
SUMMARY OF REGIONAL MEETING: EUROPE - BUILDING REGIONAL AND GLOBAL NETWORKS

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GOALS

The regional meeting will address the following issues:

- The genesis of the network and how it was established.
- What was/is involved in developing and maintaining the network.
- Who is asked to participate and at what levels in the organizations.
- Subjects the network covers.
- Vehicles used for exchange and means of communication used.
- Topics on which exchange is taking place.
- How the network overcomes differences in language and legal or other definitions of terms such as what constitutes a hazardous waste.
- Future directions and changes anticipated for the network.

1 INTRODUCTION

A goal of INECE is to further develop the global network by fostering the regional networks for environmental compliance and enforcement. Participants of Europe met for the two-day meeting to discuss further the INECE goals and the results in Europe.

2 DISCUSSION

2.1 Role of the Networks

In Europe there are currently three networks in existence:

- IMPEL;
- AC-IMPEL; and
- ACE-INECE.

These three networks are in different stages of development. IMPEL has already been in operation for several years and is in the stage of delivering concrete products. AC-IMPEL concentrates on the approximation to the European Union, while ECA-INECE has just had its inception meeting and is getting starting on networking. The common factor in the three networks is that their aim is exchange of information and sharing of experience. The networks can be developed by starting with concrete issues which can be further expanded with broader themes.

2.2 Involvement of others than authorities

The three networks consist until now of authorities dealing with compliance and enforcement. Involvement of other parties (e.g. industries and NGOs) would depend on the aims of the networks as such.

2.3 Requirements

All the networks are facing a lack of resources, both human and financial. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on the available resources. Contribution to the networks must thus be based on affordable financial, human and material resources. Besides that there is still the need for international funding (e.g. World Bank, OECD, European Union).

As human resources are scarce, it needs some reflection what can be taken up, resulting in realistic goals.

There is a need for central focal points per country, something which should be easy to achieve. Besides that a small secretariat should be in place.

The language problem should be faced somehow, keeping in mind that in the three networks there are probably more than 35 languages used. If English for instance is used as a working language, the risk may be that participation in the network may have to rely on a rather limited number of participants. Translation or interpretation on the other hand will be very costly.

2.4 Strengthening of the networks

The establishment of strong national networks will be a first need. The networks can then be built up further by starting with some small projects. The benefits of the networks can be demonstrated by generating practical outcomes, like promoting awareness and producing useful documentation. It will be advantageous to look where it is useful for a cross fertilization to take place, e.g. by mutual participation in each other's exchange programs.

2.5 Work for the future

IMPEL will further consolidate its work in specific projects as defined in its yearly work programs. AC-IMPEL will focus on the approximation process into the European Union, while the ECA-INECE countries should start off by compiling a list of contact points which will facilitate the exchange of information and communication. In due course, IMPEL might compile a comprehensive directory of the three networks.

IMPEL arranged until now general exchange programs for inspectors. In the end of 1999 in Greece the general exchange program will be organized. IMPEL will start with exchange programs that will be related to a special subject. Also, minimum criteria for inspections were accepted by the members of IMPEL. For the non-IMPEL countries which are candidates for the European Union special training programs on implementation and enforcement issues will be set up.

2.6 Role of INECE

INECE is seen as an umbrella for existing networks and as the link between regional networks. It should continue to serve as a facilitator to bring networks together. A suggestion was made that ECA-INECE might be transformed into an umbrella European regional INECE. Thus it could accommodate countries which don't fit in now, like Norway, Switzerland, Turkey. It could also take on board NGOs and other groups, like industry.

There is, however, still a need for worldwide contacts and an international conference. This could be done by having a conference at larger intervals (e.g. 3 or 4 years) and on a smaller scale with chosen regional representatives. INECE could be the facilitator for regional networks, e.g. by letting them make use of the existing home page. Regional networks could also concentrate more on in-depth training.

3 CONCLUSION

In Europe networks are in place. There are differences in development. In working together the networks can make use of their difference in development and assist each other. There is however the need for financial and technical support from authorities.

