



## **Outcome of the International Workshop Challenges in Desertification Research and Answers from Europe - Launching the European DesertNet**

Held 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> October 2006 in Bonn, Germany

Funded by the International Bureau of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

Summarised by Dr. Mariam Akhtar-Schuster (Head of the organising committee of the two-day workshop), with contributions by Dr. Christopher Martius (University of Bonn / ZEF)

Hamburg, 3rd January 2007

### **I. Evolution of European DesertNet**

At the Third Session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 3, 2-11<sup>th</sup> May 2005 in Bonn, Germany) the German Scientific Network to Combat Desertification (Desert\*Net, [www.desertnet.de](http://www.desertnet.de)) together with representatives of the French Comité Scientifique Français de la Désertification (CSFD) and the Belgian Expert Group on Desertification to support the Ministry for Development Cooperation, held informal talks to develop a pan-European network on Desertification to support the implementation process of the UNCCD by creating a European-based information communication network on best practice and best policy mechanisms for sustainable development in drylands.

Within the framework of the French-German Workshop on sustainable development (5-6 July 2005 in Potsdam) which was organised by the *Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung* (BMBF) and the *Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche* a French-German working group came together to discuss future bilateral co-operation in the fields of biodiversity and desertification. The meeting showed very good and numerous possibilities for future co-operation in the fields of biodiversity and desertification. At this meeting in Potsdam, a major field of co-operation was also seen in the creation of an efficient European Scientific Network for Research to Combat Desertification (co-ordination of the process by the German Desert\*Net and by the French CSFD (Comité Scientifique Français de la Désertification)).

The European DesertNet was established by European Scientists to improve scientific research on combating and preventing desertification, including communication to policy makers and to other stakeholders. The initiative is firmly based on the idea of creating a global network of scientists and research institutions who are interested in the topic and who share the vision and the objectives delineated in the Declaration of the European DesertNet. The creation of this scientific network will also back science as a major partner for formulating best development options for drylands, and support synergy effects between the three Rio Conventions (CCD, CBD, FCCC).

The EC has reacted very positively to the development of the European DesertNet. Mr Pierre Mathy, Head of EC Directorate I - Environment – Natural resources management and services formulates that this European

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scientific network could play an important role in stimulating and promoting European research on desertification. It is our major aim to scientifically support the work of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST).

A declaration was compiled by the members of the three national networks from Belgium, France and Germany and was circulated to the UNCCD focal points, research institutes and scientists in Europe in September 2005. So far, over 120 scientists from over 70 European research institutes from 18 European countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and The Netherlands) have signed the Declaration of the European DesertNet (see also [www.desertnet.de](http://www.desertnet.de)).

The first international and founding workshop of the European Scientific Network to Combat Desertification (European DesertNet) was held on 16th and 17th October 2006 at the premises of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in Bonn ("Langer Eugen"), with financial support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

The first international and founding workshop of the European Scientific Network to Combat Desertification (European DesertNet) took place and the European DesertNet was successfully launched<sup>1</sup>. The conference was held at the premises of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) at the UN Campus Bonn ("Langer Eugen"), Hermann-Ehlers-Str.10, D-53113 Bonn, Germany, with financial support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). European DesertNet is already seen as a global network of networks for information communication on dryland issues and desertification. Several non-European countries (e.g. USA, Israel, Morocco, South Africa) have signalled interest to join the European Network in the aftermath of the two-day workshop in Bonn.

38 scientists from 8 countries had signed up for the meeting and participated. Representatives of the UNCCD, the European Commission (DG Research and DG Joint Research Centres), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland representing the current EU presidency) the UNESCO Man and Biosphere (MAB) Program and representatives of German ministries also participated in this workshop. The aim of the workshop was to discuss and decide upon the aims, structure and activities of this new European network in order to support the implementation of the aims of the UNCCD (see attached list of participants).

The main results of the two-day meeting in Bonn can be summarised as follows:

## **II. Aims of European DesertNet**

The participants of the meeting agreed on leaving eventual smaller changes to the DesertNet Declaration to be decided upon at the first working meeting, but they prepared the following text (Box 1) to more precisely define the aims of the European DesertNet. The participants of the E-DN agreed upon the importance of the European DesertNet as a European-based scientific infrastructure for streamlining European policies regarding desertification based on scientific insight, for support the scientific foundation of the UNCCD, and for scientifically supporting the development of cutting edge research programmes. Concrete outreach mechanisms to communicate with the policy level and with stakeholders at the European and Global level will be delineated by European DesertNet after the internal structure of the newly emerged network takes up work.

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<sup>1</sup> Until the first day of the meeting, 98 scientists from over 70 European research institutes from 17 European countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and The Netherlands) had signed the Declaration of the European DesertNet (see also [www.desertnet.de](http://www.desertnet.de)).

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### III. Structure of European DesertNet

Prof. Dr. Prof. Dr. Carlos San Juan Mesonada (Madrid University, Spain) and Dr. Peter Feindt (Hamburg University, Germany) presented a first preliminary draft of a possible structure of the European DesertNet which was based on discussions at the workshop. The participants of the meeting decided on a preliminary structure of the European DesertNet that will serve to establish a lean and operational organization and is to be revised after 18 months. The structure consists of

1. Chair & Co-chair (Co-chair is responsible for the secretariat)
2. Steering committee
3. Advisory Board
4. Secretariat
5. Possibly a User Board (e.g. EC, UN agencies, focal points is being discussed)
6. Working groups
7. E-DN members: individual and institutional

The detailed tasks of these different bodies are outlined hereafter.

#### **Aims of European DesertNet**

European DesertNet is a network of European scientists involved in land degradation/desertification research and a think tank.

As a **network**, we

- provide a platform for scientific discussion and exchange of ideas, foster cutting edge science, identify topics and research areas,
- identify and document scientific state of the art of the main topics in desertification assessment, risk evaluation, mitigation and restoration,
- identify and articulate the economic drivers and the socio-economic consequences of desertification,
- integrate scientific findings across disciplines, translate into common language and communicate scientific findings, and
- work in and on affected areas inside and outside Europe.

As a **think tank**, we communicate with stakeholders and policy-makers. We

- identify minimum consensus on consolidated knowledge,
- evaluate scientific knowledge for stakeholders and policy-makers,
- disseminate knowledge,
- respond to demands for assessment and information needs address knowledge gaps,
- translate knowledge to improve governance,
- and identify issues and priorities for stakeholder and public policies.

#### **Box 1: Aims of European DesertNet**

##### **1. Chair/Co-chair**

- Represent(s) E-DN vis à vis users
- Works closely together with steering committee, advisory board and user board

##### **2. Steering committee**

- Members can represent E-DN if chair/co-chair cannot do so
- Identifies topics
- Chair / co-chair are members of the Steering committee
- Organises or supports working groups
- Responsible for quality control
- Responsible for funds and finances
- Responsible to establish communication with membership
- Organises annual meeting of members
- Raises funds

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- Consolidates and further develops working structure
  - Is supported by the secretariat
  - Works closely together with the Advisory Board

### 3. Advisory Board

- Should cover the different subfields
- Identifies new and emerging topics
- Supports steering committee on programmatic work and quality control
- Works out concepts for research programs
- Keep in contact with research communities
- Usually, steering committee and advisory board meet together (apart from organisational and technical issues)

### 4. Secretariat

- Supports steering committee and advisory board
- Organises “day to day work”
- Contact point for members, users and interested persons
- Provides services to members (information, networking, website etc.)
- Provides services to users (information etc.)

### 5. User Board (in discussion)

- The user board consists of representatives of organisations that want to use E-DN services or cooperate with E-DN
- Every organisation that wants to send a member to the user board inform the steering committee.
- The steering committee approves new members of the user board.
- Members e.g. UNCCD, EU-COM (several DGs), UNESCO ...
- Steering committee develops guidelines how to deal with national organisations or institutions that want to be member.

### 6. Working groups

- A working group is a group of members that work together on a topic.
- Open procedure to make proposals
- Steering committee will be asked to develop guidelines

### 7. European DesertNet members

- members are scientists, institutions and persons interested in desertification matters.
- The steering committee is asked to develop guidelines for membership and discuss them with members, especially:
  - Will there be a status for institutional members?
  - Will there be membership fees?
  - Will there be differentiation between members (from European countries) and associated members (non-European)?
  - thereby considering legal framework and funding rules

## IV. Selection of first board members

In a nominating procedure, the chair, co-chair and board members were selected that will constitute the European DesertNet bodies during the first 18 months.

### 1. Nominated Chair, co-chair and members of the steering committee of the E-DN

**Chair:** in discussion (will be nominated out of the steering committee)

**Co-Chair & secretariat:** Dr. Mariam Akhtar-Schuster (University of Hamburg, Germany)

**Steering Committee** (alphabetical order):

- Dr. Mariam Akhtar-Schuster (Geographer, Chair DesertNet Germany, University of Hamburg, Germany)
- Prof. Dr. Marc Bied-Charetton (President of the Comité Scientifique Français de la Désertification, CSFD, France)
- Prof. Dr. Gérard Begni (MEDIAS-France Manager, France)
- Prof. Dr. Guiseppa Enne (NRD-UNISS, University of Sassari, Italy)
- Prof. Dr. Murielle Eyletters (Biologist, Free University of Brussels, Belgium)
- Dr. Peter Feindt (Political Science, University of Hamburg, Germany)
- Prof. Dr. Joachim Hill (Remote Sensing, University of Trier, Remote Sensing Department, Germany)

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- Prof. Dr. Norbert Jürgens (Botanist, chair Diversitas Germany, Biocentre Klein Flottbek and Botanical Garden, Germany)
  - Prof. Dr. Juan Puigdefabregas (Geo-Ecologist, Estación des Zonas Aridas (CSIC), Spain)
  - Prof. Dr. Carlos San Juan Mesonada (Economist, University Carlos III of Madrid, Spain)

## 2. Nominated members of the advisory board of the E-DN

**Advisory Board** (alphabetical order. This list is open and will, if thematically and structurally necessary, be supplemented by further members which will be nominated by the steering committee):

- Prof. Dr. Jürgen Böhrer (Geographer, University of Hamburg, Germany)
- Dr. Heike Culmsee (Botanist, University of Göttingen, Germany)
- Prof. Dr. Donald Gabriels (Soil scientist, University of Ghent, Belgium)
- Dr. Richard Escadafal (Remote Sensing, Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD) - UMR CESBIO, France)
- Prof. Dr. Stefano Grego (Soil scientist, University of Tuscia, Italy)
- Dr. Alexandre Ickowicz (Rangeland science, CIRAD, France)
- Pietro Laureano (Remote Sensing, Italy) (asked)
- Dr. María José Marqués (Biologist, Dept. Investigación en Desarrollo Rural. IMIDRA. Comunidad de Madrid, Spain)
- Dr. Christopher Martius (Ecology, University of Bonn, Germany)
- Prof. Dr. Giovanni Quaranta (Chief of MEDES Observatory, University of Basilicata, Italy)
- Dr. José Rubio (Soil, Centro de Investigaciones sobre Desertificación –DIDE-CSIC, Spain)
- Dr. Maurizio Sciortino (ENEA, National Agency for New technologies, Energy and Environment, Italy)

## V. Further Action

The following activities will be immediately taken up by the Steering Committee of the European DesertNet during the next 18 months:

- **Membership:** will there be a status for institutional members? will there be membership fees?, will there be differentiation between members (from European countries) and associated members (non-European)?, legal framework (formal constitutionalization, if e.g. required by EU-COM or UNCCD rules) and funding rules?
- **Rules for Quality Control:** internal “peer review” system that guarantees and maintains the quality of results delivered by E-DN initiatives (e.g. workshops...).
- **Recruitment:** identification and recruitment of other scientists from Europe and invitation to other European countries to join E-DN.
- **Awareness raising:** informing national and international institutions about the creation and the aims of E-DN (also development of an E-DN website).
- **Funding:** e.g. identification of mechanisms to fund E-DN meetings, conferences and secretariat.
- **Organisation** of the Secretariat work and the first working meeting of the Steering Committee and the Advisory Board in the time December 2006 – January 2007 (the next plenary meeting will be organised in 1 to 1 ½ years.)

## ANNEX 1: Programme of the Meeting

<b>First Day (16<sup>th</sup> October 2006)</b>	
<b>Morning</b>	Travel and Registration (until 13:00)
<b>Afternoon:</b> 13:00 – 13:10	Welcome Address (Mr Hama Arba Diallo, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Bonn, Germany)
13:10 – 13:20	Welcome Address and Scope of the Meeting (Dr Mariam Akhtar-Schuster, on behalf of the members of Desert*Net Germany, CFRD France, Belgian Group of Desertification Experts)
13:20 – 13:30	<i>Demand for scientific input for realizing the 10-year strategic plan developed by the Inter-Governmental Working Group of the UNCCD.</i> (Dr Christoph Kohlmeyer, Head of Division Rural Development, Global Food Security. German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)
13:30 – 13:40	French-German Scientific Networking for Sustainable Development in Drylands (Dr. Anja Köhler, International Bureau of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research)
13:40 – 14:10	<i>The importance of a regional, European scientific network to support the implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.</i> (Dr Luca Montanarella, European Commission Joint Research Centre, Ispra, Italy)
14:10 – 14:40	<i>Research for Combating Desertification and Securing Human Development, a pressing problem – Challenges for and Demands from Science in Europe</i> (Dr Maria Yeroyanni, European Commission, Research Directorate I – Environment. Natural Resources Management and Services, Brussels, Belgium)
14:40 – 15:10	Coffee Break
15:10 – 18:10	<u>Plenary Discussion</u> on scope and format of European DesertNet (E-DN) (Chair: Prof. Dr. Murielle Eyletters, University of Brussels, Belgium)  <i>I. Introductory Round</i> Participants, - Short introduction of the participants  <i>II. Origins and Goals</i> - The origin and evolution of E-DN. The milestones of E-DN to date (Prof. Dr. Marc Bied-Charreton, (President of Comité Scientifique Français de la Désertification) - Discussion on the common goals of E-DN, based on the Declaration of E-DN.  <i>III. Discussion on the future structure of E-DN</i> (Chair: Ralf Wyrwinski, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)  1. Clarification of the aims of E-DN (to be discussed on the basis of the Declaration of the E-DN). These discussions will serve as starting point for discussing the organizational structure of E-DN.
<b>Evening:</b> 19:00 – 22:00	Dinner

<b>Second Day (17th October 2006)</b>	
<b>Morning:</b> 08:30 - 10:00	<p><i>III. Discussion on the future structure of E-DN (continued)</i> (Chair: Ralf Wyrwinski)</p> <p>2. Identification of other European members (recruiting procedures, international and national)</p> <p>3. The <i>Ondongwa Declaration on ICSs</i> (Prof. Dr Guiseppe Enne, NRD-UNISS, Nucleo Ricerca Desertificazione, Università degli Studi di Sassari, Italy), and the <i>Tunis Declaration on research priorities to promote sustainable development in drylands</i> (Dr Thomas Schaaf, UNESCO, Paris). <i>The EU Thematic Strategy on Soil Protection and its implications on European Desertification</i> (Jose L. Rubio, European Society for Soil Conservation).</p> <p>4. Discussion on past and present European research activities, programmes and projects on desertification as the basis for the identification of future activities of the E-DN (overlaps and gaps). Discussions will include all aspects of desertification (e.g. soil, water, vegetation, livestock, economics, social sciences....) to create the basis for the structure of E-DN (if necessary, <i>ad hoc</i> working groups will be created).</p>
10:00 – 10:30	Coffee Break
10:30 – 12:15	<p><i>III. Discussion on the future structure of E-DN (continued)</i></p> <p>5. How can European interdisciplinary research cooperation be achieved and maintained in E-DN (steering committee: representatives of natural sciences, economics, social sciences)?</p>
12:15 – 13:45	Lunch
<b>Afternoon:</b> 13:45 – 15:15	<p><i>III. Discussion of the structure of E-DN (cont'd.)</i> (Chair: Dr. Thomas Schaaf, UNESCO Paris)</p> <p>6. Finances and Membership  - Financial aspects (national and EC contributions)  - Membership: who will be the national representative in the E-DN Board; who is allowed to vote (individuals or research institutions). Voting procedures for the defined organizational body of E-DN.</p> <p>7. Election/Selection (e.g. of chairpersons and national representatives in the Board of E-DN Board, secretariat)</p>
15:15 – 15:45	Coffee Break
15:45 – 17:30	<p><i>III. Discussion of the structure of E-DN (cont'd.)</i></p> <p>8. Discussion on links between E-DN and other players and decision makers (e.g. UN Agencies, EC, NGOs, national government agencies)</p> <p>9. E-DN Activities  - Next meeting (when and where?)</p>
17:30 - 17:45	Farewell Address (PD Dr. Christopher Martius, Centre for Development Research, University of Bonn, Germany) Departure

The Workshop is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. (BMZ), and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

## ANNEX 2: Impressions of the Meeting



From left: Dr. Mariam Akhtar-Schuster (Desert\*Net Germany), Dr Christoph Kohlmeyer (BMZ), Mr Hama Arba Diallo, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Dr. Anja Köhler, International Bureau of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (IB/BMBF), Dr Luca Montanarella, European Commission Joint Research Centre, Ispra, Italy, Dr Maria Yeroyanni, European Commission, Research Directorate I – Environment, Natural Resources Management and Services, Brussels, Belgium.





