



Minutes ALTER-Net Management Board meeting

Remote – 27 January 2020

Contact

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Participants

1. Maurice Hoffmann (INBO, Belgium, Council Chair); MH
2. Sonja Jähnig (IGB, Germany); SJ
3. Mart Kulvik (IAES, Estonia); MK
4. Philip Roche (INRAE, France); PR
5. Andy Sier (CEH, UK); AS
6. Marie Vandewalle (UFZ, Germany); MV
7. Jiska van Dijk (NINA, Norway, MB chair); JVD
8. Petteri Vihervaara (SYKE, Finland); PV
9. Allan Watt (CEH, UK, MB Vice-Chair); AW
10. Tyler Kulfan (ALTER-Net); TK

Absent

Joan Pino (CREAF, Spain); JP
Jiska van Dijk (NINA, Norway, MB chair); JVD
Marie Vandewalle (UFZ, Germany; EKLIPSE); MV

Opening of Meeting

The remote meeting of the ALTER-Net Management Board began at 9.30 CET on 27 January 2020. AW presided over the meeting as Vice-Chair, as Chair JVD was ill. Due to time constraints, the meeting began without JVD, SJ, MV, JP, and AS.

New ALTER-Net Slogan

The first matter of discussion was the new ALTER-Net slogan. The current slogan is “Europe’s Ecosystem Research Network.” The MB was assigned by the Council to propose 3 slogans on which the Council will vote. The goal is to have an active and appealing slogan. A list of potential options was distributed and MH made a last-minute addition: “The pan-European Science-Policy Interface on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.”

Of the available options, MH’s suggestion was nominated, along with “The European Science-Policy Interface on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.”

Legal Structure

MH updated the MB on the recent progress concerning the ALTER-Net legal structure. MH recently had a meeting in Brussels with legal council; following this meeting, me met with JVD and they agreed to speed up the process by visiting Brussels with two/three natural persons (not representing their institutes) to found ALTER-Net as a legal non-profit entity. Afterwards, institutes can join this established organization. MH noted that this approach will be considerably faster and will likewise be the easiest way to manage the standing financial issues (all funds being in the hands of MH and TVS) so that ALTER-Net can begin working as a non-profit organization. If MH and JVD move forward in this manner, it is expected that the legal structure can be in place by the end of February.

PR agreed to join as a natural person. Lawyers have until 15 February to finalize the legal structure.

Communications

AS arrived and, along with TK, discussed the planned communications activities of ALTER-Net. The current communications activities include the website redesign, coordination of communications with EKLIPSE, revisions of the infrastructure video, and updating of promotional materials.

JP offered to host the future ALTER-Net web server at CREAM and potentially offered the services of the CREAM communications team for a redesign of the ALTER-Net website. TK has distributed a doodle to plan a joint meeting between himself, AS, representatives from EKLIPSE, and representatives from CREAM to begin discussions of the redesign and how the EKLIPSE and ALTER-Net websites will be integrated. TK is moving to Germany on 31 January and will begin working with the EKLIPSE team to coordinate between ALTER-Net and EKLIPSE during the transition of EKLIPSE management. He will serve as the go-between point person for these two organizations.

The infrastructure video project revisions have been on hold pending the wait for input from Michael Mirtl, who agreed to guide revisions with perspective from eALTER. MH will reach out immediately to Mirtl's communications personnel so that they can work with TK to promptly begin revision drafting. AS and TK are working on editing and updating promotional materials. AS advised focusing on updating short-form flyers rather than longer brochures; all agreed that less is more in regards to these materials.

Clearing House Mechanism

MK updated the Council on the proposed activities concerning the Call Exchange, ALTER-Net's clearing house mechanism. These include obtaining research profile information from those institutes who have not yet responded to a request for information; the distribution of a personal communication from MK to all contact persons to make sure they are aware of their duties; and the mainstreaming of ALTER-Net calls and channels. AW noted that the Call Exchange feature is very important for numerous partners.

Biodiversity Partnership

PV inquired about the ALTER-Net Biodiversity partnership. MH noted that there has not been much progress on this partnership since the discussion in Antony and MH is still in doubt about what the role of ALTER-Net would be in such a partnership. MH and AW will take on the role of advancing the inclusion of EKLIPSE in a draft proposal. MH will contact Hilde informally to plan a phone call and inquire what they intend to do with the suggestions of AW and MV (on behalf of EKLIPSE). MH requested that this issue be raised at the final EKLIPSE project meeting next week.

BiodivERsA was addressed; they approached ALTER-Net and EKLIPSE. AW is preparing the first Biodiversity Partnership draft to distribute to BiodivERsA. The focus at the moment is on the integration of EKLIPSE.

AHIA

PR presented on the AHIA activity. The 2020 AHIA call was funded and has been released as agreed at the Council meeting. TK has distributed and promoted the call using the website, mailing list, social media, and direct outreach to the Council. To date, only one response to the call has been made but it did not meet the relevance requirements for AHA. More promotion will be sent out on a continuous, rolling basis. The final deadline is March 15, so there is still time for proposals.

MSR

JP was not present at the meeting and no action was planned for the MSR activity in 2020. As such, this agenda item was skipped.

Infrastructure

TK previously provided an update on the infrastructure video. PV mentioned the open call on biodiversity monitoring (HO2020), and noted the recent movement on ecosystem monitoring in the context of the European Green Deal and post-2020 Biodiversity Strategy.

The EEA is in favor of long-term monitoring and the JRC is most strongly linked with current policies; PV is uncertain about DG Environment's position, but noted that all of these groups are focused on biodiversity monitoring and that there are a lot of ongoing discussions. It is therefore important for ALTER-Net to follow these developments, as they could represent an opportunity for funding research by ALTER-Net partners. AW noted that the LTER network could play a major role in relation to such projects. AW questioned whether there are plans for proposals. PV did not have knowledge of any such proposals, but noted that integrating monitoring sites is the main current goal in Finland.

Summer School

AW presented on the Summer School activity. The Council supported funding for this year and the 2021 Summer School, in principle. Among the conveners (AW, Nicholas, MV, Ute Frisch, and Brooke Wilkerson), meetings have been held to reflect and conceptually refresh; a third meeting will be held Wednesday (Jan 29) to plan for speakers and to make decisions. Then advertising will begin. They will relay this new information to TK and AS with a link to the UFZ site, which handles the applications. AS noted that someone has commented on the SS mugs and requested different colors; this will be considered.

ALTER-Net Conference 2021

Discussion of the the 2021 ALTER-Net Conference planning began prior to the arrival of SJ. AW proposed that a MB meeting specifically focused on the conference should be held as soon as possible. Splitting up the work involved was considered desirable.

Summer School alumni from the past year recently met in Brussels and presented ideas about the future of the Summer School and future conferences. Rather than being allocated a space for an add-on session, it was proposed that alumni be invited to co-organize the conference and possibly host one or more themes.

SJ arrived; she agreed that the SS alumni co-organizing is a good idea and that further delegation must be organized. SJ supported the idea of a special MB meeting sometime in February. Meanwhile, an alumni representative can be asked to join the MB meeting. SJ recommended also sending at least two email reminders to make sure that emails extend beyond the council representatives themselves. PR suggested waiting until after the meeting to send out any emails. AW suggested contacting the alumni and asking them to send one representative (ask them as a group to organize themselves); SJ supported this idea.

TK will report back to JVD about these ideas. Ideas will be gathered from PR, SJ, AW, and TK about suitable dates so that they can all be involved.

Science-Policy Interface

MV was not present. AW, MH, and TK will be present at the EKLIPSE project meeting in Leipzig on 6-7 February. AW requested more involvement of the MB in the SPI/EKLIPSE processes, noting that a great deal of work is planned; task forces will be discussed.

CBD-SBBTA

MH was contacted concerning ALTER-Net and the CBD-SBBTA. There may be interest from the CBD for ALTER-Net to participate in a partnership of some form. MH is now in discussion with Marco Fritz about whether a short paragraph could be established on ALTER-Net as a connection to the CBD. MH will further explore possibilities.

Marco Fritz additionally approached EKLIPSE with the idea of holding a meeting on transformative change related to the CBD biodiversity policy. A workshop will be held on 15 March and EKLIPSE will help to facilitate this workshop. SJ questioned if these activities are connected with upcoming IPBES work; they are not, as Marco is proactively trying to address transformative change sooner rather than later.

Proposed New Activities

Proposed new activities include the production of a one-page summary of added value and a 2030 vision document. No movement has been initiated on either activity; the MB welcomes further input from the Council on these items. Due to the developments mentioned by MH, the proposed roundtable discussion of the legal structure is no longer needed.

AW and Nicholas Dendoncker discussed the proposed "second Summer School"; AW opined that it is a great idea, but would need new conveners. AW proposed that this idea could be discussed at the next summer school during a brainstorming and planning session. The goal is to attract new target groups for the Summer School. The MB agreed to move forward gradually with this idea; additional funding would accelerate its planning.

Further discussions can continue at the EKLIPSE project meeting in Leipzig between AW, MH, MV, and TK.

The meeting concluded at 11.00 on 27 January 2020.