



German Nagoya Protocol HuB workshop

Tuesday 19 of July 2022, Intercity Hotel, Braunschweig

Workshop report

Welcome and project outlook

After a warm welcome by Amber Scholz, the focus of the workshop was on what the next phase of the German Nagoya Protocol HuB project will look like. Amber Scholz gave the good news and a presentation on the extension of the HuB project for the next 5 years now financed by the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany.

Elizabeth Karger, the German Nagoya Protocol HuB project coordinator, defined that the main goals of the project will build upon what the HuB has developed up to now, and focus on:

- **Providing advice and information for individuals and institutions** in Germany on ABS obligations, including information on developments in the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol nationally and internationally (**supporting users**)
- **Networking and information exchange** to improve the ABS framework to facilitate compliance with ABS obligations and promote international research (**making ABS easier**)
- **Facilitate information flow** from the scientific community (experiences, data etc.) **into policy processes** and future negotiations (**scientific support for policy makers**)

The project will have 3 main tasks, the first task is the **support for users**. This includes the existing resources and the HuB network. The existing services should be expanded and questions should be discussed in a forum. The second task is the **contribution to political ABS processes** by engaging in the political discussions and expanding the existing network. In addition, further **innovative solutions and tools** will be developed to deal with ABS challenges.

Session 1 - Providing support for the user community

Interactive Session

The session consisted on a brainstorming activity about material or activities that HuB project could further develop to support the user community:

- Support for institutions
- Teaching and Training
- Help desk
- Information and Tools



German Nagoya Protocol Hub

In general, ideas about raising awareness and increasing capacities were discussed: presentations on practicalities of the implementation of the NP (e.g. tools to understand, analyze and negotiate benefit sharing in Mutually Agreed Terms), participation with stands or kiosks in conferences, keep the variety of materials, develop podcast with researchers and their ABS experiences, continue with the training but design activities for different knowledge levels of the Nagoya Protocol, incursion on online courses, offer workshops for specific target public as ABS officers, curators or managers of ex situ collections and lawyers, update information in the ABS-CH.

The attendees highlighted the importance of the help desk and suggested to broaden the scope to cover questions about ABS outside Germany and the European Union and beyond the CBD, e.g. ABS discussions on other international ABS fora. It is also important to deal with frustration among researchers, e.g. creating capacities, sharing more successful stories through different media and make more visible the ones already existing, compiling and making available helpful information to make the ABS process easier, e.g. about countries with ABS legislation.



Figure 1. Brainstorming on Providing support for the user community

Session 2 - Innovative solutions and instruments for ABS

Collective ABS information (database):

The first presentation was given by Hilke Püschner. Hilke presented the tools the DSMZ has been using to collect and record information about countries with Nagoya Protocol regulations since 2017 in a way that is easy to continuously update. The specific country information was collected by contacting each National Focal Point (NFP). In 2020, there was a second round of emails sent to those that had not replied. This country database is updated in Excel and only used internally.

The second presentation was given by Scarlett Sett. Scarlett is in active exchange with compliance officers and has built up an informal network with those with analog positions. The ABS compliance officers group consists of 13 compliance officers and aims to exchange information and experiences with different countries. Country-specific information is collected in Excel and only used internally. Among other things, this has resulted in an overview of the areas of responsibility/core competencies and updated contact information of ABS National Focal Points.

The last presentation was given by Konstantin Wußmann from BfN. He pointed out that BfN has the same difficulties with provider countries, some of the NFPs not responding to inquiries. Regarding user controls, Konstantin pointed out that an exchange with the provider countries is helpful, but also the provider countries do not always have a flow chart or summarized procedure for users of their own ABS process.

Discussion

Amber started the discussion by asking the participants, how can the information that the HuB collects be complementary to the information found on the ABS clearing house website and not a mere copy?. It was clear that there is a desire from users for a **platform** that compiles experiences with providing countries. This could be structurally based on the information collected by the ABS compliance officers group with buttons that can separate content into "Open" and "Internal" categories. This information could then appear as links in a "**roadmap**", which would make it clearly accessible. Another possibility would be to create one flowchart with the ABS procedures for some countries, as this would also ensure clarity. In any case, the focus would be on providing information complementary to the ABSCH. For this reason, a partnership with ABSCH secretariat would be crucial.

There was also discussion about "Github" as a replacement for Excel to gather information. In general, it was brought out that there must be a "disclaimer" that this is not legal advice.

Simplifying ABS for users: The example of framework agreements:

Melania Muñoz presented about a successful case developing a framework agreement to facilitate access and benefit sharing with a provider country. It is the case of the fast-track agreement between Leibniz Institute DSMZ and Costa Rica, a Material Transfer Agreement signed with the objective of simplifying the process of depositing and using microbial resources from Costa Rica obtained from the DSMZ bioresource catalogue ensuring benefit sharing. Melania explained the process and a desirable next step would be to re-use this and other agreements with other partners, collections and providers.

Hartmut Meyer from the Capacity Development Initiative focused on how research can become commercial at certain points. Individual ABS contracts between the provider countries and users can begin

as non-commercial but might change throughout a project lifetime. Compliance control of these contracts falls into the provider countries scope. In this way, more trust could be built up. Some positive examples with collaborative projects in Benin and the Bahamas were presented and it was highlighted that direct cooperation with research groups within countries is very useful.

Interactive session

In this session, a brainstorming on innovative solutions and instruments for ABS was conducted in two groups. The topics were divided into these four points:

- What are possible instruments?
- Who is interested and capable of trying something out/how do we find them?
- How can the HuB project support the process?
- How can we take good examples and scale them up?

In general, the attendees think the fast-track agreement signed by Costa Rica and DSMZ could be adapted and re-used as a model with other countries. To achieve that, it is important to share the existing agreement, including the ABS-CH. Some propose to start with countries in Latin America.

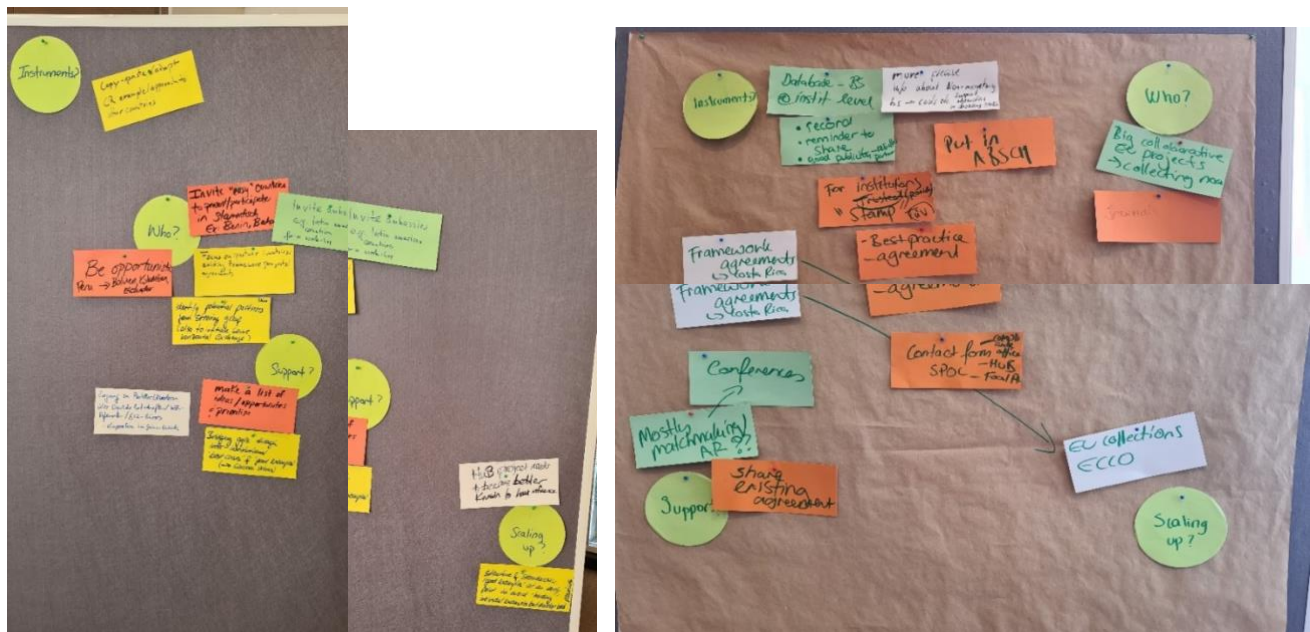


Figure 2. Brainstorming on innovative solutions and instruments for ABS

Session 3 - Strengthening the ABS user community

Panel discussion: How can the ABS community provide input into relevant policy processes?

After the lunch break, the event continued with a panel discussion. Amber H. Scholz, Thomas Greiber and Melania Munoz discussed new aspects of strengthening the ABS user community. The discussion



was moderated by Elizabeth Karger. Amber represented the DSI Scientific Network, Thomas the evolving EU position and Melania with her experience as the ABS focal point of Costa Rica.

The first point was how to address and identify countries and areas of interest. It was pointed out that looking for win-win scenarios for all participating parties was key in building partnerships. The network could serve to form a basis between the various institutions (EU, German ministries and negotiating partners) and pave the way for cooperation. Furthermore, it was emphasized how important language and expressions are when communicating in international groups. Through simple and concise language, the project can be perceived internationally as relevant and important.

Panel discussion: How can we grow and consolidate ABS networks in Germany and beyond?

Ideas to continue growing and expanding the HuB network such as creating a public or private database with updated country-specific ABS processes (i.e. updated contact information, or documents not available in the ABS CH website), working with the ABS Clearing House website to report user experiences, standardizing collection of information, developing ABS process charts with providing countries (that could be uploaded into the ABS CH website) were suggested the most valuable. A clear benefit from working with researchers in other countries would enrich the HuB network and might fill gaps of information.