



## DEWA~Europe/GRID-Geneva Quarterly Bulletin No. 2 - 2004

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UNEP/Global Resource Information Database-Geneva

### DEWA programme coordination meetings; Nairobi, June 2004

DEWA~Europe's Regional Coordinator Ron Witt and Earthwatch/GEO Data Coordinator Jaap van Woerden participated in a series of internal meetings held at UNEP Headquarters from 14-18 June, to discuss and clarify the status of DEWA's overall strategy (and a number of "sub-strategies"); the second GEO Yearbook exercise; and planning of the GEO-4 process.

The one-day meeting on the overall DEWA strategy and programmes of work succeeded in covering most of the topics that were on the agenda and helped to clarify many issues, including streamlining of terminology to be used for DEWA's activities, networks and projects. There remains the need to finalise and confirm the overall strategy document, and link the several sub-strategies to the main, overall DEWA strategy in a clear fashion.

The half-day meeting on preparation of the second GEO Yearbook (for the year 2004) was very successful in covering all issues and clarifying most questions on the "when-where-&-how" of the process, with regional assignments more-or-less spelled out, or at least sufficiently to begin the relevant work activities and draft regional section inputs. DEWA~Europe will again have the major responsibility for the Indicators section, which it was suggested to better integrate in the document itself by having it as part of (or immediately following) the Overview chapter.

The GEO-4 Planning meeting was held over two-&-one-half days with an extremely ambitious agenda, including many of the relevant sub-processes, such as e.g. capacity building, data/indicators and policy-related. Much progress was made, however, in defining the scope, contents and format

of GEO-4, and laying out the initial process through the end of 2004, including global and regional meetings to be held. The status of the work of the different GEO Working Groups was also presented, with DEWA~Europe having the lead for the Data Working Group.

In regard to the second GEO Yearbook (for 2004), DEWA~Europe will prepare for updating the indicators section for the European section and provide overall support for data and graphics. As concerns the GEO-4 process, DEWA~Europe with UNEP/ROE is making plans to hold the European Ad-hoc Experts Consultation in early October, and the next GEO Data Working Group meeting back-to-back with the GEO-4 Start-up Meeting in Nairobi, by mid-November 2004. ■

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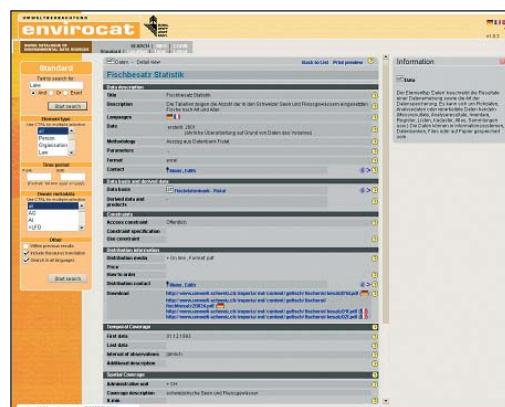
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### Envirocat - the new Swiss catalogue for environmental data

For several years, DEWA~Europe/ GRID-Geneva has been a key partner in the development of the Swiss meta-data project, namely CH-CDS (from the European "Catalogue of Data Sources"). Changing needs such as managing meta-data online and a more user-friendly interface made it necessary to develop a new application which is now available online. The application developed on behalf of the SAEFL (Swiss Agency for Environment, Forests and Landscape) is now called "Envirocat".

Currently, the meta-data in Envirocat is in the process of being updated and validated. Envirocat now offers approximately 600 data sets of increased quality compared to the former CDS content. It was therefore decided to close the old CDS website and to announce officially the envirocat web address: <http://www.envirocat.ch>

The new Envirocat application - developed completely with open source products (Linux, Postgres SQL, Zope) - allows a complete meta-data management decentralisation. Envirocat



The Envirocat homepage

enables various other partners (Swiss federal offices, cantons and some cities) to split the amount of meta-data maintenance work through several services and staff. Workflow possibilities, among other features of the application, will also enhance the overall quality of meta-data included. A full paper has been accepted at EnviroInfo2004 conference (see article above) and will be presented during this event on 22 October, 2004 in Geneva. ■

## Enviroinfo 2004 programme and participant's registration

The Conference Enviroinfo2004 will be hosted by the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) on 21-23 October, 2004. Organised by the State of Geneva, DEWA~Europe is particularly involved as part both of the Organisation and Programme Committees.

During the first quarter 2004, the "call for papers" received 200 abstracts, which were read and ranked by 39 reviewers from various organisations, administrations, private companies and universities. Finally, due to that success and the overall quality of the abstracts, the programme committee decided to retain 95 abstracts. Those papers will be published in the Conference proceedings and on a cd-rom, and will be presented during the Conference (a part will be also webcasted and diffused through the Internet). The Programme Committee also selected 50 posters and decided to give more emphasis to the regular poster session, which will be transformed in a more open interactive forum.

Presentations and posters were categorised into seven tracks, some Enviroinfo classic themes like "Sharing Environmental Knowledge", "New Developments in Sharing Technologies",

"Environmental Data Catalogue", and "Web and Information Systems", but also new ones like "Health, Risk Management & ICT Impacts", "Corporate Sustainability Communication and Reporting" or "Environmental GIS & Remote Sensing". The main topic of the conference is "Sharing" (North-South technology transfer, Open Source development, sharing network, Open GIS, exchange of data and knowledge).

The conference programme has been published and is now available on the conference website hosted by DEWA-Europe.

DEWA-Europe will also actively participate as authors: several papers and posters were accepted. Among others, the "GEO Data Portal and UNEP.Net: UNEP's new platform for environmental data access & web interoperability", "Global evaluation of human risk and vulnerability to natural hazards" or posters like "Tracking Land-derived Pollution by Satellite in Eastern Mediterranean Sea", "Multi-source object-oriented classification of land cover using very high resolution imagery and digital elevation model".

Enviroinfo is open to scientists, managers and decision-makers from various disciplines, experts from IT industry, gov-

ernmental and inter-governmental administrations, non governmental organisations, environmental agencies and networks, managers and experts

from environmental technology companies, consultants, students and concerned public. Final registration deadline for the participation is 15 September, 2004.

Further information about programme, registration, accommodation, schedule, partners and sponsors, is available through:

<http://www.enviroinfo2004.org> ■



Enviroinfo 2004 programme

## Technical and website news

DEWA~Europe's website has been through some major changes in the past few months. New technology, such as the PHP programming language, is now used to speed updating procedures and to create page contents with a dynamic approach. The website is also linked to a MySQL database engine, a very popular Open Source SQL, which allows to build a database-driven website.

E-mail spamming and viruses became a major concern within the office as a growing number of unwanted messages ended-up in our e-mailboxes (more than 1000 spams a day were filtered). To avoid such an amount of spam messages, all staff email addresses were created as a GIF image on the website. Although the email links are no longer clickable on the web page and people who want to contact us have to rewrite the addresses manually in their

mailing software, this technique is the most efficient one today to reduce the number of unwanted e-mails.

Starting June 2004, [info@grid.unep.ch](mailto:info@grid.unep.ch) will no longer be DEWA~Europe's contact address as it has now been replaced by [info@grid.grid.unep.ch](mailto:info@grid.grid.unep.ch), the first one having been listed by a large number of spamming robots within the world wide web. We already apologize for this inconvenience, but there is no better solution for the moment to cut down the amount of spam we receive. Of course, there is still the possibility to contact us and formulate questions by filling out the appropriate form at [www.grid.unep.ch/question.php](http://www.grid.unep.ch/question.php).



GRID Geneva's website new homepage

A French version of the website will be available shortly, since bilingualism is one of the main characteristic of the DEWA-Europe office. ■

## The expanding horizons of UNEP's "Environment and Security" initiative

In late 2002, UNEP's Regional Office for Europe (ROE) embarked on a new initiative supported by DEWA~Europe and other UNEP units, under the title of "Environment and Security". The general purpose of this project, being carried out in collaboration with UNDP and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), is to identify linkages between major environmental concerns or issues within European sub-regions and countries, and existing or potential security problems that impact on people and states. Environmental concerns relating to shared natural resources range from threats to biodiversity and human livelihoods to land degradation and international waters. Other issues are obsolete or polluting industrial and waste sites, including nuclear ones, and their impacts either locally within countries or especially as trans-boundary phenomena.

DEWA~Europe has been supporting this initiative at the conceptual, management and technical levels. This includes taking part in the project's steering committee meetings and workshops, missions to the sub-regions involved (Central Asia, SouthEastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus), and through preparation of digital cartographic and related products, which demonstrate existing environmental concerns and issues, as well as relevant policy measures (conventions, treaties, etc.).

The focus of new activities in 2004 has been on the third sub-region, the Southern Caucasus. In May, three national consultations were held in Armenia,

Azerbaijan and Georgia, and represented the formal launch of the joint OSCE-UNDP-UNEP initiative in the sub-region. The purpose of the national consultations (hereafter, NatCons) was to introduce and explain the Env&Sec initiative in detail to a cross-sectoral group of participants, including multiple government ministries, academic and civil society representatives in each case, as well as to review initial information collected on environmental problems and security issues. The NatCons also sought to clarify and express much of this information in cartographic format, maps that will be used in particular to direct project activities aimed at cooperative and mitigatory measures, both in national and trans-boundary contexts.

The Env&Sec NatCons were organised by the field offices of OSCE (Baku) and UNDP (Tbilisi and Yerevan) and involved some 30-40 participants per country. The Ministries of Environment (Ecology, Nature Protection etc.) and Foreign Affairs were the primary ministries invited, but also Defense, Internal Security, Agriculture, Health et al. Prominent persons from academic circles and civil society, mainly national and regional NGOs, were also invited to each of the three consultations. In Armenia the two Ministers opened the meeting; in the other two countries, lesser representatives of the Ministries of Environment and MFA were present.

Reaction to the initiative was extremely positive in each of the three countries, and discussion at the NatCons intense in all three cases. Follow-ups are now being conducted, including re-writing of the Env&Sec background paper for the Southern Caucasus sub-region.

Aside from participation in the field mission and NatCons held in the Southern Caucasus countries, DEWA~Europe staff have been busy supporting a number of the other sub-



Ferghana Valley base map and environmental "hot spots"

projects of Env&Sec, both for the Central Asia and SouthEastern Europe sub-regions. A web-site was created in advance of an Env&Sec field mission to the Ferghana Valley area, including a wide number of useful documents and products to support the mission and its reporting on environment and security problems & issues there. At the same time, DEWA~Europe is preparing another website in support of the SouthEastern Europe mining study, in conjunction with UNEP's Division of Trade, Industry and Environment (DTIE) in Paris and ROE who are overseeing this study. Again, this website re-groups relevant data and information products in support of the environmental hazards study, including documents, maps and useful links to similar activities in the entire sub-region.

Finally, DEWA~Europe has been asked by UNEP/ROE to conduct a "rapid environmental assessment" of the Tisza River Basin that overlaps five countries of SouthEastern Europe. This study is being carried out as a complement to Env&Sec activities, and will feed into both the SEE mining activity mentioned above, as well as the proposed Carpathians Environment Outlook (KEO) report. There is also the likelihood of DEWA~Europe being asked to take on the Env&Sec website by the third quarter of 2004, an acknowledgement of the excellent data and information gathering, and design/graphics/mapping work done to date on the other sub-projects described herein for Env&Sec. ■



South Eastern Europe base map and seismicity



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### Calendar of Events (August - October 2004)

#### 4-21 August

Field assessment on the Coropuna glacier (Peru) as part of a Collaboration on Studying Climate Change Impacts for Arequipa Water Supply between DEWA~Europe and GTZ.

#### 13-14 September

ENV&SEC Initiative's Management Board and Advisory Group meetings, Geneva, Switzerland.

#### 17-18 September

Carpathian Environment Outlook (KEO) steering group meeting, GRID-Warsaw, Poland.

#### 27-28 September

EEA and U.S. EPA "Workshop on Indicators and Assessment", Brussels, Belgium.

#### 4-5 October

Africa Sustainable Development Data and Indicators Information System training workshop, CEDARE, Cairo, Egypt

#### 7 October

Second meeting of the Interagency Working Group on Environmental Statistics, Eurostat, Luxembourg

#### 7-8 October

European Ad-hoc Expert Consultation on the next Global Environment Outlook (GEO-4), Geneva, Switzerland.

#### 11-13 October

GEO Working Group on Vulnerability and Cross-Cutting Issues meeting, RIVM, Netherlands

#### 12-14 October

Fifth UNGIWG plenary meeting, WHO, Geneva, Switzerland

#### 13-14 October

8th meeting of the Earthwatch Working Party, UNEP offices, Geneva, Switzerland.

#### 15 October

14th Meeting of the UNEP/DEWA~Europe/GRID-Geneva "Partnership" Advisory, University of Geneva, Switzerland

#### 21-23 October

18th Conference EnviroInfo 2004 of the German Informatics Society (GI), Geneva, Switzerland

## Competencies and services of DEWA~Europe / GRID-Geneva's

DEWA~Europe/GRID-Geneva's principal activity is to provide high-quality environmental data and information, to underpin UNEP's review of the state of the environment and provide early warning on emerging environmental threats. At the same time, DEWA~Europe offers technical services and develops value-added environmental products to support the work of other entities on a case-by-case basis.

Over the years, the office has compiled an extensive archive of geo-spatial and tabular databases, and is currently using state-of-the-art information technology to make them accessible to the global community through Internet-based applications. Just to name a few, the office has been responsible for the complete design, data gathering and formatting, and on-line interface of the GEO Data Portal. We have been a key partner in the development of the Swiss metadata catalog known as Envirocat. The statistical analysis and on-line data of the newly released UNDP report "Reducing Disaster Risk" was made possible thanks to DEWA~Europe's expertise in the latest technologies, in user-friendly graphic visualization. The above-mentioned projects required expertise in a wide

numbers of ICT tools such as Linux/UNIX, Apache, PHP, MySQL, Postgresql, IIS, SVG, JGraph, Internet Maps Servers, ESRI, MapInfo, etc.

At the same time, DEWA~Europe's know-how of such tools as geographic information systems (GIS), remote sensing and modeling provides valuable knowledge and better insights for decision-makers. For example, the latest satellite imagery analysis consisted in exposing chlorophyll concentration of Lebanon's coastal water using SeaWiFS and Landsat TM sensors. The PreView - IMS Project has been recognized by the international scientific community as a powerful and innovative modelling tool to identify risk and human vulnerability to natural hazards in relation to socio-economic and physical factors.

If you think that DEWA~Europe could assist your projects in some way, please feel free to contact our office through:  
[infogrid@grid.unep.ch](mailto:infogrid@grid.unep.ch) ■

## GRID-Geneva's Latest Outputs

**Freshwater in Europe - Facts, Figures and Maps.** 92 pages, full color. International distribution.

**Overfishing - A Major Threat to The Global Marine Ecology.** Early Warning on Emerging Environmental Threats, four pages, full color. International distribution (English and French).

## Announcement

Two new collaborators have joined DEWA~Europe/GRID-Geneva's team. Ms Karin Requía will be preparing the "rapid environmental assessment" of the Tisza River Basin. Ms Karine Bachmann is part of the Organising Committee of the EnviroInfo 2004 conference and will also be working on the SiENG (Geneva's Environmental and Energy Information System).

