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**Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy
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Item 6 (g) of the provisional agenda*

**Work programme of the Platform: policy support
tools and methodologies****Information on work related to policy support tools and
methodologies (deliverable 4 (c))****Note by the secretariat**

1. One of the four main functions outlined in the founding resolution of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is to support “policy formulation and implementation by identifying policy-relevant tools and methodologies, such as those arising from assessments, to enable decision makers to gain access to those tools and methodologies and, where necessary, to promote and catalyse their further development” (UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/9, annex I, appendix 1, para. 1 (d)).
2. In its decision IPBES-2/5, on the work programme for the period 2014–2018, the Plenary of IPBES requested the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau to develop an online catalogue of policy support tools and methodologies to facilitate easy access by decision makers to policy support tools and methodologies and to provide guidance on how to promote and catalyse their further development.
3. In its decision IPBES-3/1, on the work programme for the period 2014–2018, the Plenary took note of the development of the catalogue and of the preliminary guidance and requested the Executive Secretary, in consultation with the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau, to submit them for review to Platform members, observers and stakeholders and to undertake work to establish the catalogue. The Plenary also requested the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau to further develop the guidance for consideration by the Plenary at its fourth session.
4. In section VI of its decision IPBES-4/1, on the work programme of the Platform, the Plenary took note of the guidance for further work on policy support tools and methodologies (IPBES/4/12, section II); encouraged stronger integration of work regarding policy support tools and methodologies across all relevant deliverables of the work programme; and requested the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, supported by the expert group on policy support tools and methodologies, inter alia, to continue the development of the online catalogue of policy support tools and methodologies (IPBES/4/INF/14) and to make available to Governments and stakeholders a prototype of the online catalogue for testing and review prior to the fifth session of the Plenary.
5. The annex to the present note provides additional information in support of the note by the secretariat on work on policy support tools and methodologies (IPBES/5/8), which describes the progress made and sets out a proposal for an approach to content development for the catalogue, as well as a set of future steps for the undertaking of further work. The annex is presented without formal editing.

* IPBES/5/1/Rev.1.

Annex

Information on work related to policy support tools and methodologies (deliverable 4 (c))

I. Catalogue of policy support tools and methodologies

1. As described in document IPBES-5/8, IPBES received an offer for an existing web architecture ready to be used to operationalize the IPBES catalogue of policy support tools and methodologies. This web architecture, called Oppla, has been developed and offered to IPBES by a partnership between the Operational Potential of Ecosystem Research Applications (OPERAs) and Operationalization of natural capital and ecosystem services (OpenNESS), in the context of projects funded by the European Union, and the Oppla European Economic Interest Grouping.
2. Oppla is an open platform for sharing policy support tools and case studies related to biodiversity and ecosystem services and in many ways meets the needs of the envisaged catalogue of policy support tools and methodologies of IPBES. The Oppla team committed itself to developing a working prototype of the web architecture for the IPBES catalogue, to providing IPBES with full control over the catalogue and to enabling IPBES to benefit from relevant future upgrades of Oppla at no cost. The offer is provided in the appendix to this document.
3. An analysis of the offer was undertaken drawing on relevant IPBES expert groups and task forces, several MEP members, and members of the secretariat, as a basis for the Bureau to decide on the offer. It considered critical issues including the added value, potential costs, governance arrangements and branding, sustainability, as well as the availability of alternatives. Key advantages included the facts that the offer meets important needs of IPBES, is provided at no additional costs to IPBES, would allow IPBES to have full control over the web architecture, its functionalities and its content, and would allow this catalogue to operate independently of Oppla. Based on the analysis the Bureau accepted the offer in October 2016.
4. Following acceptance of the offer, the secretariat started the development of the prototype of the online catalogue. This work was supported by the newly established technical support unit for deliverable 4(c) at the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre, and performed as a collaboration between the expert group on policy support tools and methodologies, and the Oppla team. The prototype will be available at <http://oppla-ipbes.pantheonsite.io/> as of mid-February 2017, for testing. The following paragraphs outline the key structure of the prototype and how it is embedded in the IPBES website.
5. At the base of the prototype is a searchable and interconnected database, which uses the web architecture provided by Oppla. The prototype will contain individual policy support tools and methodologies, policy instruments as well as items of the following categories:
 - (a) Case studies related to the implementation of specific policy instruments or application of policy support tools and methodologies, including those included in IPBES assessments;
 - (b) Datasets and other resources that could be used when implementing specific policy instruments or applying policy support tools and methodologies;
 - (c) Available online training and guidance material regarding the implementation of specific policy instruments or application of policy support tools and methodologies,
 - (d) Expert profiles of individuals that have expertise in the implementation of specific policy instruments or application of policy support tools and methodologies.
6. Further, given the decision to also integrate the existing catalogue of relevant assessments into this new web structure, information on relevant assessments of biodiversity and ecosystem services is also included in this searchable database.
7. For each individual item a broad range of relevant information will be made available, including links to other relevant or interrelated items. For example, for each of the policy instruments, information about the instrument itself and its applicability would be included. Furthermore, links would be provided to policy support tools and methodologies that are commonly used to implement the policy instrument, to assessments that have evaluated the effectiveness of that policy instrument, to case studies describing how the instrument has been implemented in practice, to possible datasets and other resources that could be used in implementing the policy instrument, to training and further guidance on how to implement the policy instrument, and links to experts with expertise in that regard.

Many of these envisaged links will first be indicated by placeholders and will be made operational following further guidance from the Plenary.

8. The IPBES website will provide entry points through the following main sections that allow to search the database:

- (a) An introduction to the catalogue of policy support tools and methodologies, with information on the main features of policy instruments and policy support tools, and links to these instruments and tools (based on the outline of the catalogue as described in IPBES/4/INF/14);
- (b) A section on methodological guidance on scenarios and models (based on the IPBES assessment report) and on the diverse conceptualisation of values of nature and nature's contribution to people (based on the preliminary guide on values of IPBES);
- (c) The catalogue of relevant assessments, which, once operational, will include a searchable database of information on assessments of biodiversity and ecosystem services from the global to sub-national scales, including information already contained in the older version of the catalogue of relevant assessments; and
- (d) A section to access the database of expert profiles, which, once operational, will allow to search for experts according to specific themes, regions, policy instruments and policy support tools and methodologies.

9. The prototype will include examples of policy support tools and methodologies referred to in the pollination assessment, the assessment on scenarios and models and the preliminary guidance on values. It is foreseen to incorporate the catalogue of assessments and the searchable database of experts at a later stage.

10. Further work, taking into account any guidance from the Plenary, is envisaged to include the following activities:

- (a) Continue to operationalise the various functionalities of the catalogue;
- (b) Continue to populate the catalogue with material drawn from the pollination and the scenarios and models assessments, and the preliminary guidance on values;
- (c) Review the catalogue of assessments and develop an approach for its integration within the same web architecture;
- (d) Develop options for governance of the catalogue, including a proposal on a process for the addition of content not generated by IPBES to the catalogue and quality control with regard to such material; and
- (e) Plan for an evaluation of the use and effectiveness of the online prototype of the catalogue, in the context of the process for the review of IPBES.

II. Methodological guidance to support assessments

11. Responding to a request by the Plenary (decision IPBES-4/1), the expert group on policy support tools and methodologies, supported by the secretariat, has begun the development of guidance to ensure the integration of work on policy support tools and methodologies into all relevant deliverables of the IPBES work programme. This work is carried out in collaboration with the coordinating lead authors (CLAs) of the chapters of ongoing assessments addressing policy responses (chapter 6 of the regional assessments, chapters 6 and 8 of the assessment on land degradation and restoration and chapter 6 of the global assessment).

12. These discussions began during the joint second author meeting of the regional and the land degradation and restoration assessment in August 2016. It was agreed that, building on the work provided by the expert group on policy support tools and methodologies, the expert group on policy support tools and methodologies and the CLAs would together further develop guidance, including on experience gained and relevant work undertaken in the assessments so far. This collaboration will facilitate comparability among the regional assessments and allow the global assessment to benefit from a coherent analysis across regions.

13. The development of this guidance is in progress, and a first draft is foreseen to be concluded by the second quarter of 2017 in order to support the authors of ongoing assessments at their respective meetings during the third quarter of 2017.

Appendix

Offer for the use of Oppla for the IPBES catalogue of policy support tools and methodologies

An offer was received by the IPBES Secretariat on the 18 August 2016 from a partnership of the projects OPERAs and OpenNESS, which are funded by the European Union, and the Oppla EEIG to provide the web infrastructure for the OPBES Catalogue of Policy Support Tools and Methodologies. The Offer submitted is set out below.

Oppla Proposal to support the IPBES Catalogue of Policy Support Tools and Methodologies

Dear Members of the IPBES Bureau,

It is an honour to herewith present to you our offer of Oppla as a base to operationalise the IPBES Catalogue of policy support tools and methodologies. Oppla is a new virtual platform (<http://oppla.eu>) developed specifically for collating and sharing current tools, methodologies and other services regarding the governance of biodiversity, ecosystem services and sustainable development.

Implementing the IPBES Catalogue of Policy Support Tools and Methodologies

Mandate for the IPBES Catalogue

As you well know, IPBES “supports policy formulation and implementation by identifying policy relevant tools and methodologies, such as those arising from assessments, to enable decision makers to gain access to those tools and methodologies and, where necessary, to promote and catalyse their further development” as one of its four main functions. To help deliver this core function, the Plenary requested that an online ‘Catalogue’ of policy support tools and methodologies (PSTM) be established as part of the first work programme.

Outline of the IPBES Catalogue

With much interest we have followed the work of the Expert Group developing an outline for the Catalogue as an online tool over the first two years of the work programme. This outline, which has since been endorsed by the Plenary, describes the envisaged Catalogue as a dynamic, two-way, online platform designed around IPBES processes and functions and featuring a user-focused approach.

The Catalogue, as described, would be the centrepiece of the policy support function and would make available – in an organized, interactive and user-friendly manner – content on policy support tools and methodologies developed by IPBES, e.g. through its assessments. The Catalogue is also envisaged to allow a range of users to assess the usability of tools and methodologies in their specific contexts and to add content to the Catalogue on resources required, types of outputs that can be obtained and any gaps that have been identified.

Implementation of the IPBES Catalogue

The Plenary has requested to develop the online Catalogue based on the outline and make available to Governments and stakeholders a prototype of the Catalogue for testing and review prior to the fifth session of the Plenary. The requirements of the Catalogue and the specifications regarding its functionalities and structures imply the need for a sophisticated web-based architecture and governance structure. From discussions with the Secretariat, we have learned that IPBES is currently exploring different ways and means to implement the online Catalogue within the context of its procedural framework and resource constraints.

How Oppla could help to implement the IPBES Catalogue of Policy Support Tools and Methodologies

We believe that Oppla could serve as the underlying web-architecture to operationalise the Catalogue. As Oppla is in an advanced state of development and supported with sufficient resources, it provides a ready to use, cost-efficient solution to the implementation of the IPBES Catalogue. The following paragraphs introduce Oppla, explain its governance and capacity, and summarise why we believe it could make a significant contribution to IPBES.

What is Oppla?

Oppla is a new virtual hub for collating and promoting the latest tools, methodologies, guidance and data on biodiversity, ecosystem services and sustainable development. Over 60 universities, research institutes, agencies and enterprises are currently developing Oppla as part of a joint activity between the OPERAs and OpenNESS projects, funded by the European Commission 7th Framework Programme. Oppla will provide access to a wide range of resources, drawn from the most innovative communities of science, policy and practice – forming a ‘one stop shop’ of policy support tools and methodologies, enabling decision-makers to find useful resources, quickly and easily.

The Oppla platform is launching in September 2016 to a global audience comprising members from a broad range of sectors – mostly environmental, but also from businesses, development, finance, health and other actors involved in sustainable development (the pre-launch membership already exceeds 700 individuals). Oppla will include the following functionality at launch:

- **Oppla Marketplace:** promoting useful ‘products’ including tools, services, and datasets
- **Oppla Case Studies:** describing projects and assessments, and the tools/methods they have used
- **Oppla Community:** an online directory of individuals and matchmaking service
- **Ask Oppla:** a simple question and answer service to help the community share knowledge
- **Oppla Learning:** lists of webinars and events, as well as online training and Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs)

How can Oppla support the IPBES Catalogue?

Oppla is developing a service to allow different programmes and projects to utilise the Oppla system in creating their own branded platforms, drawing information from the main Oppla database (at the discretion of the programme/project). For example: it will be possible to develop the IPBES Catalogue as a separate entity that is designed to comply with the IPBES Visual Identity and other corporate standards, whilst benefiting from Oppla’s functionality and community. The IPBES Secretariat would have full control over the system and the content that appears in the Catalogue. There is a strong synergy between the requirements of the IPBES Catalogue (as described in the outline agreed by Plenary) and the functionality of Oppla. In addition, there is a great deal of added value in using Oppla:

- Oppla is the outcome of 5M€ of research and development activity by leading experts in ecosystem services and natural capital.
- IPBES can select different functions from Oppla’s existing toolset (marketplace, matchmaking, Ask Oppla, case study finder, etc). Bespoke functionality can also be added in partnership with Oppla or by IPBES’ own developers.
- All data stored within Oppla is fully accessible and data exports can be supplied on demand (IPBES would not be reliant on Oppla for managing its own data). Data templates can also be fully customised to meet the specific needs of IPBES.
- Oppla provides a ‘test bed’ and incubator for new tools and methods, which may later be suitable for inclusion in the IPBES Catalogue.
- Oppla is planning a number of future developments, which will be made available to partners using the Oppla system.

We offer to IPBES the Oppla architecture as the base for the IPBES Catalogue of policy support tools and methodologies, and to work together with the IPBES Secretariat and the Expert Group to develop a working prototype of the IPBES Catalogue by February 2017.

Existing resources within the EU-funded OPERAs and OpenNESS projects can be deployed to the development of the prototype until the beginning of next year. Beyond that, and depending on the financing needs, EU services will explore possibilities to secure funding through the EU budget for further development of the IPBES Catalogue. However, no legal engagement can be taken at this stage. In any case, Oppla is being developed with open source code; hence it would be possible to transfer the database and functionality to a third party server in the future.

Oppla governance and capacity

Oppla is a European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG) that is managed by its members as a nonprofit entity. The aims of Oppla are to assist people in making nature work for the benefit of humankind; offer practical advice, guidance, tools and techniques; offer a website including a database of information and case studies, and a question and answer service; establish a network for sharing resources, new ideas and practical experience; function as a marketplace; offer events, training courses, a helpdesk and other services on demand.

Oppla is operated by its members, currently the European Centre for Nature Conservation and Countryside. This provides access to staff and expertise across both organisations with expertise in biodiversity, ecosystem services, communication, digital media, marketing and business development. Management of Oppla is guided by a Strategy Working Group (SWG) comprising IPBES co-chairs, CLAs and other IPBES representatives, amongst others. The SWG advises on the strategic direction of Oppla and ensures close links with the latest developments in science, policy and practice. Oppla also hosts a User Assembly: a non-executive stakeholder group with which the SWG consults over the provision of Oppla services. The Assembly is open to all members of the Oppla community and draws from a diverse user base.

The Oppla EEIG is currently seeking new members of both the SWG and Assembly with a focus on global representation. The members of the EEIG are interested in further discussing this opportunity with IPBES, with potential for including representation of the IPBES Secretariat on the Oppla SWG.
