

ALTER-Net MB Remote Meeting Minutes

Date: 17 April 2020, 12:00--14:00

Attendance: Jiska Van Dijk (Chair, JVD), Allan Watt (Vice-Chair, AW) Maurice Hoffmann (MH), Andy Sier (AS), Marie Vandewalle (MV), Sonja Jaehnig (SJ), Petteri Vihervaara (PV), Philip Roche (PR)

Agenda:

- ALTER-Net statute & daily operation
- Eklipse/Alter-Net communication strategy & donation strategy & progress new website A-Net
- Eklipse governance & ALTER-Net SPI activity
- Eklipse/ALTER-Net Biodiv Partnership (BiodivERsA)
- ALTER-Net AHIA extra option for Key Message paper nr3 – question to council
- Summer School
- Conference 2021
- Working group Green New Deal calls, Public Consultation - European Climate Pact, ...
- Summer School
- AOB

Introduction

Chair JVD opened the meeting. Present MB members include JVD, TK, MH, AW, SJ, AS, VP, and MV. PR will be joining later in the meeting and MK may be able to call in. JVD introduced the agenda points.

ALTER-Net Statutes

The floor was given to MH to review the first agenda point: the ALTER-Net statutes and daily operation. The statutes have been further fine-tuned since the previous MB meeting and a new approach has been applied for the association: four people are founding the association (MH, JVD, PR, and AW). This enables a fast adoption of the legal status so that the takeover of EKLIPSE can be efficiently managed. The association will begin to exist once the statutes are signed in person--which has not yet been possible due to the coronavirus situation. April 3rd was the original intended signing date; now, the founding members (at least MH in person, along with the others in proxy) plan to sign as soon as restrictions are lifted. MH noted that restrictions will last at least until May 4th and then it is expected that travel will be permitted again.

AW noted that at the last Council meeting, several partners seemed hesitant to join the new body and asked if network membership would be possible without joining the legal body. MH will investigate the possibility of this and believes that it likely could be an option; the consortium

would need to agree that the association will handle financial matters on behalf of the consortium. JVD noted that a treasurer is still needed and that an appointment should be pursued and established prior to the end of the EKLIPSE project in July. AW asked if the treasurer would have to be based in Belgium where the association is located; MH will investigate this question, and noted that the treasurer does not need to be a scientifically active member of ALTER-Net. MH added that the present ALTER-Net governance structure will be retained in the association structure in addition to a new body composed of the MB chair, Council chair, secretariat, and treasurer.

Eclipse/Alter-Net Communications

JVD reminded the MB that the EKLIPSE project ends in July and will be adopted by ALTER-Net. Numerous task forces have been established for different aspects of EKLIPSE, including communications and governance.

TK has distributed a new draft of the EKLIPSE communication strategy prepared by the C32 communications company. The EKLIPSE communications task force will be meeting on Monday to review comments and the MB is encouraged to submit comments. MH expressed concerns that the strategy is singularly focused on EKLIPSE and doesn't adequately recognize that EKLIPSE will be a component of ALTER-Net. MV noted that in her conversations with C32 they believe it would be best to approach the strategy separately at the moment and move toward a fused communications strategy within a year. C32 would like to train an ALTER-Net spokesperson for communications. They also suggested obtaining a professional communications intern to assist in upcoming months.

JVD noted that TK is currently working for both ALTER-Net and EKLIPSE and can play a key bridging role. TK gave an update on the state of affairs for the ALTER-Net website. TK and AS have worked with personnel at CREAM to transfer hosting from CEH to CREAM. C32 will redesign the ALTER-Net website in a style that corresponds with EKLIPSE's website, but the websites will be kept separate. The website will be switched from Plone language to Wordpress. TK has produced a briefing of proposed design changes for the ALTER-Net website that has been shared with C32 and CREAM.

MH asked that everyone provide comments on the comm strategy. AS noted that if we want to make it clear that EKLIPSE is an activity of ALTER-Net but retain the separate branding, that the title of EKLIPSE itself should identify this (i.e. EKLIPSE by ALTER-Net). AS additionally questioned if the MB needs to establish their own approach or if they should follow the lead of C32. JVD suggested letting the MB act independently concerning our approval of the communications strategy and direction and then allowing involvement from other stakeholders at a later time, stressing that quick movement is essential at this stage. TK will distribute the website briefing of suggested revisions that he produced with the MB.

Conference 2021

Nicolas Dendoncker and a group of former ALTER-Net Summer School students, along with Ana Lilebo, have expressed interest in helping with the organization of the next ALTER-Net conference--but no one has volunteered to take up leadership at this point. JVD questioned whether the Council should be further inquired for an organizer nominee or if the conference should be postponed a year in response to the coronavirus crisis.

AW expressed support for the idea of multiple actors serving in leadership support, including Nico, Philip Roche, the Summer School alumni, perhaps the freshwater community, etc. and allow separate components to be organized separately, rather than all duties falling on one figure. It was suggested that four groups could take leadership of separate aspects and one other figure could oversee management. MH asked if there are other institutes which are planning their own conference on a relevant issue; ALTER-Net could work and organize in conjunction with them. AW expressed preference for a true ALTER-Net conference (even if it meant the need to postpone). MV stressed that as long as there is a skilled coordinator with administrative/managerial experience, the compartmentalized approach to planning could work; she suggested Candice Pouget as a viable option. MV also stated that this conference would be an excellent opportunity to advertise the new management of EKLIPSE; she could help organize a quarter of the conference.

MH voiced favor for a conference on the general topic of science-policy interfacing. MV stated that the transformative change topic would also be an excellent option. Prior to leaving, SJ wanted to clarify the willingness of the different potential actors to plan a compartmentalized, multiple-leadership conference. She offered to send out an email of inquiry of interest in partial leadership. AW offered to support MV in partial leadership. SJ will distribute a letter of inquiry and cc the MB. MH offered the involvement and support of INBO in organization if the conference is to be held in Ghent again.

EKLIPSE Governance and ALTER-Net Involvement

MV reviewed the progress of the EKLIPSE Governance Task Force and suggested that the new governance figure should be sent to the MB for feedback. The new terms of reference for the governing bodies will be shared as well; wherever ALTER-Net is mentioned, the MB can review and give their approval. An update on the KCB was requested; information should be available for the public by Monday.

MB Members and Makeup

Public Consultation on the Climate Pact and Green New Deal calls are pending activities for ALTER-Net. TK applied for a Green Week stand, but the application was rejected. It was noted that current ALTER-Net activity is largely consumed with coordination with EKLIPSE.

MV is happy to retain her place in the MB but questioned whether the SPI activity will be singularly focused on EKLIPSE. AW suggested an additional MB member taking Marie's SPI position and Marie serving as representative for EKLIPSE.

AS noted that he plans to withdraw from ALTER-Net at the end of the year and asked whether TK will serve as the single communications figure or if there will be a replacement on the MB for AS. MH will check whether the MB can name their own replacements or if the Council will need to be consulted. It was questioned whether an MB replacement for communications is actually needed; if this is the case, the most important group to represent will be CREAM (TK suggested Adriana Morato). MV noted that the new EKLIPSE communications strategy calls for the organization of a small communications team. JVD expressed skepticism in not replacing Andy with a new MB member, noting that Andy provides a big picture perspective while TK handled day-to-day communications. AW expressed agreement with JVD; AS stressed the importance of finding an enthusiastic replacement.

Biodiversity Partnership

AW reviewed the progress of discussions with BiodivERsA and EKLIPSE about the Biodiversity Partnership. It has been made clear to BiodivERsA and the EC that further guaranteed funding would be essential in order to make EKLIPSE involvement possible. MH has been invited to a meeting on April 27th at 16:00.

Summer School

AW discussed the issues surrounding the coronavirus and its impact on the 2020 Summer School, which is currently planned for August. Discussions about whether or not to proceed have been ongoing. Fourteen applications have been received and the deadline has been extended until the end of April. Promotion will continue, but AW personally doubts that the school will be held in 2020. If the Summer School is cancelled, applications will automatically be considered for 2021. If the plans to hold the school are not cancelled, AW suggests another discussion within the MB to give final approval, considering the potential risks.

AHIA Action

The AHIA call has been extended until the end of April; a decision is desired on the selected action before the start of the summer so that work can begin. There are three proposals received to date; additionally, two papers were published as deliverables from the 2019 Conference (on societal involvement and on the key messages methods) and it was suggested that a third key messages paper on the scientific bases of each key message could be produced. Frederic cannot lead the third paper, but it was suggested that it could be made an AHIA action.

JVD alternatively noted that there is still the possibility to open the contract from the 2017 conference to support the production of this paper. If JVD is to lead it under the €15k contract, she will also need to request labor hours from the Council. MH provided further context for the AHIA proposal idea and noted that a further possibility is that the conference budget of 2019 could be used, treating the paper as a deliverable/outcome of the conference. The final option would be opening the initiative to the ALTER-Net consortium requesting proposals, but not as an AHIA initiative. The proposed idea is to have an open call on the topic of the literature review underpinning the key messages; if it fits within established budgets, the Council will not need to be consulted. AW stressed that publication should be efficient, as the subject will become less relevant as we move into 2021 and beyond.

PR stated that he does not believe the paper should not be tied with an AHIA call, but noted that he would be interested in helping write such a paper. MH expressed support for using the 2019 Conference budget. JVD and PR will pursue this initiative.

AOB and Conclusion

A task force is looking into the Green Deal call; they are still waiting on the next timeline from Anne Milbau and then how the ALTER-Net consortium should organize and proceed will be decided. Tyler will send out a reminder to comment/consult on the climate pact. Further contact with Michael Mirtl is urgently needed so that the infrastructure video project can be concluded.

The meeting concluded at 14:20.