

***Report from the COMMON FORUM secretariat
(2005-2008) and plans for the next secretariat
after August 2008***

First draft



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About Common Forum

The COMMON FORUM on Contaminated Land was initiated in Bonn 1994. It started as an informal group of those from national government and agencies in EU Member States who are involved with contaminated land and groundwater issues. In 1996 COMMON FORUM gained a more formal status as initiators of the EU funded CARACAS concerted action on risk assessment for contaminated land. COMMON FORUM was the group of formal country representatives in CARACAS, and this situation continued during the subsequent CLARINET concerted action, which ended in 2001.

The publication of the CLARINET reports introducing “Risk based land Management” as a central concept in European contaminated land approaches illustrates that EU wide harmonisation can arise at a strategic level if all stakeholders realise the benefits of this. COMMON FORUM is now recognised by the EC as an important “stakeholder network” in the development of a EU soil protection policy. It is also recognised by the industry-lead contaminated land network NICOLE (Network of Industrially Contaminated Land in Europe) as representing the European regulatory and policymaking community. After the end of CLARINET, COMMON FORUM wanted to keep it’s central position in the soil protection and contaminated land discussion, and succeeded due to the enthusiasm of it’s members. The need for more continuity was growing, as expressed during all meetings since 2001, for many actions to take place between meetings, and for more effective engagement with bodies like the European Commission.

The general objectives of COMMON FORUM are to develop strategies for the management and treatment of contaminated sites and for land recycling with respect to “sustainable resource protection” for contaminated land and groundwater. COMMON FORUM holds regular meetings to discuss important and current issues in these fields. When possible, common views are developed and expertise is offered to the European Commission, relevant stakeholder networks and EU research projects. Many COMMON FORUM members participate in stakeholder groups in EU research projects or participate in discussions at workshops where results of EU projects are presented.

COMMON FORUM has adopted the following mission statement:

- being a platform for exchange of knowledge and experiences,
- establishing a discussion platform on policy, research, technical and managerial concepts of contaminated land,
- being a platform for initiating and following-up of international projects among members,
- offering an exchange of expertise to the European Commission and to European networks.

1. Introduction

The present report gives an overview of the activities of the CF (COMMOM FORUM) network from 2005 till august 2008. In August 2005 a semi-permanent secretariat has been formally established on a project basis for three years. This project will end in August 2008. The main goal of this “end of project” report is to support the decision about continuation of the project with another semi-permanent secretary.

Several ideas about the mission and the most appropriate structure for CF have already been developed long time before the start of the current secretariat in meetings in Antwerp (October 2001); Paris (June 2002), Berlin (November 2002) and Birmingham (January 2004). In a meeting in The Hague (November 2004) a decision has been made how to proceed with a more organised structure, in view of the following needs & benefits:

- Common Forum is recognised as a „stakeholder group“ by DG ENV (ref. EU soil strategy; GWD) Common Forum can provide statements and makes proposals to on-going EU policy discussions (“early-warning system”).
- A more active and strategic input to R&D at EU level has been agreed in Birmingham; long-term support for strategic projects beyond their EC funding horizon is needed (e.g. AQUATERRA, EURODEMO, SNOWMAN, EUGRIS). The Common Forum could provide overarching co-ordination/support to these projects.
- To ensure a long-term role of the Common Forum on EU level, voluntary contributions by members will not be enough. An organised structure is needed, which could achieve the following:
 - Stronger CF-viewpoints towards EC;
 - Permanent representation in other stakeholder initiatives/discussions;
 - Screening of information for CF-members; organise information exchange;
 - Continuity in FP5/FP6-initiated strategic projects; multinational cooperation;
 - CF-secretariat: one address – one person; management; representation;
 - CF-secretariat will provide an organised structure like the science community and industry (NICOLE) to make timely input in on-going developments/discussion.

CF-members decided, after considering various options, that the establishment of an informal secretariat would be the most promising and cost-effective option. A knowledgeable person should be contracted as an informal secretary. The secretariat should be funded as a multinational project for a limited number of years. The project could be continued after an evaluation, for which the current report aims to provide the necessary information concerning tasks and activities of the secretariat and the financial aspects.

The tasks of the current secretariat are outlined in chapter 2. The main activities of the secretariat have been the organisation of CF-meetings and attending some meetings of other organisations on behalf of CF.

Chapter 3 of this report gives an overview the CF meetings, other meetings attended by the secretary on behalf of CF and of special papers/ reports written by the secretary. Detailed information can be found in the news archives of the CF website. www.commonforum.eu. The archives are a compilation of regular email newsletters. CF News also gives information about the agenda and summary conclusions of the meetings.

Chapter 4 will describe a short evaluation of the activities of the secretariat and the overall impact and performance of CF as a network. Some suggestions for activities for the next

secretariat will be given. It is an evaluation by the secretariat. The final evaluation is the responsibility of the main contract holder and the CF-members from countries that contributed financially to the project. It is important to note that CF-members from countries offering contributions are members of the agenda committee. The agenda committee assists the secretariat in drafting meeting agenda's and provides guidance in other activities of the secretariat.

Chapter 5 gives an overview of the financial aspects. However, this overview could not be completed in the current draft, because information concerning financial contributions of certain countries is still lacking at present.

A proposal for a next secretariat is briefly described in chapter 6.

2. The tasks of the secretariat

General aims

In view of the mission of CF the aim of the 'secretariat' project is to keep the CF active as a network in their current field of interest, which according to the CLARINET reports can be defined as (Risk based) management of the system of (contaminated) land and water resources. The secretariat should organise the collective CF-efforts effectively and carry out agreed actions. Because of the EU soil strategy, which is currently being developed, the field of interest of CF may become broader. The soil strategy recognizes other threats to soil than contamination, the mitigation of which may require a similar management philosophy as was developed for contamination by CF during the CARACAS and CLARINET concerted actions and within the Technical Working Group Contamination in the EU soil strategy discussion. Although CF can offer expertise and experience with management strategies in other fields, the core business of CF will remain the management of contaminated land and related water resources.

Specific Tasks

1] *Preparing and Organizing 2 CF meetings per year*

- Liaise with country hosting the meeting (e.g. agenda), logistics of the meetings are managed by the hosting country.
- Drafting agenda's
- Prepare discussion papers and draft CF statements
- Drafting the reports of the meeting
- Organising and animating the CF Agenda committee (when necessary)
- Carrying out agreed actions
- Creating and following the country contact list for the CF (and the ICCL)

2] *Being the formal 'speaker' on behalf of Common Forum:*

- Representing CF in NICOLE steering committee and participating in NICOLE workshop discussions on behalf of CF.
- Participating in meetings of the (former ad Hoc) International working group on contaminated land.
- Participating in review panels or advisory forums of EU DG Research projects and projects by European Environmental Agency (EEA) or Joint Research Centre (JRC):

- To ensure that projects work in a way that meets the needs of Member States and that projects can benefit from CF knowledge and resources (e.g. for data collection in European Countries).
- To present CF as a platform for discussing long term support for initiatives.
- Maintaining an active communication with DG ENV concerning the development of the thematic strategy for soil protection and contaminated land related policies (for instance on IPPC, waste, on sediments and on groundwater).
- Reporting to CF about the activities mentioned above.

3] Taking care of communication and information exchange by:

- Answering email questions by CF members, email consultations of Agenda committee.
- Feeding the EUGRIS website with CF news.
- Publishing an email newsletter, with active cooperation of CF members.
- Updating the CF website.

4] Elaborating final activities report (one at the end of the contract).

- .To justify the financial contributions for those countries that contributed.

3. Overview of Activities

Because CF has been active from January 2005 under the current secretariat before the official start of the project in August 2005, this overview includes meetings from January 2005 up till now and also covers the meeting agenda from February 2008 till August 2008. Concerning working hours needed to perform the listed activities experience has shown that the following amount of working days per year is required as an average for each main task of the secretariat:

Preparing and organizing 2 CF meetings	10 days/year
Being the formal ‘speaker’ on behalf of Common Forum, information Exchange, discussion papers,	12 days/year
Final activities report (one at the end of the contract)	6 days/year
TOTAL;	28 days/year

3.a] Meetings .

CF-meetings

CF meetings involve preparation and chairing of meetings sessions by the secretary. The CF secretariat is responsible for the agenda, the time schedule of the sessions at the meeting and the invitations of speakers/ guests. The CF secretariat consults the agenda committee consisting of contributing CF members (see financial aspects). Eight meetings have been organised. Reports and conclusions of the first seven meetings can be found on the CF website (commonforum.eu)

1. Vienna, 12 &13 May 2005

- Main subjects: Risk based remediation standards, Excavated contaminated soil as waste and a discussion about EU Soil policy. B. Berger (EU DG-ENV) outlined the ideas of the commission.
2. Bordeaux, at Consoil, 5 October 2005
Main subjects: Financial aspect of CF, status of CF-members and guests, agenda committee, topics for next meetings.
 3. Sardinia, at Nicole meeting 30 November 2005
Main subjects: Relation with EUGRIS, subjects for next meetings.
 4. Budapest, 8&9 June 2006
Main subjects: Contaminated site inventories and SFD (Soil Framework Directive) development. Start of a first SFD discussion paper
 5. Bilbao, 2&3 November 2006
Main subjects: EU state aid rules. discussion on SFD after introduction by L. Marmo (EU DG-ENV). Start of second discussion paper on SFD
 6. Stuttgart, 24&25 April 2007
Main subjects: Discussion paper about CF opinions on SFD, C. Olazabal (EU DG-ENV) participated in the discussion. Special CF session on Urban soils at CABERNET REVIT conference.
 7. Stockholm, 12 September 2007
Main subjects: SFD proposals of the Portuguese EU presidency. Special CF session on “quality control” at ICCL-meeting (10&11 September)
 8. Rotterdam, February 2008 :
Main subjects: Improving EU-MS cooperation in contaminated land management, New developments in IPPC and SFD, Continuation of CF.

NICOLE meetings

1. Nicole steering committee Leuven 25 February 2005. Discussions about Groundwater directive and Soil Policy. P. Quevauviller and C. Olazabal presented the point of view of the EC.
2. Workshop Stockholm, 16&17 June 2005 “Ecological Risk Assessment”. CF-Presentation on ecological risk assessment.
3. Workshop Sardinia 1&2 December 2005 “Impacts of EU directives on the management of contaminated land”.
4. Workshop Carcassone, 11 & 12 May 2006. “Data Acquisition for a Good Conceptual Site Model”.
5. Workshop Leuven 4-6 October 2006. “NICOLE 1996-2006 Ten Year Network Anniversary Workshop: Making Management of Contaminated Land an Obsolete Business - Challenges for the Future.” Presentation on CF history by Harald Kasamas.
6. Nicole steering committee Brussels 15 -12 2006. Discussion on the NICOLE position concerning SFD. L. Marmo represented EC.
7. Workshop Akersloot (NL)14 &15 June 2007. “Redevelopment of sites – the industrial perspective “. CF-Presentation on status SFD discussion.

Meetings EU

1. Joint Research Centre Ispra 3&4 February 2005 on Heracles project, options for harmonisation of contaminated land risk assessment.
2. Informal meeting about EU soil policy organised by UK 17 & 18 October 2005.
3. Meeting with Claudia Olazabal EU DG ENV about options future position of CF in implementation discussions about EU soil policies.
4. Discussion with rapporteur of EP (Gutierrez) on proposed SFD 27 June 2007

5. Workshop on SFD development organised by North Rhine Westphalia in Brussels 17 October 2007.

ICCL

1. Meeting in Paris 29 & 30 September 2005. Presentation on CF and EU soil policy.
2. Meeting in Stockholm 10 & 11 September, organisation of session on quality control

CONSOIL

- Programme committee meeting (February 2005) and Consoil conference (October 2005)
- Organisation of a Special session with ICCL and the French ENV Ministry.
- Preparation of conclusions of the conference on behalf of CF.
- Preparation of oral presentation for Consoil 2008

SETAC

Presentation on the “Pro’s and Con’s of a Soil Framework Directive in EU policy session at the SETAC Europe 17th Annual Meeting 2007 (Porto, May 2007).

EUROSOIL

Preparation of key note speech for session on contaminated land for EUROSOIL 2008.

3.b] DISCUSSION PAPERS

1. The common forum guide to the soil strategy internet consultation (2005)
2. Reflections on EU contaminated land policy as outlined in draft of a proposed soil framework directive (one version, 2006)
3. Short statements about the contaminated land part of the proposed Soil Framework Directive, (2 drafts, 2007)
4. Proposals for text changes in some articles of the proposed soil framework directive, (4 drafts, 2007)
5. Final CF-secretariat report (2008)

4.0 Evaluation

CF –meetings: Agenda and participation

Agenda of most CF meetings were dominated by discussions about the SFD. Information exchange about technical subjects and research in the contaminated land field suffered most from this. Apart from SFD, developments in other EU directives and national approaches have been discussed. The agenda committee was very useful for discussing the agenda and the members of this committee were also very active in email discussions in general. Activity of CF members outside the agenda committee varied, and some efforts should be undertaken to improve the communication within the CF network, especially between the CF meetings. It also appeared to be very difficult to attract new CF members from new EU member states. Although some contact persons are present on the email recipients list for COMMON

FORUM NEWS it not often not clear how close they are to those in charge of the Contaminated land policy in these countries.

Conclusions:

1. Broaden the scope of CF discussions by addressing technical themes, financial aspects of contaminated land management and case studies in addition to EU and national policies.
2. Intensify contacts with policy makers in new EU member states

CF meetings: Organisation

The responsibilities for the organisation of a meeting are divided between the CF secretariat and the country representative of the country that hosts the meeting. The CF secretariat is responsible for the agenda, the time schedule of the sessions at the meeting and the invitations of speakers/ guests. The hosting country is in charge of finding an appropriate meeting place and covering the costs of the meeting organisation.

Meeting place:

- One room for plenary meetings (40 persons) chairs and tables in conference lay out.
- 2 or 3 smaller rooms for group discussions
- Coffee breaks and 2 lunches at the meeting facility.

The hosting country will organise (and bear the costs possible and financially feasible) for :

- A get-together (evening before 1st day),
- A “field trip” and a joint dinner (1st day).

In case the costs of get together, field trip and dinner can not be paid by the hosting country the costs will be paid by the CF representatives present at the meeting. However, finding adequate places for get-togethers, dinners and organisation of field trips still is to be done by the hosting country.

The formula for CF meeting outlined above proved to be adequate.

Conclusion:

3. The organisation of a CF meeting is to be continued in the “traditional” way.

Effectiveness of CF network

During the debates in EU council and parliament about the SFD CF acted as a platform for exchanging opinions of EU member states, especially among those in charge of coordinating the national point of view in their countries. CF was also consulted by the rapporteur of EP. The various discussion papers drafted by the secretariat were well read also outside the CF, although it is sometimes difficult to find the tone of voice that satisfies all readers. State aid rules and opportunities have been clarified in the discussion in Bilbao. The importance to have informal discussions and consultations with “the working floor” level of the EC became clear.

Conclusion:

4. Contacts with EC should be actively maintained and representatives from the relevant commission services (DG ENV, DG COMP, JRC, EEA) need to be invited.

5 Financial aspects

The project description (2005) for the secretariat described the deliverables of the secretariat and a motivation for an annual budget of €50.000 (including 19% VAT). The Netherlands offered to be the contractor if the project was financially supported by some EU member states. Preliminary consultations led to the conclusion that contributions from 5 countries would be a realistic expectation which would result in an annual contribution to the project of €10.000 (€30.000 for three years) per country. Some countries were considering lower contributions. An overview of the financial contributions received by the Netherlands Ministry of Housing, Spatial planning and the Environment (VROM) will be given at the CF meeting in Rotterdam, 28&29 February 2008.

The breakdown of the annual budget for the CF secretariaat is given in table 1.

Table 1. Breakdown of annual cost of the CF secretariat

Type of cost	€without VAT	€incl. 19% VAT
1] Work hours, including office costs, internet access and other related costs	31.000,-	36.890,-
2] Travel expenses	7.000,-	7.000,-
3] Website hosting and support (EUGRIS)	5.000,-	5.950,-
Total	43.000,-	49.840,-

The annual cost of work hours, including office costs, internet access and other related costs (1) is paid as a “lump sum”. Travel expenses (2) will be reimbursed based on actual costs to be specified by tickets, receipts and hotel bills. Reimbursement of travel expenses will be in agreement with Dutch regulations concerning travel expenses for civil servants. Other costs (3) were taken care of by Germany by offering linking and support for the EUGRIS internet webportal on behalf of CF. Concerning travel expenses (2) it may be relevant to mention that around €10.000 will not be spent at the end of the project in August 2008.

Contributions from CF countries PM

6. The next secretariat

The next secretariat needs to start in September 2008 to assure the continuity of CF. The possibility that France will take over the position of the Netherlands as a contractor for a secretary has been informally discussed in Stockholm and needs to be confirmed in the next months, preferably at the CF meeting in Rotterdam. The first meeting under the new secretariat will be held in France in the second semester of 2008 (Carcassonne + Salsigne site visit or Toulouse + AZF site visit could be suggested to the French Ministry for Environment).

In view of the evaluation in this report and the experiences with the current secretariat project the following points are important for the new secretariat:

1. The contract should start on September 2008, for three years.
2. The funding contracts (one per country) need to be elaborated for a three years period, with annual invoices to improve the financial management of the project.
3. 50.000€ will remain the basis for covering an annual secretariat budget.
4. If additional budget can be collected for some meetings by the hosting country (or if the more than €50.000 is collected for the secretariat), this can be used for inviting new participants (Eastern European country representatives for example).
5. The COMMONFORUM.EU domain name and website will be transferred to the next secretariat free of charge.
6. The scope of CF discussions should be broadened by addressing technical themes, financial aspects of contaminated land management and case studies in addition to EU and national policies. (conclusion 1 from chapter 4)
7. Contacts with policy makers in new EU member states should be intensified (conclusion 2 from chapter 4)
8. The organisation of a CF meeting is to be continued in the “traditional” way. (conclusion 3 from chapter 4)
9. Contacts with EC should be actively maintained and representatives from the relevant commission services (DG ENV, DG COMP, JRC, EEA) need to be invited. (conclusion 4 from chapter 4)
10. As long as the current secretary Joop Vegter gets a refund for travel and hotel he can remain involved as an advisor and even do some work (chairmanship, facilitator of technical issues).
11. Harald Kasamas, Austrian UBA, is also prepared to help as an advisor as discussed informally in Stockholm.