

Lessons Learned From the GEOCAB Portal

This document is submitted to the Program Board for discussion.

1 INTRODUCTION

This document was prepared by Andiswa Mlisa, Mark Noort and Joost Teuben on behalf of the GEO Capacity Building Working Group at the request of the GEO Programme Board.

2 BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FACILITY

The GEO capacity building resource facility (GEOCAB) Portal was developed in the period 2010-2015 in the framework of the FP7 projects, GEONetCab and EOPOWER, both funded by the European Commission. The projects responded to a need identified by the GEO Capacity Building Committee for a resource facility on capacity building in Earth observation. The GEOCAB portal was designed as a resource facility for capacity building to fill a gap in GEOSS, which at the time was focussed on data.

The aims of the GEOCAB portal were to:

- (i) Promote the free and open exchange of earth observation data and information;
- (ii) Enhance capacity building in earth observation techniques and applications, with special emphasis on developing countries; and
- (iii) Promote open and easy access to capacity building material, references, software and other information related to earth observation.

GEOCAB acted as part of a federated network of regional capacity building portals (in the Balkans, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia, and French-speaking Africa) that provided information in local languages.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in 2015 concerning the establishment and maintenance of the GEO capacity building resource facility (GEOCAB) upon finalisation of the FP7 EOPOWER project. The following organizations signed the MoU:

- Université de Genève (UNIGE), Geneva, Switzerland;
- Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD), Marseille/Montpellier, France;
- Centre Régional Africain des Sciences et Technologies de l'Espace, en Langue Française, affiliated to UN (CRASTE-LF), Rabat, Morocco;
- Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR), Roma, Italy;
- Aristotelio Panepistimio Thessalonikis (AUTH), Greece;
- University of Twente, Faculty ITC (ITC), Enschede, the Netherlands; and
- HCP international (HCP). Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Technical hosting of GEOCAB, as well as the coordination for its maintenance, operation and quality control, was provided by IRD until 2018. GEOCAB was designed as part of MDweb, the metadata catalogue of IRD on environmental issues for developing countries. At the time, it seemed a good guarantee for continuity because the MDweb tool was expected to be around for a long time and

maintenance and improvement of GEOCAB would be included in maintenance and improvement of MDweb. However, the MDweb initiative was apparently abandoned a few years later, leaving GEOCAB with limited technical support.

Efforts were made by the Secretariat and the Capacity Building Working Group to find resources to support the continuity of GEOCAB Portal maintenance. During this period, engagement with the GEOSS Platform team led to GEOCAB being brokered and its resources made available on the GEOSS Portal. Critically, the Portal needed further development to include brokering services to reduce the burden of resource providers submitting information twice, once in their own platforms and then in the GEOCAB platform.

Maintenance of the GEOCAB Portal ended at some point in early 2018, due to lack of funding. The Portal is currently off-line with no access to the data and information.

Although attention was given from the start to GEOCAB's sustainability, the facility was only maintained at a very basic level after the end of the project funding. Much needed improvements could not be implemented due to lack of resources and time. The system was also set up in such a way that only one partner was able to handle IT aspects. Although there was an offer by another partner to take over management responsibilities, this never materialized in practice.

3 CONCLUSIONS

Although a group of volunteers provided input to GEOCAB for a long time, including valuable support from the CEOS Working Group on Capacity Development, GEOCAB never reached critical mass in terms of receiving inputs from outside the group. In fact, most requests were directed at individuals (to do the input or to provide assistance).

We can conclude that even though the GEOCAB Portal was not very successful in its operation and sustainability, there still is a need to facilitate access to resource material on capacity building for Earth observation. It is possible that the GEO Knowledge Hub may accommodate the type of resources (success stories, roadshows, workshops, marketing toolkits, impact assessment framework, etc.) envisaged to be accessible in the GEOCAB Portal.