EKLIPSE

Knowledge & Learning Mechanism on Biodiversity & Ecosystem Services

Developing a mechanism for supporting better decisions on our environment based on the best available knowledge.

Lessons learnt from the EKLIPSE action "Supporting the EU negotiators on the IPBES Global Assessment's Summary for Policymakers."

A report of the EKLIPSE project

Prepared by the EKLIPSE Expert Working Group on the IPBES Global Assessment (GA) and its links to the Summary for Policymakers (SPM)

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1 Introduction

Prior to the IPBES-7 Plenary in Paris, 29 April – 4 May 2019, an Expert Working Group (EWG) was established by the EKLIPSE mechanism to support the EU delegation to the Plenary by providing materials for the negotiations of the IPBES Global Assessment's Summary for Policymakers (SPM).

This EKLIPSE action was requested by the European Commission's DG Environment and took place in the period 4 March – 24 April 2019. International experts with differing backgrounds joined this EWG to define methods for assessing, linking and improving the SPM, and to establish working and reporting protocols. The EWG worked systematically to review claims made in the SPM, assess and verify the framing of these claims against those in the GA Report, and identify the presence/absence of key messages between the SPM and the GA Report.

All details on the action and the EWG outputs are provided in an official report available on the EKLIPSE website[1]. The results of this EWG project were presented at the 2019 ALTER-Net EKLIPSE Conference, held from 17 to 19 June 2019 in Ghent, Belgium[2].

During the EWG's working period and throughout the Plenary, the EWG, the EKLIPSE team and the requesters from DG Environment have collected a substantial amount of process-wise experience related to this type of science-policy collaboration, which may be helpful for similar EKLIPSE EWGs and actions in the future. Therefore, this report summarizes process-related experience and lessons learnt from the action "Supporting the EU negotiators on the IPBES Global Assessment's Summary for Policymakers" to help design future EKLIPSE mechanism actions related to IPBES and supporting EU negotiators.

[1] Harmáčková, Z. V., Roebeling, P., Carrasco, J., Fisher, J., Giampietro, M., Washbourne, C.-L., Young, S. (2019). *EKLIPSE Expert Working Group's report on supporting the EU negotiators on the IPBES Global Assessment's Summary for Policymakers*. Available on: http://www.eklipse-mechanism.eu/apps/Eklipse_data/website/EKLIPSE_IPBES-Request-Report_WebVersion_28052019.pdf

[2] Carrasco, J., Fisher, J., Giampietro, M., Harmáčková, Z.V., Roebeling, P., Washbourne, C.-L., Young, S., 2019. Working across science-policy interfaces: lessons learnt from the EKLIPSE Expert Working Group on the IPBES Global Assessment. Oral presentation, 2019 ALTER-Net EKLIPSE Conference, 17-19 June 2019, Ghent, Belgium.

2 General reflections

2.1 Expert Working Group

- The action was an overall interesting and useful experience, relevant for leveraging the experts' professional background and experiences related to science-policy interfaces;
- The action provided an opportunity to gain a profound knowledge of the IPBES Global Assessment and its SPM, and also benefit from other experts' insights, knowledge, multiple perspectives and dialogue;
- The collaboration within the EWG, as well as with EKLIPSE and the requesters was perceived as pleasant and efficient; and
- Experts' involvement and level of motivation was high at all stages of the action, which was vital for the success of the action.

2.2 EKLIPSE and DG Environment

- The action delivered timely and high-quality output;
- The requesters were satisfied with the collaboration with the EWG during the action; and
- This action and collaboration with the requesters illustrate that similar platforms and groups can work very well.

3 Lessons learnt

In this section, we provide a brief overview of the challenges faced and proposed solutions (Table 1), as well as good practices applied and what facilitated them (Table 2) during the EWG action. Subsequently, we provide details for selected points.

Table 1: Challenges faced and proposed solutions

Challenges faced	Proposed solution(s)
Time limitations	• Timely delivery of resource documents for review (particularly the IPBES Global Assessment chapters and Summary for Policymakers) • Clear timing of calls with the requesters, preparatory EU meetings, milestones and deliverables right from the start • Timely organization of administrative issues, clearances and travel arrangements
No pre-defined methods for assessing, linking and improving the SPM No established working protocols	• Clear definition of expectations on inputs, milestones and deliverables • Clear definition of preferred methods
No pre-defined output templates No established reporting protocols	• Clear definition of expectations on deliverables and how these should be provided
Interactions between science experts and policymakers	• Iterative feedback on provided inputs, milestones and deliverables (adaptive approach) • Attendance of 1-2 EWG-members at the (IPBES) Plenary session: i) to provide expert support to negotiators (improving response by negotiators), and ii) for experts to

Challenges faced	Proposed solution(s)
	learn about negotiations and requirements (improving future EWG inputs)
Document updates / mis-matches	• Make sure that the EWG receives updates of documents as they appear so that the EWG can provide input on (even last minute) changes. As a result, tailored recommendations can be prepared and submitted (even if this means working over-night).
Technical language	• Avoiding the use of professional jargon and keywords with different pre-understandings in different fields
Types of expertise in the EWG	• Striving to include even more expertise types and backgrounds of experts

Table 2: Good practices applied and facilitating factors

Good practices applied	Mean(s)
Administrative support	• Technical organization of meetings (EKLIPSE), such as scheduling (Doodle), meetings (GoToMeeting) and invitees • Content management of meeting (EWG-Chairs), such as agendas, minutes and to-do's • Sending-out reminders (EKLIPSE)
Communication	• Meetings & fast follow-up • E-mail & quick response • Shared documents (GoogleDrive) • Documentation of all steps in the process
Keeping momentum	• Regular calls/meetings (at least each week) • Regular milestones (at least every 1 or 2 weeks) • Reminders • Flexibility by EWG members

3.1 Time limitations

The time to carry out the analysis was very limited, which made it difficult to process the vast amount of information in the IPBES Global Assessment and deliver quality products under a tight schedule. In the future, more time would allow the EWG to react more flexibly on requesters' feedback and provide supporting materials not only for the Plenary but also for the preceding EU meetings. Similar EKLIPSE science-policy actions need to start earlier so that there is more time for exchanges with the requesters. This would also allow for the EWG report drafts to be useful already for the pre-Plenary EU WPIE, which some members of the EWG also could attend (depending on agreement of the presidency).

It is easy to expect that, due to the intrinsic mechanisms of policy making, similar problems of time limitations will be experienced again in future actions. For this reason, one could consider the hypothesis of establishing a permanent platform of interaction where the experts of a given pool can discuss conceptual issues linked to scientific advice typical of the field of analysis.

3.2 Regular updates with the requesters and feedback on preliminary reports

Getting timely feedback from the requesters on preliminary versions of the Experts' output proved extremely helpful. Ideally, more feedback between the requesters and the EWG should be established to prepare materials of maximum relevance for the negotiators.

3.3 Requesters' comments

Having access to requesters' preliminary comments to the SPM proved extremely useful, as it helped the EWG to identify key topics for the EU negotiators and focus specifically on the information in the IPBES Global Assessment relevant for the proposed comments. Having access to the preliminary comments is vital for targeting the analysis.

3.4 Regular calls and milestones

Regular calls and milestones proved useful to keep the pace of the EWG.

3.5 Technical language and professional jargon

It was challenging to overcome different pre-understandings of technical terms and professional jargon, e.g., aggregating complex information and assumptions in two or three specific keywords. The use of such language tends to be abused within academia. This is problematic when experts are not familiar with the technical language of other fields, but even more for communicating with other professionals or the general public, where it is particularly important to use technical language carefully and transmit a clear message.

3.6 Types of expertise in the EWG

The EWG consisted of experts with various backgrounds in academia, policy and practice. However, it would be beneficial to include even more areas of knowledge or expertise (private and academic) into the discussion, as that would highlight different focus and approaches.

3.7 Presence of Experts at the Plenary

EU negotiators at future plenaries would benefit from the presence and support of members of the EWG at the IPBES plenary. It is necessary to start planning the experts' attendance at the Plenaries sufficiently in advance, as it has proved impossible to involve experts once the registration for the Plenary has been closed and individual delegations finalised.

3.8 Form of the final report for the negotiators

Since the text of the SPM is frequently changed before and during the Plenary, it is necessary for the EWG outputs and reports to be organised in a way that is easy to navigate during real-time SPM text changes at the Plenary.

3.9 Long-term pre-negotiation collaboration between the EU requesters and IPBES assessments

In order for the Plenary negotiations of IPBES assessments to be more efficient, establishing a collaborative exchange mechanism between the EU negotiators and the IPBES assessments' author teams would be extremely beneficial. Ideally, the EWG team should be established already while the

assessments are being written, sharing several rounds of comments after the First and Second Order Drafts are released. This would allow for more exchanges with Experts and enhance common understanding of policy needs and scientific views.

In general, establishing a permanent platform of interaction where the experts of a given pool can discuss conceptual issues linked to scientific advice typical of the field of analysis. In this case, it would have helped if the pool of experts had a previous general discussion on: (i) pros and cons of using a given terminology ("ecosystem services" vs "nature contribution to people"); (ii) pros and cons of the strategy of "keeping always a positive tone with policymakers" vs the strategy of "flagging the seriousness of the uncomfortable knowledge presented to policymakers"; (iii) how to deal with the unavoidable level of uncertainty associated with knowledge claims when coming to the definition of targets and indicators. With this solution, when the pool of experts will be required again to work under severe time limitations, it will be able to focus the discussions only on the specific practical issues related to the request without being slowed down by the need of dealing with general conceptual issues.

4 Conclusions

The importance of expert working groups providing assistance and advice to decision-makers is ever increasing. The experience of the EKLIPSE EWG on "Supporting the EU negotiators on the IPBES Global Assessment's Summary for Policymakers" has shown that such working groups have a high potential. When well-managed, experts' different countries of origin and expertise areas can represent a huge asset. The group has illustrated that thanks to the wide variety of expertise, technical experience and high motivation for dialogue and collaboration, experts' resulting understanding of methodologies, approaches, and issues, and their ability to provide useful material for the EU negotiators, was substantial. This model of collaboration might be promising for future tighter inclusion of decision-makers in similar groups.

The list of specific experience points and recommendations provided in this report aims to facilitate future collaborations of expert working groups. The main lessons learned is that similar actions benefit from adaptive and flexible, but still organised and well-managed approach. Furthermore, similar working groups may benefit from a long-term collaboration in the future, and arguably, their actionability and quality of products would be substantially increased by the ability to work together and with the requesters on a continuous basis.