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# Options for the Continuation of the GNU Partnership

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# A temporary undertaking

There are many different definitions and viewpoints of what a project is, but all have one matter in common, namely that a project is a temporary undertaking. Considering that the temporary nature is inherent to projects, continuation is not necessarily a must. Nevertheless, sustainability of the project work is desirable. This sustainability can be viewed from two perspectives: Firstly, as the sustainability of the project results, that is the project should have lasting effects, and, secondly, as the sustainability of interaction, that is the project should result in a lasting community. The latter is the focus of this document.

GNU is designed to influence its participants' approaches towards GMES and to improve the way they fulfil their roles within this process. Therefore, a long-term collaboration within other frameworks than that of the FP6 funded Coordination Action only is envisaged to further take advantage of the added value of the interaction among the Consortium members and their Extended Consortium. This partnership stands a reasonable chance to proceed into the future because it can build on well established personal relationships. The focus of this continuation is the GNU participants. Likewise, it also considers that they should remain well connected to different stakeholders.

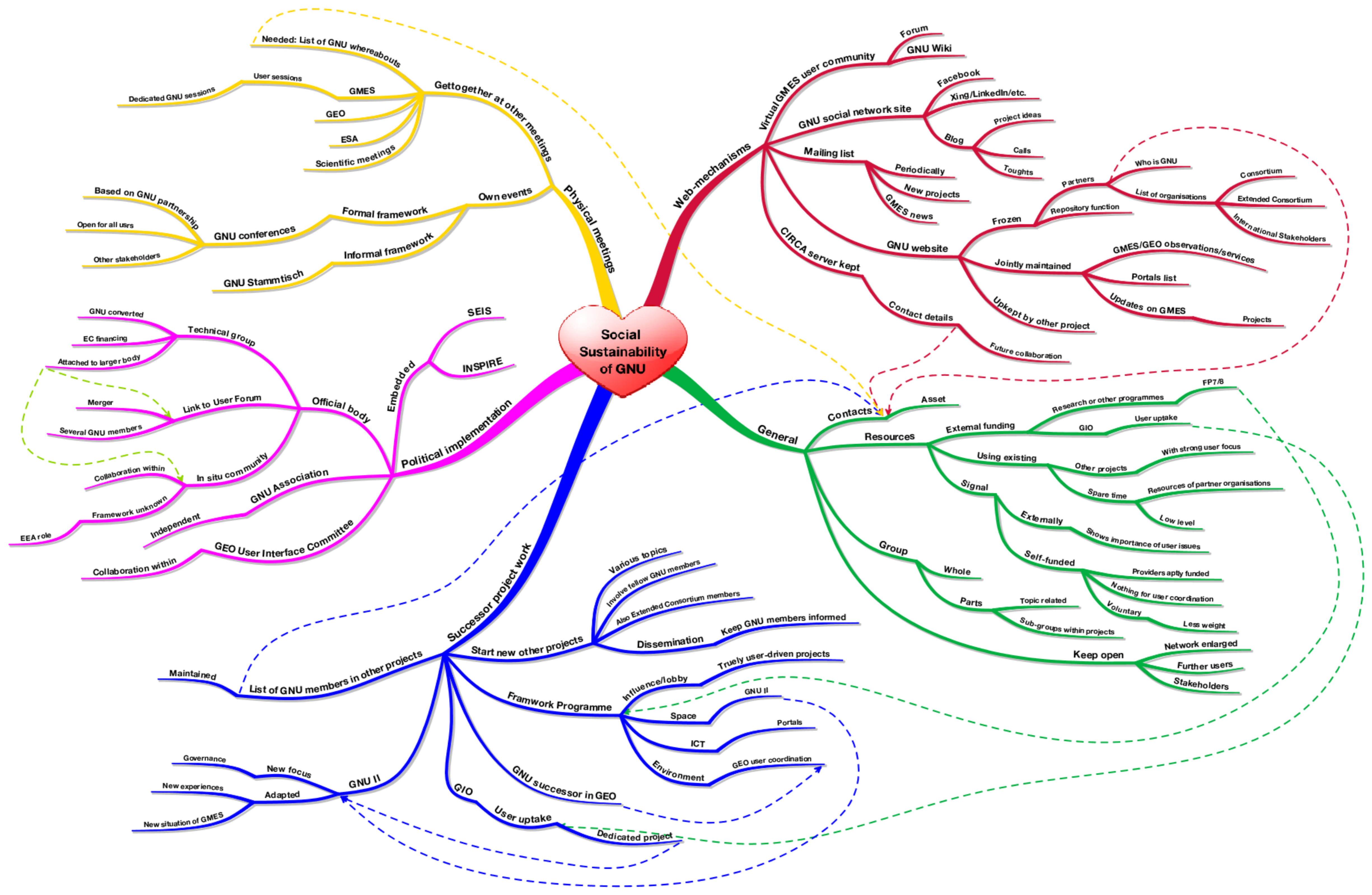
The consortium members prepared a comprehensive listing of possible actions which can foster the existence of the network beyond the life time of the Coordination Action. This listing reflects how the project work has influenced the partners perception on GMES and, accordingly, the role their network intends to play within European environmental monitoring. Also options were considered to finance such initiatives. The established contacts of GNU to decision makers were utilised to ask for advice from different perspectives on possible future actions by the GNU network.

The below document is not only useful for the GNU participants themselves but it can also be considered a means of guidance to other consortia which intend to continue at least some collaboration beyond the time frame of their project.

# Mind map

The working method for this deliverable was similar to that described in the deliverable “Quality Criteria for GMES Products“ (2.4a) and is not repeated here. All materials collected were converted into a mind map aimed at structuring the elements identified. This mind map was circulated among the participants, commented and revised. The text below is based on this mind map. The text again was circulated, commented and revised to this final version.

The mind map is designed to be printed in A3 format.



# How can (some) GNU collaboration continue after the project has ended?

## 1. General aspects

The GNU members' group can continue its existence as a whole or focus on parts of it, e.g. related to particular topics. In any case, the network should be kept open and enable the involvement of further users and other GMES stakeholders.

Resources for this collaboration can be based on existing sources, such as the frameworks given by other projects where user groups can be formed under the influence of GNU partners. Also the partner's organisations may agree that these individuals spend some time on GMES user networking, although this would be realistic only on a fairly low level. Dedicated external funding may be sought through research and other funding programmes including FP7 or FP8, or within the GIO (GMES Initial Operations) User Uptake initiatives. Obviously, external funding is a strong signal showing that user networking is still important to GMES, whereas the need for users to fund their networking on their own might demonstrate the opposite. Providers are aptly funded by GMES sources, and, likewise, a part of the space budget should be directed to potential end-users. This view is also expressed in the widely supported EURISY position paper of October 2010 (<http://www.eurisy.org/index.php/news/item/109-eurisy-position-paper-released.html>) to which GNU was consulted among other stakeholder representatives.

In any case, the existing contacts of the GNU members among each other and to further stakeholders and groups are the most important asset of the GNU partnership and provide a range of opportunities for further collaboration as specified in the following paragraphs.

## 2. Successor project work

GNU participants should take advantage of future options to start GMES projects related to their particular field of interest. Ideally, by doing so they would involve fellow GNU members including those of the Extended Consortium. Moreover, within such future projects, dissemination activities should, among their other recipients, also explicitly be targeted at the GNU network to keep these individuals informed about recent developments and thereby also provide a means to keep in touch.

In any case, a list of the pertinent projects in which several GNU members participate is helpful not only to be informed about the partners' whereabouts but also to show in which ongoing projects the GNU partners may put the above ideas into action. This list is added to this document as an Annex.

The Commission's Framework Programme may be the most suitable funding source for GNU partners' new project ideas. They should not only passively wait for suitable calls but also try to influence the programme by lobbying for calls for truly user-driven projects. Several Framework priorities would be of interest to GNU partners. The Environment theme currently funds GEO (Group on Earth Observation) related projects. The ICT (Information and Communication Technology) theme could enable to deepen GNU's work on data portals, and the Space theme could give rise to a further project aimed at user-networking.

The ultimate successor to GNU would of course be a GNU II, as a project specifically dedicated to let the GNU collaboration continue. Such a GNU II would not necessarily have the same focus as the current GNU, but it could e.g. have a stronger governance focus. Moreover, a GNU II would take advantage of new experiences gathered during GNU and it would consider the changes as to the overall situation of GMES.

The current GIO (GMES Initial Operations) phase has foreseen funds to improve user uptake and user involvement. Possibly such funds would provide opportunities for GNU partners to further collaborate on the optimisation of GMES from the users' perspectives.

Moreover, besides GMES, also GEO may provide a framework for a GNU successor of any kind, provided GEO will fund projects in the future. Recently, a call for proposals was issued, however without providing funding through GEO but the intent to link successful applicants with donor organisations.

### 3. Political Implementation

GEO likely provides a more useful framework for a political implementation of user networking than for operational project work. The User Interface Committee is open for interested parties. Currently, only few GNU members are involved in this body, but more may do so in the future. In this way, GNU collaboration would be embedded in another group.

Further candidates for such an embedding are the planned GMES User Forum, to which several GNU partners may be nominated by their countries. Also the GMES in situ community may be suitable, although the framework foreseen for this community is still unknown the more so as the GMES In Situ Observations Working Group is not continued. The EEA (European Environment Agency) currently coordinates this part of GMES and the future development will thus depend on this organisation.

GNU could also be converted into a technical group with Commission financing, aiming at shaping specific GMES aspects to best meet the users' needs. In a less official setting, GNU partners could form an independent association as their own framework for a future collaboration. Such an association would be open not only for GNU members (Consortium and Extended Consortium) but also for other users who wish to be actively involved in GMES user networking.

### 4. Physical meetings

Real get-togethers are most effective for joint work of the GNU partners, as the six project meetings have shown. Therefore, future meetings would be beneficial for the GNU partners, regardless whether arranged in a formal or in a rather informal manner. Formal meetings could be GNU conferences, similar to the two conferences the GNU Consortium has held jointly with its Extended Consortium. Although primarily aimed at the GNU partnership, these conferences would be open for all stakeholders interested. More informal meeting types can be considered without an official agenda but intended to foster different kinds of communication and the identification of ideas for future activities.

Arranging get-togethers of GNU partners in the framework of already planned meetings may be easier and less costly but would likely only involve those partners who participate in these other meetings anyway. These meetings may involve GMES events, such as future fora and user sessions therein which could even become dedicated GNU sessions. Similarly, GEO or ESA events may within their events provide opportunities for GNU partners to meet. Scientific events of any kind will in the future likely involve several GNU partners at the same time, but never a large number of them owing to the specific topics of the events which will certainly not be of interest to all GNU partners. In any case a list of the GNU partners' whereabouts is needed to facilitate long-term or ad hoc planning of get-togethers once an opportunity arises.

## 5. Web-mechanisms

As a cost-saving way to keep the GNU collaboration working, various web mechanisms offer a range of opportunities. Such mechanisms cannot work as stand-alone methods, but in combination with other activities as described above, they can be very helpful. GNU could set up its own virtual community, such as an internet forum or a wiki, falling back on its experience with the GEOSS (Global Earth Observations System of Systems) best practices wiki.

With much less effort, GNU partners could get involved in existing social media, e.g. a dedicated GNU Facebook fanpage (such as the GEO Facebook fanpage) could be created. Other social media, such as XING or LinkedIn may be more suitable because they have a stronger focus on professional aspects than Facebook. Moreover, blogging sites could be taken advantage of to exchange issues such as project ideas, calls and thoughts on GMES. A much simpler means to distribute information, but only in a one-way fashion, could be a dedicated mailing list, again to periodically update GNU members on new projects and the like, including general news on GMES.

For the current GNU website several options exist. It can be frozen after the project ends and serve a simple repository function for several years which requires maintenance only from a technical perspective, e.g. when server software is updated. Besides the GNU outcomes, partners will find information about the further GNU partners, including Consortium, Extended Consortium and International

Stakeholders, and more specific information about each other under the heading Who is GNU. Beyond technical maintenance, the website could also be jointly maintained by several GNU partners and could provide useful information on new GMES/GEO services and further updates, such as new GMES projects. Some of the deliverables could also be updated, e.g. the listing and evaluating of GMES portals. Moreover, the website may be taken over by a future project (including a GNU II) and then be upkept by that project.

To facilitate project work, GNU has maintained a CIRCA server which stores information internal to the Consortium and not meant to be distributed. This server will be kept alive for some time and e.g. provide the contact details for all GNU members which will make it easier for them to keep in touch.

## Reflection

GNU partners have actively contributed to this long inventory of opportunities which may be suitable to enable (some) GNU collaboration after the project has ceased. During the project close-down meeting and during other occasions, a strong interest was expressed by many GNU partners to continue their collaboration in whatever way. The future will show how realistic the various scenarios in this collection are. The articulated options have received different degrees of enthusiasm among the participants, e.g., get-togethers at future GMES meetings would be appreciated by all partners, whereas a GNU Facebook fanpage is of interest to a small minority of the partners only. Besides enthusiasm, two major issues will be decisive as to the chances of any action to be realised in the future: Firstly the relationship between funding needed and funding available, and, secondly, the willingness and ability of a GNU partner to initiate the action and to take responsibility

Obviously, actions which are less costly and require little time to be initiated will stand a more realistic chance to be realised than expensive and time-consuming activities. The current situation is that the GNU partners will gladly participate in any activity – including a GNU II, which has frequently been asked for within the Consortium – but thus far the partners who will actually start activities yet have to be identified.

## Annex: Current involvement of GNU partners in pertinent projects

The list shows the GMES, GEO and other pertinent projects which involve at least two GNU partners at the time this deliverable was drafted. The list shows some further projects although these contain only one GNU partner as project participant but they bear direct relevance to at least one other GNU partner (e.g., only NILU participates in PASODOBLE, but UBA-A participates in MACC and will participate in MACC II, and both projects are closely linked and collaborate with each other). Besides these, projects containing only one GNU partner are not shown because they will not support the future networking of GNU partners.

SUBCOAST, subsidence of coastal zones:

Marco Hoogvliet, TNO & Stuart March, BGS

EUFODOS, Forest Downstream:

Mathias Schardt, Klaus Granica, JOANNEUM & Stefanie Linser, UBA-A

ESA-Extension Forest Monitoring User Executive Body:

Stefanie Linser, UBA-A & Frank Fell, INFORMUS & Tim Green, Jo van Brusselen, EFI

MS MONINA, Biodiversity/Natura 2000 Downstream:

Andreas Littkopf, ETC-UAB & Herbert Haubold, UBA-A & Jo v. Valckenborgh, AGIV

GRAAL: Regional administrations:

Maria Dalla Costa and all ISPRA participants in GNU

EGIDA: GEO-Science and Technology:

Maria Dalla Costa (ISPRA) & Stuart March (BGS) & Aasmund Fahre Vik (NILU) & Herbert Haubold (UBA-A)

EVOSS: Volcanoes Downstream:

Stuart March (BGS)

GEOLAND II, Land Monitoring Core Service

Several GNU partners

PASODOBLE, Air quality Downstream:

Aasmund Fahre Vik and all NILU participants in GNU

PANGEO Ground Motion and Urban Atlas

Stuart March (BGS) & Marco Hoogvliet (TNO)

GEOBALKAN, GEO Capacity Building

Manuela Hirschmugl (JOANNEUM) & Herbert Haubold (UBA-A)

HELM, Land Monitoring Core Service:

Several GNU partners

MAIRES, Russia Cooperation:

Mathias Schardt (JOANNEUM)

EO-MINERS, GEO Mining:

Stuart March (BGS) & Philipp Schepelmann (WI)

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This report and the other reports by GNU  
can be downloaded at the project website:

[www.gmes-network-of-users.eu](http://www.gmes-network-of-users.eu)