He added that the Comms Group had discussed whether or not to find an alternative package to Basecamp but that the consensus was that this would create a lot of upheaval at this present time and that the Group's resources should be used elsewhere at this present time.
 - Whether the text of the website could be reviewed and changed. Michael said that comments on the structure of the website had now been closed because we were in the final stages of user testing and that it would be launched in the next days. Any suggestions on structure would be recorded and considered during a later round of updates to the website (the date of which is indeterminate at this stage...). Any potential changes to the text of individual webpages is possible and can be done by the Secretariat. These would be considered as 'minor changes' and could be implemented relatively quickly and without significant cost. Suggestions should be submitted to the Secretariat to be implemented in due course.

Update by Mr. Hans Lopatta, Policy Officer: Legal Issues European Commission - Directorate General for Environment Unit D.4 (Governance, Information & Reporting)

Hans Lopatta from the European Commission gave an update on recent major legislative change. John informed the General Assembly that a written update from Hans to reflect his verbal update had been uploaded to Basecamp.

Session 11: Organisational matters

Chair: John Seager

1. Board report on financial state of IMPEL in 2014 & 2015

Michael Nicholson presented a summary of IMPEL's final financial position in 2014 and then the interim results of 2015.

Elen said that if Michael could give a mid year picture then the National Coordinators could help to improve the situation. For information, Michael presents information such as this to the IMPEL Board on a regular basis. Giuseppe suggested that the General Assembly could already approve a 'B-list' set of project ToRs. If this was done then, as soon as budget became available, they could begin their work.

2. Membership

a) Application for new membership

Isobel Moore introduced the application of membership of Natural Resources Wales (UK) to IMPEL. Darko Blinkov introduced the application of membership of the State Environmental Inspectorate (FYR Macedonia) to IMPEL. The network discussed, and then agreed, on the application of both organisations to join IMPEL.

b) Membership fees

Chris Dijkens led a discussion regarding a review of the membership fee level within IMPEL. An annexed document to this agenda item was presented which outlined that membership fees had not increased since IMPEL became a legal entity in 2008 despite rising costs such as personnel, overheads, flight and hotel costs etc. Inflation has been at around 11% and consequently the Board wished to propose that the General Assembly review and agree to their recommendation that a 10% increase be added to the membership fee level, effective from January 2017.

Several comments were received on this topic:

- Jean Luc asked whether the proposal to increase fees apply to the minimum level of fees or on all fees / the amount that members are paying at the moment. Chris confirmed that the proposal was to apply a 10% increase on the minimum level of fees i.e. € 5,000 would become € 5,500 for first members in IMPEL and so on.
- Sigrun said that the fees were at about the correct level already and Iceland does not support an increase. Chrystalla and Petra agreed with Iceland on behalf of Cyprus and the Czech Republic, respectively. Florin said that Romania could not support an increase at this time but recommended that we review the situation in a few years time.
- Waltraud said that Austria supported the recommendation of the Board. She said that it was a responsible measure that members increased the minimum level of fees so that we did not become dependent on LIFE+. She also said that it indicated a sign of commitment to IMPEL.

- Elen proposed that members could negotiate with the Board on an individual basis to increase fees. Kristina said that if we increase fees we should do it on a formal basis and not on a voluntary basis as proposed by Elen. This would be easier to explain to budget holders in countries – in other words, if the Statute & rules were changed to incorporate the increase then it would be easier to justify to budget holders that fees had been increased rather than asking budget holders for an additional, *voluntary* contribution.
- Kristina said that the rules at the moment allow members to pay a minimum of € 2,000 and/or negotiate with the Board for paying a different amount should payment of the fee be difficult. In effect, we could continue to increase the fee by 10% and still have the option for members to pay less should that be necessary. That way, we could both agree to the Board’s proposal and satisfy the concerns of Iceland, Czech Republic, Romania and Cyprus that the fees are at about the correct level.
- Henk proposed that we postpone the issue of raising the fees to give more time to discuss the proposal internally within our countries.

It was agreed to ‘do nothing’ (Option 1 set out in the paper circulated for this meeting) at this present time. However, a small committee would be formed consisting of representatives from Iceland, Germany, Netherlands and the UK to identify further options. A proposal would be prepared for the next General Assembly.

c) ‘Discontinuation of membership’

Chris Dijkens led a discussion regarding the non-payment of membership fees from the IMPEL member, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning in the FYR of Macedonia.

28 Member countries present voted to discontinue the membership of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning in the FYR of Macedonia due to the non-payment of membership fees.

3. IMPEL Rules & Statute

The IMPEL Board sought final approval on the changes made to the IMPEL rules and statute following last year’s adoption of a new strategy and the corresponding organisational changes. Chris gave an overview of the rules and statute and the process undertaken so far to get to this point. The draft proposal is as presented to the General Assembly.

Kristina highlighted a couple of changes that should be incorporated into the proposal:

- In Article 3.2 of the Statute proposal to change the ‘objective’ to more adequately reflect the rules, which refer to acceding, Candidates, Potential Candidates, EU member states and EEA or EFTA.
- In Article 3.3a of the Statute, proposal to change ‘EC’ to ‘EU’.
- In Article 3.3i of the Statute, proposal to remove the wording around ‘alternatives for...’ regulation.
- Article 11 of the Statute, formatting error between # 7 & 8. Similarly, formatting error in Article 15 between # 1b & 1c.

It was agreed to incorporate the suggestions of Kristina into the proposed draft.

There was unanimous agreement to approve the Statute and Rules, including the changes proposed by Kristina above. Michael would incorporate the changes and then make all necessary arrangements with the Belgian authorities to change the official documents on behalf of the IMPEL network.

Session 12: Conclusions and close of meeting

Chair: *John Seager*

The next meeting will take place 01-02 December 2016 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

John closed the meeting on behalf of the network by thanking our Luxembourgian hosts once again and wished everyone a safe journey home.

Annex 1

Participation List

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Annex 2

Key Action Points

Agenda Item	Action Point
Session 2	John to collate the two-page documents from the Expert Teams (and add a cover note) summarising their key work for the next 5 years. Secretariat to send this to the General Assembly for comment and approval.
	Secretariat (Michael) to circulate the notes of the Board's recent meetings with DG Environment.
Session 3	Henk to circulate notes of National Coordinator meeting to General Assembly.
Session 4	Secretariat (Michael) to re-circulate the Networks Conference draft programme to gain further comments. Comments from the General Assembly should be sent in by early January.
	Secretariat (Michael) to circulate the link to website of the AELERT conference.
	Secretariat (Nancy) to attend meeting with Basel Convention in December 2015 on behalf of Waste & TFS Expert Team and report back to that ET in due course on the outcomes of that meeting.
Session 5	Horst to clarify in the IED Implementation report which package was completed by this year's project and which packages of work will be addressed in future parts of the IED Implementation project. Information to be circulated to the General Assembly.
Session 6	IMPEL Board to hold a further discussion with John Visbeen to examine the consultancy cost on the <u>Illegal Killing of Birds</u> project and see if that is fully necessary.
	IMPEL Board to contact Heads of EPAs Network on whether co-funding on the project: 2016/20 Environmental Liabilities, is possible.
Session 11	IMPEL Board to establish a small committee consisting of representatives from Iceland, Germany, Netherlands and the UK to identify further options for the topic on membership fees. A proposal would be prepared for the next General Assembly.
	Secretariat (Michael) to write, on behalf of IMPEL Board to Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning in the FYR of Macedonia to inform them of the General Assembly's decision.
	Secretariat (Michael) to write to NRW & State Environmental Inspectorate in FYR Macedonia to welcome them to IMPEL.
	Secretariat (Michael) to incorporate the Statute & Rule changes agreed and then make all necessary arrangements with the Belgian authorities where IMPEL is registered.