

	ALTER-Net Council meeting, Ghent, 21 May 2015
Venue	Augustinian Monastery Academiestraat 1, BE-9000 Ghent, Belgium_
Contact	tessa.vansanten@inbo.be
Attendance	Maurice Hoffmann (INBO; council chair) Györgyi Bela (ESSRG; council vice-chair) Corina Basnou (CREAF) Jesper Fredshavn (DCE) Eeva Furman (SYKE) Tor Heggberget (NINA) Kate Irvine (JHI) Stefan Klotz (UFZ) Mart Külvik (EMU) Christian Lauk (SEC) Per Mickwitz (SYKE) Terry Parr (CEH) Olga Roig (CREAF) Ivo Svejkský (HBU-CAS) Katalin Török (IEB CER HAS) Jiska van Dijk (NINA, MB vice-chair) Tessa Van Santen (INBO, secretariat) Rob Wolters (ECNC)
Absent with notification	Hanne Bach (DCE) Leon Braat (Alterra) Jean-Marc Callois (IRSTEA) Sonja Jähnig (IGB) Veronika Gaube (SEC) Ulf Grandin (SLU) Allison Hester (JHI) Miki Kertesz (IEB CER HAS) Marion Mehring (ISOE) Michael Mirtl (EAA) NN (CNRS) Julius Oszlányi (ILE-SAS) Klement Tockner (IGB) Angheluta Vadineanu (UNIBUC) Allan Watt (CEH) Keimpe Wieringa (PBL)
Absent without notification	Kinga Krauze (ERCE) Fernando Valladares (CSIC)

Welcome and start of the meeting (09.00 – 09.10h)

Session 1 Follow up Brussels meeting June 25-26, 2014 (9.10-9.30h)

1. Approval of Brussels minutes ([doc 01](#))

There were no remarks formulated.

Decision:

The minutes of the meeting in June 2014 were approved without changes ([doc01+](#)).

2. Follow-up Brussels minutes ([doc 01](#))

Maurice goes through the minutes of June 2014 and indicates what has been done and which points need further attention:

- Horizon scanning of future research needs: the proposed task force did not meet;
 - Rob: identify some topics to discuss in the council itself, not everything must be prepared by the MB or a Task force.
 - Eeva: maybe next year, we can organize something back to back with the MB, a brainstorm on calls for example.
 - Maurice: all council members always have the opportunity to add (discussion, brainstorming, ...) points to the agenda; no suggestions were made for the present meeting; given the fact that the council is considered as a “decision-making body of the consortium” (cit MoU, Art. 12), and has as one of its tasks to “make strategic decisions related to the Consortium (cit. MoU, Art.13), and the Management board its task is among others to “prepare consultative documents for the Council meetings on the accomplished and planned activities (including general and specific activity budgets and an annual report) “ (cit. MoU, Art. 15), the council meeting agenda is primarily made up according to the latter.

Conclusion: We will take the remarks on the agenda into consideration when drawing up future council agendas, and to try to add items that make them more interesting and vivid.

- Proposal preparation
 - Maurice: Petteri suggested to have a meeting in June on new proposals that will be launched, will be discussed later (item 9 on the agenda).
- Stakeholder issue
 - Jiska: in the communication plan, there is already a list of stakeholders, it can be extended.
 - Maurice: important to give some attention to re-activate the internal stakeholders.

Conclusion: Council asks the MB to make an update of the list of external and internal stakeholders. The secretariat will facilitate this exercise.

- ALTER-Net was represented at the IPBES plenary meeting in Bonn last January (Maurice as stakeholder (Allan Watt and Carsten Nesshoever were also present, but not on behalf of ALTER-Net))
- Discussion on further IPBES involvement beyond being stakeholder:
 - Györgyi: Supplementary activity would be of added value for ALTER-Net; based on her experience with IPBES from Hungary, she suggests that, given a recent IPBES initiative to establish more global partnerships, focusing on networks, would be a good way to have more ALTER-Net involvement; the IPBES secretariat is open for collaboration. As ALTER-Net we should identify how we can contribute, sending a letter to the IPBES secretariat might be helpful. Györgyi Pataki, current MEP member for the East European states, is active in this process.
 - Supplementary, it would be nice to mobilize other experts from ALTER-Net institutes, but experts are nominated by governments, not by ngo's; ALTER-Net can only try to activate its consortium partners to suggest ALTER-Net researchers to their governments for nomination; ALTER-Net support for regional assessments, knowledge and capacity building is vital though
 - Eeva: (1) someone should take the responsibility to inform (e-mail) the ALTER-Net community on IPBES-issues, not forgetting the young scientists in the consortium? (2) We should somehow monitor how ALTER-Net contributes and can contribute; (3) important to get a better position in IPBES with ALTER-Net.
 - Rob: from an ALTER-Net point of view, why is this IPBES involvement beneficial to the consortium? Not clear that we can offer in kind, and not clear what we can get out of it.
 - Jiska would be happy to contribute, NINA already had two informal meetings with IPBES, it is not so easy to get involved in it.
 - Stefan: ALTER-Net is already an official observer;
 - Katalin: Visibility is one of the benefits to ALTER-Net, it is important to provide some science, important to get involved.
 - Terry: good question why to get involved, IPBES is very important in shaping the biodiversity policy; check what the gaps are, what knowledge is needed. What is the role of ALTER-Net and how can we keep it on track?
 - Rob: important process and hopefully it will lead to more concrete businesses; bring our combined proposals to the secretariat.

Conclusion: no overall picture could yet be developed on what the benefits would be for ALTER-Net to be involved in IPBES, i.e. beyond the observer status. What are the goals, costs and benefits of supplementary involvement in IPBES and how should ALTER-Net contribute to IPBES; an action on ALTER-Net involvement in IPBES is needed on short notice.

Decision: The secretariat will prepare a questionnaire on present-day involvement of ALTER-consortium partners in IPBES (experts, assessment contributors, etc.). Conclusions will be communicated to council and MB; the MB will be asked to translate these findings into an activity for the forthcoming years.

- An ALTER-Net Publication data base has not been maintained; Maurice suggests that he, together with the secretariat, could look further into this. However, it is generally recognized that keeping up with all ALTER-net consortium partners' publications is a

very heavy task, and it is questionable whether this would be of sufficient added value to the consortium.

- Decision: Skip this secretariat task but keep on mentioning publications on the website when a new ALTER-Net paper is published.

Session 2 Partnership issues (9.30-11.00h)

3. Overview of the signed MoU and Pledges ([doc 02](#))

A state-of-the-art overview is shown as a reminder to those representatives whose institute so far forgot to sign the pledge and MoU for 2014.

Alterra motivated by letter why so far they did not sign. To convince Alterra to stay in anyhow, Maurice will take contact with the newly appointed director of Alterra to remind him/her of the benefits that come with the partnership; this will be done in close cooperation with Lawrence Jones-Walters, being member of the MB and affiliated to Alterra, and Leon Braat, former MB chair.

Jesper: DCE wants to keep involved, he thought the MoU and pledge were signed and send, so Jesper will look into it.

With CNRS: we have a new contact through Dominique Joly.

Decision: Maurice will take contact with the newly appointed director of Alterra (July 2015) to remind him/her of the benefits that come with the partnership; this will be done in close cooperation with Lawrence Jones-Walters, being member of the MB and affiliated to Alterra, and Leon Braat, former MB chair. Additionally, the yearly reminder summarizing the achievements of ALTER-Net, and reminding consortium partner on their commitment and signing the yearly pledge, will be send around by the secretariat as soon as the achievements of last year are clearly recognized.

4. New partners

- 4.1. CREAM, Centre for Ecological Research and Forestry Applications (Barcelona, Spain)
Corporate presentation CREAM – Corina Basnou
- 4.2. ISOE, Institute for Social Ecological Research (Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany)
ISOE could not be present during the Council meeting due to an intern evaluation.

Both partners were already accepted earlier through a mail consultation of all council representatives; both were accepted unanimously in October 2014.

No additional candidates for partnership presented themselves lately.

5. Resigning partners

- 5.1. CONECOFOR
Maurice contacted Conecofor; they officially withdrew from ALTER-Net.

Decision: The withdrawal of Conecofor as partner in the ALTER-Net consortium is accepted.

5.2. CSIC

We received no official reaction of CSIC. Olga offers to check informally with her contact persons within CSIC, and will try to stimulate them to be an active partner in ALTER-Net again.

Decision: We will do a final attempt to keep CSIC on board through Olga (CREAF).

6. Partners confirming their partnership

6.1. BC-CAS (Biology Centre, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic)

Ivo Svejkovski confirms at the meeting that BC-CAS likes to stay on board, and that the partnership will not only concern the Institute of Hydrobiology, but the whole Biology Centre.

Conclusion/Decision: BC-CAS at the level of their Biology Centre is welcomed again in our midst; Ivo is welcomed as the new representative in the council.

7. Need of a business plan (suggested by letter to Maurice by Alterra)

ALTER-Net does not have a true business plan, as indicated by Alterra by letter; the question is raised by Maurice if we really need one? During a short discussion, all contributors stated that we do not really need a true business plan, given the availability of documents clearly illustrating our activities.

Decision: there is no need for a business plan, because our general goals and aims are stated in the Memorandum of Understanding and our specific (yearly) goals and activities are well documented by MB prepared documents, that are available to all council and board members. The secretariat, together with the MB, will prepare a document though, that clearly states the deliverables per activity on a yearly basis.

8. Partnership strategy (how to maximize institutes signing the three-yearly MoU and yearly pledges)([doc2+](#))

How should we proceed on attracting new partners? A document was prepared by the MB, and discussed during the council meeting.

The two earlier stated basic ideas were confirmed at the meeting:

- have a pan- European coverage
- have a good coverage of the biodiversity and ecosystem disciplines, that strengthens and underpins our slogan that we are 'Europe's Ecosystem Research Network'.

Comments were given on the following:

Criterion 1: List of countries: when you see the different countries listed, you reflect immediately at your network. The list should also include those countries that are already involved in ALTER-Net.

Criterion 2: Relevant expertise is quite broad, we need to emphasize that we are a "research network"

It is suggested to replace 'relevant expertise' by 'expertise that is relevant to research'

The question is raised whether the (growing) participation in ALTER-Net of social scientists should not be explicitly mentioned; additionally, emphasis to the trans-disciplinarity of the network should be included.

Criterion 3: It was generally concluded that it would be better to skip this criterion

Criterion 4: ok

Criterion 5: 'national scope' ; it is suggested to add at least 'regional scope' and/or 'interregional scope'.

Conclusion/Decision: The document needs some minor adaptations, according to the above suggestions; it will be adapted by the secretariat in cooperation with Ben Delbaere, and will be put on the website.

Coffee break (11.00-11.30h)

Session 3 Overview and discussion ALTER-Net activities (11.30-13.00h)

9. ALTER-Net and EU-projects, including Horizon 2020, collaboration, exchange and networking

9.1. MB-evaluation ([doc 5](#); [doc5+](#))

One of the main reasons for most partner institutes to be in ALTER-Net is to be actively involved in preparing (research) proposals, following calls at any level. ALTER-Net tries to stimulate everyone in the consortium to collaborate in proposal building, and to take participation of partner institutes into consideration when preparing proposals. Being in that privileged position is one of the main drivers for many institutes.

The proposal of the MB to meet at SYKE in June to discuss some proposal calls relevant to the consortium, is welcomed by the council. It is decided though that financing this kind of activity is not within the scope of the consortium.

Some further remarks from the council members concerning collaboration on calls, forming consortia:

- Györgyi: better organize something on a specific call
- Stefan: distinguish between calls where only one consortium could be successful and other calls where more consortia can be successful
- Györgyi talked to Birgit de Boissezon on how to apply for H2020 calls. Budget has dropped during the last years/calls for issues concerning biodiversity and ecosystems. There is an emphasis on innovation now.
- Terry: it is not feasible for ALTER-Net to top-down the proposal writing process.
- Maurice: The smaller consortium institutes ask for a transparent as possible way of proposal building and the possibility to be potentially involved.
- Györgyi: funding per project is decreasing, more proposals is better than less proposals, one should accept competition. However, ALTER-Net can facilitate a lot of things so that partners can be successful in proposal writing.
- Per: we have to be open on our intentions, but when it is on the content, we cannot be open on this, because there will be competition.

Conclusion/Decision: The Council members recognize the importance to disseminate the information on calls. ALTER-Net must facilitate cooperation, spread the information and tell each other in which calls there is interest. At the same time, it is accepted that

ALTER-Net should not thrive for a top-down position of organizing proposal building. The role of ALTER-Net is to facilitate and stimulate relevant proposal participation, not to lead proposal building. The tools to share this information and interest (whether as a coordinator or as participant) should be further developed.

This means that different consortia that (partly) consist of ALTER-Net institutes, will compete for the same call, despite earlier attempts to avoid this. ALTER-Net has the task to facilitate and to stimulate shared proposal building, but it remains the autonomy of the individual institutes to decide on who to involve. However, to enable ALTER-Net to play its facilitating and stimulating role, sharing information on proposal building initiatives is vital. The facilitation is on information and on (shared) interests, but does not include financing specific meetings.

Hence, council members are urgently asked to stimulate their scientists to communicate on (potential) proposal initiatives to Petteri Vihervaara (MB member responsible for proposal building) on a regular basis, in order to enable him to inform ALTER-Net partners.

Everyone agrees that it is the job of the council members to keep the researchers at their institute active in sharing this info with ALTER-Net.

10. Communication

10.1. MB-evaluation ([doc 3](#))

Council expresses its sincere gratitude to Andy and Ben, MB members responsible for communication, who spent a lot of time in this activity, and more specifically in maintaining the website. It is asked by the MB whether anyone would be willing to spend some in kind contribution to help them with this formidable task.

Andy indicated that he has too little time to maintain and develop the website. He therefore asks whether there's a need to further maintain and develop the 'news and views' website? Given this remark, it is asked how often this part of the website is visited, in other words if it is worth maintaining this part given the effort put into it.

Conclusion: Andy will be asked to check how frequently the 'news and views' part of the ALTER-Net website is consulted. Depending on the outcome, it can be decided by the MB autonomously to maintain or skip that part of the website.

In case the MB concludes that it is worthwhile to maintain 'news and views', the secretariat will ask the council members to come up with potential volunteers that can contribute to its maintenance, in order to limit the in-kind of Andy.

The activity suggestions made in [doc3](#) are accepted.

Lunch (13.00-14.00h)

Session 3bis Overview and discussion ALTER-Net activities (14.00-15.30h)

11. Common Training Programme

11.1. Summer School ([doc 4](#))

Focus of the Summer School last year was again on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. The MB-questions raised to the council in doc4 were dealt with as follows:

- *Acknowledge the continued support of the Peyresq Foyer d'Humanisme to the summer schools*
 - Council confirms its support as suggested
- *Discuss and advise the conveners on the strategy and content of the ALTER-Net summer schools*
 - Potential supplementary issues that could be dealt with at the SS and that came up in the council meeting are 1. To include the nature-based solution concept in the SS, 2. to include a more business aimed approach, 3. to include tutor participation of practitioners, 4. to include health issues in connection to biodiversity and ecosystem services, 5. to include participatory processes, bringing stakeholders together into decision making that includes ecosystem services.
- *Agree to continue the current funding strategy (including student fees and no more than five grants to students unable to pay the fees) with a contribution of approximately €35,000 from the ALTER-Net budget*
 - Council agrees with the suggestions made
- *Agree in principle to support the 2016 Summer School to allow continuity of planning*
 - Council agrees with the suggestions made

Conclusion: In general, council agrees with all suggestions made in [doc4](#) on continuation and future plans for the Summer School (see details above).

It wishes to thank explicitly the conveners and wish them lots of inspiration and courage to maintain and further develop this highly successful activity of ALTER-Net.

It wishes to explicitly thank Sanna-Riikka Saarela wholeheartedly for her strong positive engagement and effort put into the SS. Likewise, the council expresses its gratitude to SYKE for its surplus of in kind contribution to the Summer School.

11.2. Additional training programmes

A general discussion was initiated on possible additional training 'programmes'.

Suggested topics were

- monitoring methodologies relevant for habitat and birds directive reporting to EU, e.g. environmental DNA techniques, remote sensing techniques, ...
- something around the AHIA-paper subject on citizen science.

Although some members wondered what ALTER-Net can get out of these joint training programmes, and what role ALTER-Net could play in organizing these, it was emphasized that co-production of knowledge is an important issue for ALTER-Net; sharing knowledge, expertise among consortium partners was initially and remains a basic goal of the network. It was then realized that the use of the term 'joint training programme' might be bad wording for what is really meant, i.e. joint workshops aimed at learning from one another, not on one partner 'training' others.

The follow up of the AHIA project on citizen science could be interesting for many of our institutes.

There is a general feeling that we need something bottom up, we should not force people into any subject for workshops. If the organization of joint workshops would be successful, then it could be included as one of the options to be financed by the mobility

fund. This is doubted though, since the mobility fund is meant for individuals, not for group activities.

There's a general agreement ('it's worth trying') that further development of joint activities in a format of joint workshops is worth developing; it is also agreed that the budget suggested by the MB is worth spending and can be agreed upon. It is asked though where the money can be spent on, is it for the partners who organize the workshop initiative? It is suggested to allocate the money to organizational costs.

Conclusion/Decision: There is a positive feeling on the idea of joint workshops. The council is positive about the proposal of Philip to organize some workshops, but advises to do this bottom-up rather than forcing particular subjects top-down. Council wishes to allocate a budget of maximum 15k€ to organize potential workshops. The budget should be spent on organisational costs. Suggestions for workshops can be made to Philip Roche directly, or via the secretariat. This will be communicated through our website. Potential participants can individually apply for travel and lodging cost reimbursement through the mobility fund.

12. Science-policy interface

12.1. Biodiversity knowledge system for €pe ([doc 6](#); [doc 6+](#))

There were miscellaneous thoughts, remarks and feelings on the concrete initiative co-financed by ALTER-Net on bringing together networks discussing the format of a proposal on a network of networks, the follow-up of the FP7 project KNEU (Biodiversity Knowledge). Depending on the format, more or less partners could be included in the proposal. Given the strategy followed in the proposal to choose for a limited number of first level partners, this might have led to development of several bits in which different ALTER-Net partner participate. Given the fact that no formal knowledge on bits, let alone 'winners' is available, it was considered far too early to evaluate our attempt to bring together an extremely ambitious network of networks. We should evaluate this type of activity though, to learn from it for future initiatives by ALTER-Net on this type of issue. It is suggested that a skype meeting on this issue is organized, once a decision on granting one of the bits has been made.

Conclusion: the council considers it a good idea to evaluate this initiative on co-financing network building, once a decision has been made by the EC on the gaining bit. Council suggests that this is organized by the MB.

12.2. Opinion paper ([doc 7](#))

After a call to all ALTER-Net partners to be involved in writing this paper, a group of people came together at a meeting organized in Berlin. Quite some progress was made in developing this paper on the Nature-Based Solution concept. A highly appreciated state of affairs was presented by Heidi Wittmer at the ALTER-Net pre conference on the 18th of May.

Conclusion: The council appreciates the initiative to develop an opinion paper on the Nature-Based Solution concept, and looks forward to the final results, and the paper that is planned to come out of it. The council wishes to thank the participants in the paper preparation for their in kind contribution.

13. Biodiversity and ecosystem research infrastructures

13.1. LTER ([doc 8](#); [doc 8+](#))

Three realizations were achieved in 2014-2015:

- Workshop in February 2015 to finalize the ALTER-Net paper on Biodiversity strategies in general – this paper is almost finished
- eLTER horizon 2020 proposal: better sharing of data, with a selection of LTER networks; this was granted in H2020.
- ESFRI-proposal: Germany will take the lead. Stefan informs that the Netherlands wants to join, given the fact that they obtained a governmental consent recently; twelve countries are involved now in the ESFRI-proposal.
- Upgrading of the DEIMS database has been realized
- Suggested budget:
 - 5k€ was allocated before but not used until now.
 - Question of Michael to allocate 15k this year
 - We allocated so far 10k € per year. Now a raise up to 15k is asked. Terry is very supportive, but why the 5k€ extra because DEIMS could also be done in the eLTER budget. It is concluded that a more explanation is needed on why 5 k€ more is being asked.

Conclusion/Decision: In principle the council agrees to allocate a 10k€ budget to this activity, but when the MB responsible (Michael Mirtl) can clarify where he needs the extra 5 k€ for, council is willing to consider this budget increase; a decision on this can be realized through a general council mail consult by the secretariat.

14. ALTER-Net High Impact Actions (AHIA)

14.1. MB-evaluation – state of the art ([doc 9](#); [doc9+](#))

One project started at ESSRG on citizen science, the second elected proposal withdrew for budgetary reasons; a manuscript entitled “Learning and transformative potential of citizen science: Lessons from the study of Nature” was submitted to *Conservational Biology*.

At the last Council meeting (June 2014) it was asked to revise the procedure of the AHIA. The

MB prepared a new proposal ([doc9](#)).

- After a short discussion on the MB proposal, council principally concludes that the new procedure is ok, and that it can be further fine-tuned according to the following suggestions:
 - Launch for a call by the secretariat, launch at the end of January, project proposal on one A4 paper, making up a non-prioritized short list with max. 10 proposals and then a yearly revisable council-board delegation will decide on the selection. Up to a maximum of two projects to be realized per year.
- Lessons learned from the on-going AHIA-project
 - Györgyi has a presentations with lessons learned from the first AHIA round. So far, no conflicts arise between lessons learned and the new procedure. In this context, Györgyi asks what ALTER-Net should or could do in the future in the field of citizen science? She states that citizen science is very popular in the H2020 contexts: Next year a citizen science related call is coming up.

- If we want to go further in consolidating a team on this, we should put it in another activity, because otherwise every AHIA could lead to a new team.
- Györgyi experienced it difficult to organize the work in an effective way, now it was most an online collaboration.
- From the very beginning, the AHIA-project should be very focused. AHIA is very much about coordination, it takes a lot of time.
- Györgyi is prepared to write down here findings on this first AHIA in a short note.

Conclusions/Decisions: the new procedure and budget allocation proposal developed by the MB is principally accepted; the following issues are to be included though:

Point 5. The shortlist should not be a *prioritized* list; prioritization is a council's job.

It is further decided to launch the call at fixed dates, and all consecutive steps will also be fixed in time in order to ascertain the starting date of every granted project;

Point 6: a delegation of the council supplemented with two MB members is to be appointed every year to prioritize the short list, this will not necessarily be a fixed number of people. For 2015 it is decided that from the MB Lawrence (coordinator) and one supplementary MB member (to be decided by the MB), and from council Maurice, Terry, Eeva and Kate will take part in the prioritizing procedure.

For 2015, the following timing is decided 1st of August 2015: launch; 1st of October submission deadline; 1st of November: non-prioritized shortlist ready; 1st of December: decision on project(s) approval; 1st of January 2016: start project; 31st December 2016: deliverables project

From 2016 onwards, the same timing is suggested, but starting with the 31st January of every year, and hence start of the project(s): 1st of June.

Györgyi will write down here findings on the first AHIA project in a short note, to be distributed among council and board members by the secretariat.

15. Research Projects

15.1. Multi-Site Experiment ([doc 10](#); [doc10+](#))

The report on the on-going MSE on dung beetles is presented in document [doc10+](#). Final results are expected by the end of 2015.

A total budget was allocated of 20k€, 12.500€ in the first year (2014-15) and 7.500€ in the second year (2015-16). This type of activity was brought in when ALTER-net was still financed by Europe. We so far realized three MSE. The question has arisen at the last council if this was still within the scope of ALTER-Net. Additionally, the questions is raised how projects are selected? Although there is a proposal form available to launch MSE-calls, the selection procedure has not been clearly defined.

The on-going dung beetle project was submitted for the MSE-call of 2013 and it was the only project; selection was decided by council.

Although it is suggested during the meeting that the whole MSE-concept would better be phased out and the money used for something else, others suggests that we first need to elaborate this with the TF and discuss it at the next council meeting.

Conclusion: The task force that had been decided upon in Aix in January 2014 (Frauke, Terry, Stefan, Maurice) on the future structure of MSE should meet. Frauke Ecke (MB) will be asked to take the initiative to come up with a proposal to redefine the MSE-concept, and discuss this with the task force members. It is supplementary asked to describe a selection procedure.

15.2. Back-to-the-future project – ([doc 10++](#))

A progress report is presented in document [doc 10++](#). As no comments are included by the MB, the council concludes that no further funding is requested by the project partners. Given the good progress made in the project so far, the council wishes to stimulate the project group to finalize their reports.

Council concludes to await these final reporting results, before deciding on possible follow ups of it, and not before a suggestion on this is made by the MB.

16. ALTER-Net event: ALTER-Net Conference 2015: “Nature and Urban Wellbeing. Nature-based solutions to Societal Challenges”

16.1. First feedback, ideas and suggestions of the council partners

- Jiska: excellent conference
- Kate: impressed by the quality of the presented material, many inspiring discussions
- Per: enjoyed it, informal atmosphere, good mix of people
- Stefan: not too much in depth discussion could take place, different people with different background, find a journal for a special issue on this.
- Rob: good (original) poster session

Conclusion: Timo and Sanna-Riikka as initiators of this conference, but also all members of the organizing and scientific committee get a deserved applause from the council members for this successful major event, and wished them further success with the follow-up of the conference.

16.2. Outcomes conference 2015

16.2.1. Outcomes, policy options, follow-up

Presentations will be on the ALTER-Net website; the organizers are still searching for a journal to publish a selection of the presentations, to think out a good policy options letter, and to have a successful follow up at the EEF conference in Rome (round table).

16.3. First ideas on subjects for the next conference event (principally in 2017)

A couple of preliminary suggestions are made by the council members:

- Climate change
- Innovative monitoring techniques (for pan-European N2000 evaluation)
- Follow-up NBS
- Land use – biodiversity relations
- Landscape management
- Restoration and biodiversity

- Circular economy and NBS
- Citizen science
- Restoration
- Include the two DG's (DG-RTD, DG-Environment) in selecting a subject
- Subject in which a majority of ALTER-Net partners is strongly involved in

Coffee break (15.30-16.00h)

Session 4 Spending and Budget (16.00-17.00h)

17. ALTER-Net Mobility fund ([doc 11](#))

The decision was made to keep the Mobility Fund and to maintain a budget of 15k€. The Council members are asked to promote this within their institute. The rules and description can be found on the ALTER-Net website.

18. Budgetary issues

- 18.1. Budget overview (up to 14th of April 2015) ([doc12](#))
- 18.2. Overview MB budget proposals April 2015 – March 2016 ([doc 13](#))

Budget proposals as suggested by the MB are accepted, unless stated otherwise in any of the conclusions/decisions formulated above.

19. AOB

19.1. Next council meeting

The suggestion was made to organize the next council meeting during two days. This allows us to have more in-depth discussions on the documents that the Management Board provides for the Council meeting and to think more strategically on the role that ALTER-Net should play in Europe, in research, and in other networks. More discussion is needed at the council meeting, apart from a decision making part, council also needs a strategic and a more science-aimed part.

19.2. Fresh water platform

The new Freshwater Information Platform has been made publically available - it is a follow-up activity of the EU-funded projects BioFresh and MARS.

<http://www.freshwaterplatform.eu/>

20. Date and venue next meeting

No decisions were taken at the meeting on when and where to hold the next council meeting.