

	<p align="center">ALTER-Net Council meeting, Brussels, 25-26th June 2014</p>
<p>Venue</p>	<p>Research Institute for Nature & Forest (INBO) Kliniekstraat 25, BE-1070 Brussels, Belgium, auditorium, ground floor_</p>
<p>Contact</p>	<p>tessa.vansanten@inbo.be</p>
<p>Attendance</p>	<p>Maurice Hoffmann (INBO, chair) Allan Watt (CEH, MB chair) Jean-Marc Callois (IRSTEA) Eeva Furman (SYKE) Veronika Gaube (SEC) Ulf Grandin (SLU) Alison Hester (JHI) Tor Heggberget (NINA) Sonja Jähnig (IGB) Miki Kertesz (IEB CER HAS) Stefan Klotz (UFZ; Thursday) Kinga Krauze (ERCE) Mart Külvik (EMU; Wednesday) Michael Mirtl (via skype) Julius Oszlanyi (ILE-SAS; Wednesday) Terry Parr (CEH) Angheluta Vadineanu (UNIBUC) Tessa Van Santen (INBO; secretariat) Keimpe Wieringa (PBL) Rob Wolters (ECNC)</p>
<p>Absent with notification</p>	<p>Hanne Bach (DCE) Györgi Bela (ESSRG) Leon Braat (Alterra) Gudrun Bornette (CNRS) Caroline Geeraerts (INBO, secretariat ALTER-Net) Sanna-Riikka Saarela (SYKE) Klement Tockner (IGB) Fernando Valladares (CSIC) Peter Verburg (VU-IVM)</p>
<p>Absent without notification</p>	<p>Cristiana Cocciufa (CONECOFOR) Vera Straskrabova (HBI-CAS)</p>

- Biodiversity and ecosystem research infrastructures – specifically in close interaction with LTER-Europe and LifeWatch; Michael Mirtl (EEA)
- ALTER-Net High Impact Actions; Lawrence Jones-Walters (Alterra)
- Research Projects incl. Multi-Site Experiments, Marie Curie ITN and Back-to-the-future project; Frauke Ecke (SLU),
- Annual ALTER-Net event (shared responsibility).

Some general conclusions from Aix were:

- Mobility fund will be kept
- Logo of ALTER-Net should be on LTER-website
- Summer school = top priority of ALTER-Net
- MSE-proposal on dung beetles was accepted
- AHIA (ALTER-Net High Impact Action), projects were prioritized
- Willingness to sign the MoU and pledges was large
- Changes in goals and objectives are taken up in the MoU
- Horizon2020: ALTER-Net will rather structurally than financially facilitate temporary consortium building in proposal preparation
- Science-policy: further on the council meeting agenda
- Research infrastructure: further on the council meeting agenda
- Annual event: Clear preference for a conference on Nature based solutions and Urban contexts
- Budget and pledges: annually budget based on cash contributions of consortium partners estimated at 100 000 €
- ALTER-Net should remain its pan-European character, and expand its expertise when necessary.

Terry has a question about one of the core businesses mentioned in the slides, i.e. *'Invest in Horizon Scanning of future research needs in its core businesses'*. Since there are many different views on what is meant with this horizon scanning, this activity needs further elaboration. Maurice admits that this is an added activity that was not formally accepted as such at the council meeting in Aix, nor proposed by the MB at that time; the additional idea for a core activity came up after discussions with some of the council members during the last months. Rob welcomes the added activity, but wonders how it will be put into practice: Do we consider this as an activity that acts as an ALTER-Net lobby to promote our own future research initiatives, ...?

Decision

- Different Council members think this activity is very important and of significant added value; adding it to the ALTER-Net core activities is considered a good suggestion. It is welcomed and accepted.

Action

- To further elaborate the meaning and contents of it, a mixed task force is set up: there is interest to participate in this by Alison, Eeva, Kinga, Ulf, Terry; Maurice suggests to also involve Stefan in this task force; the suggestion is accepted.
- The MB is asked to organize this temporary task force.

5.2. VU-IVM

They are withdrawing because they couldn't meet the conditions in the MoU. Since they themselves took the initiative to withdraw, no initiatives are expected to convince them otherwise.

Decision

The withdrawal of VU-IVM as partner in the ALTER-Net consortium is accepted.

6. Partners not meeting the MoU conditions for a longer period of time
 CONECOFOR, CSIC, HBI-CAS

Maurice asks if he should take further action to keep these institutes further involved actively. Miki suggests to further try to contact people of these institutes, by using our personal networks. Julius will ask Vera from HBI-CAS if they are able and willing to sign the MoU or, if not, whether an alternative Czech Institute could be suggested. Eeva mentions that she had lasting contacts with Cristina Cocciufa (CONECOFOR), problem is that Cristina has no support from within her institute.

Eeva proposes to send a letter to the respective representatives, explaining the situation, and asking officially whether they want to remain partner or not. In the letter it will explicitly be asked to answer, otherwise ALTER-Net will consider them not interested anymore, and will vote on their withdrawal at the next council meeting.

Action

- Maurice will first contact Conecofor and CSIC in an informal way sounding them for their interest in maintaining partnership, and after that a formal letter will be send to the institutes with the question to sign the MoU and, in which we explain that a decision will be taken at the next council meeting if they do not respond. Julius will contact Vera on partnership of her institute; any other initiative of council members on these three partners are welcomed.

7. Potential new partners

As far as new partnership is concerned the MoU says:

a new partner institute will be asked to send the following to the ALTER-Net secretariat:

- information from the new partner institute explaining the expertise and/or capacity in strategic biodiversity research of the institute;
- an invitation letter from an existing consortium partner who acknowledges the candidacy;
- a draft letter of agreement (i.e. a draft pledge) to the MoU applicable between April 2014 - April 2017

Newly applying candidate partners are:

7.1. NaGRIDD, Université de Namur, Namur Research Group on Sustainable Development (Belgium)

7.2. CREAM, Centre for Ecological Research and Forestry Applications (Barcelona, Spain)
 App. 100 scientists, more than half of their subjects are related to ALTER-Net

7.3. Gianna Dondini, leading a small society for zoologic research and for educational programmes about biodiversity and science (Nature and Archaeological Centre of Pistoia Apennines, Tuscany, Italy)

7.4. ISOE, Institute for Social Ecological Research (Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany)

The above-mentioned institutes recently expressed their interest in becoming a full member of ALTER-Net by mail. All were sent the MoU and model-pledge.

- NaGRIDD did repeat their interest after reading MoU and pledge, but none of the above-mentioned documents were received so far; INBO is willing to draw an invitation letter given the fact that they have positive experience with the group in projects within the scope of ALTER-Net;
- From CREAM we received a signed pledge, an invitation letter from ILE-SAS and an informative document on their institute, a signed MoU is on its way;
- After sending MoU and model-pledge we did not yet receive a reply from the Nature and Archaeological Centre of Pistoia Apennines (Gianna Dondini);
- After sending MoU and model-pledge we did not yet receive signed documents from ISOE, but they repeated their interest; potential partnership will be discussed at their institute in October this year.

Conclusion

- Most of the council members support the principle: “the more the merrier”;
- A full dossier is needed (i.e. an invitation letter from an existing ALTER-Net partner, a presentation of their institute, a signed pledge letter and MoU) before a decision of acceptance can be made.

Action

- All presently known potential new partners will be informed accordingly by Maurice; they will be asked to supply the secretariat with all the necessary documents. These will be sent by email to the Council members for approval. They will have a month to answer the question whether they agree that the applicant can become a new member or not. From the replies, a 2/3 majority should be in favour in order to have acceptance of the new partner.
- To inform potential new members, the formal procedure will be put available on our website at <http://www.alter-net.info/join>

8. Strategy to attract new partners

Two main questions arise:

- Do we want to attract more partners?
- Do we need to have a formal strategy on attracting new partners?

Mart: we do not have a clear partnership policy; what if we grow to 50 or 75 members; what are the qualifications needed to become a member? We have discussed this before, but no clear decision on this was ever made.

Maurice replies that earlier, two issues were considered important for expanding the consortium (see also doc 02+): first, ALTER-Net should be representative for Europe, hence should be pan-European, and second, the need for additional expertise that is presently

interesting/challenging for ALTER-Net researchers to participate in this activity (they want to know what is in it for them; a link to Horizon 2020 calls might help), work on the development of tools to implement at a local (city) scale, apart from human health, also include the urban footprint which is an extremely relevant and perhaps even more challenging concept, focus should not only be on the relationship between human well-being and ecosystem health but also on solutions offered by ecosystem health.

A shared opinion by all council members was that it is generally considered of high added value if some *good show cases* are included.

An important questions arose, i.e. does the ALTER-Net consortium has enough expertise on human health; it was proposed to have other consortia/persons involved who have their focus on human health rather than on ecology/ecosystems.

These general brainstorming ideas, questions and suggestions were not sufficiently conclusive though. Hence, it was decided to leave the development of title, scope and program of the conference to the scientific and/or organizing committee, taking into consideration the reflections made by the council.

Candidates for the organizing committee: Sanna-Riikka Saarela; Timo Assmuth (SYKE), Hans Keune (INBO), Aysegul Cil (ECNC), Simon Bell (EMU), Verboom (Alterra), Vegard Gunderson, (NINA), Carsten Nesshöver (UFZ), Marta Dobrovodská (ILE-SAS), EC-representatives from DG-RTD, **to be completed**

Candidates for the scientific committee from the Council: **to be completed**

Decisions

- The council decides that a conference on nature-based solution back-to-back with the EC (DG-RTD) will be held with the intention to organize it in May 2015 in Brussels, and aiming at approx. 250 participants. SYKE is asked to take the lead in the organization of the conference;
- Further details on the conference title, scope and program should be elaborated by the organizing (OC) and scientific committee (SC), they are asked to take the reflections of the council into consideration;
- The composition of OC and SC will be decided by council through a mail demand; this should be realized as soon as possible, given the short period before the conference is planned to take place.

Thursday 26th June 2014

Session 4 Partnership and stakeholders (9.00-9.45h)

10. Who are our prime external stakeholders? (Rob Wolters)

A presentation on stakeholder theory and practicalities for ALTER-Net is given by Rob; the presentation was prepared together with Ben Delbaere en Andy Sier. We refer to doc xy for further details

Questions and suggestions to the Council were:

- Decide on a clear-cut list of our prime external stakeholders?
- Include stakeholder reviews in every ALTER-Net activity at the beginning
- Ask the MB to develop an external stakeholder engagement plan for decision making

Comments:

- Eeva: good recommendations in the presentation; good advice that when we organize something we need to think more who are our end users; so make a plan on who we target
- Maurice notes that a large number of stakeholders are mentioned who were recently not yet recognized as such at the ALTER-Net level; this long list might be the result of the fact that stakeholders like ngo's, managers, industries and business are institutional stakeholders of at least some of the 26 ALTER-Net partners, but they are not necessarily also the (prime) stakeholders of the consortium
- Terry also recognizes the length of the list of (potential) stakeholders, and urges for prioritization: internally, the primary stakeholders for the council are directors of institutes and our fellow researchers, externally, this would be the European commission; hence, both should be recognized as such; it will be distracting to involve many of the secondary stakeholders.
- Keimpe: making up a list of stakeholders is really time consuming to do; it is not only making a list, but it is a true research question to know the true interests of the stakeholders, so look for the common interest, we really need to understand what the stakeholders' concerns are.
- Angheluta stresses one word, co-development; this knowledge will feed the policy side.
- Eeva: emphasis on the co-production of knowledge is really important
- Maurice: two focuses: the commission and our colleague researchers and directors
- Allan: those who we want to influence, so our funding stakeholders are very important
- Jean-Marc: every stakeholder has its own strategy: to meet this, we need to have a broad set of stakeholders, we need to build long term partnerships.
- Rob: make it practical, do a bit of research on stakeholders, identify your stakeholders from the beginning

Allan concludes that actions regarding stakeholders are required:

- A stakeholder view in every activity is needed
- Three main groups: High EU policy makers; directors of our institutes, fellow researchers

Allan presents an overview of all the MB-activities, discussed at the MB-meeting of the 5th of May of this year (see doc04+)

13. Summer School 2014 (doc 05)

Comments

- Terry: survey of the participants, are they moving into influencing positions, is there plan to do this survey? Allan says the convenors will look into this;
- Kinga: LinkedIn group or a platform on facebook where tutors and students can keep in touch; Allan replies that there is a LinkedIn group, but it's not very active;
- Maurice asks to send around the list of participants, so we can know if we were successful in promoting the SS.

Decisions

- The Council agrees with the Summer School activity as it has been put forward in doc 05
- A list of participants will be sent to the council members, once the list is final (not long before the actual SS takes place).

14. Communication Action Plan (doc 06)

No comments were given on the communication plan, except on the question to shorten the ALTER-Net slogan; it is considered too long by Andy and Ben, to be sufficiently attractive. Miki prefers that biodiversity remains in the slogan; Stefan does not agree on this; Terry recalls that we planned to further highlight the ecosystem part in our communication; Kinga reminds that LTER also uses the "ecosystem research network" slogan; Rob prefers the short title and would prefer to keep biodiversity in the title; Alison states that biodiversity is becoming old fashioned and not future-aimed

A voting is organized: 6 are in favour of 'Europe's biodiversity research network', 10 are in favour of 'Europe's ecosystem research network'

Decisions

- The Council agrees with the Communication Plan as it has been put forward in doc 06
- The Council decides that the one and only slogan on the website will be "Europe's ecosystem research network", this replaces the earlier longer version "Europe's biodiversity, ecosystem and ecosystem services research network"
- A discussion on how we relate the three basic issues of ALTER-Net (biodiversity, ecosystems and ecosystem services) is needed on the next Council meeting, the splitting discussion is a sign that we have very diverse opinions on this; the fact that we recently also focused on socio-economic subjects in the three basic ALTER-Net issues is presently also not included in the slogan.

15. Science-policy interface

15.1. Network of Knowledge (doc 07; doc07+)

Purpose = move from the proposed model to a real network of knowledge

Carsten his proposal is that ALTER-Net supports an interim plan
Maurice asks the support of the other members for this business plan

Decision

- The Council agrees with the Joint activity of ALTER-Net and other major biodiversity knowledge hubs to develop a “business plan” for a future Network of Knowledge to support decision-making as it has been put forward in doc 07.
- The Council does not agree with the budget that is proposed in doc 07. Budget issues are dealt with under item 21 on the agenda.

15.2. Opinion paper (doc 08)

Preparing an opinion paper as proposed in doc 08 is welcomed by the council. Eeva would appreciate getting it prepared before the conference, and Alison suggests that it can be in the first conference session to discuss the importance of nature-based solutions; Ulf estimates that the timing makes it difficult to contribute actively and on such short notice. It is therefore suggested by Allan to keep the call open for a longer time, closing in September Rob stresses again that it is very useful to determine stakeholders, and what the expected impact will be.

Decision

- The Council principally agrees with the Development and submission of an ALTER-Net opinion paper on “Nature-based solutions” as it has been put forward in doc 07,
- It nevertheless asks to postpone the deadline for the Call for Expression of Interests to ALTER-Net partners to join to the 15th of September 2015, in order to enable all ALTER-Net partners to seriously join the working group.
- Additionally, the Council considers a physical three day writing work shop an overkill and suggests to make use of other means to organize meetings, e.g. through skype.

16. Research Projects (Joint training activities, Marie Curie, ITN and MSE) (doc 12)

Marie Curie ITN. Allan reports on a Marie Curie proposal (doc 12), that has been submitted in April. A decision is expected in September, Marie Curie is focusing on funding shared training programs and on funding PhD students

MSE-experiment, state of the art. Maurice reports on the state of the art of the MSE-experiment on the ecosystem functions of dung beetle assemblages along a bioclimatic gradient in Europe. Presently, 14 sites are operational (see doc zz); everyone does the experiment the same way; costs are mainly material and mail costs; Maurice can report on this, is this dealing with ALTER-Net goals.

The task force (Frauke, Terry, Stefan, Maurice) that has been decided upon in Aix in January 2014 on the future structure of MSE still has to start up; Terry has his doubts about the trans-disciplinarity of the on-going experiment.

17. EU-projects ALTER-Net

17.1. Sharing information on forth-coming research calls

Maurice raises the question whether any of the ALTER-Net partners that have people in their institute that have the task to actively screen the market for upcoming calls of any kind, would be in the possibility and willing to share this information with the ALTER-Net partners proactively (if relevant for the biodiversity, ecosystems and ecosystem services aspects in which the ALTER-Net consortium is interested/involved), e.g. through the secretariat and/or through Petteri Vihervaara (MB-responsible for external projects). It was discussed at the MB-meeting in May, and sharing this information was considered of significant added value for the ALTER-Net core activity on joint participation in potential EU-projects. Presently, several of the smaller institutes do not have such a facilitating service within their institutes. It is left with the council members to look whether this idea would stand any chance in their institute. Jean-Marc expects this to be impossible for at least some institutes to spread this around; he suggests to identify the most relevant calls and share this with the network. Allan: very thin line to circulate when the information is considered confidential

Meanwhile, there's the general wish of all consortium partners to inform one another on potentially interesting calls for proposals, and if someone from the consortium partners foresees to prepare a proposal, that the (relevant) consortium partners would at least be given the opportunity to show their interest in (co-)leading a proposal, or participating.

Actions

- Council members are asked to look in their institute whether sharing their information on calls for proposals that are potentially interesting for the ALTER-Net consortium would stand any chance.
- It is asked to Petteri to evaluate the presently installed follow-up system together with Jiska and Sanna-Riikka and, if necessary, further develop it.

17.2. Relevance of keeping a database giving an overview of on-going ALTER-Net collaborations

The present-day database contains accepted proposals where ALTER-Net partners are involved in. Tor will discuss this with Jiska and ask her if the database is up-to-date.

Eeva is firm on the need for ALTER-Net to keep this database up-to-date, e.g. to show this spin-off of the ALTER-Net partnership to our directors.

Maurice asks whether the database should be expanded with on-going preparation of new proposals, in order to give the opportunity to consortium partners to show their interest.

Angheluta states that the smaller institutes can mostly not take up the leadership in a proposal preparation, but they can help in proposal preparation.

Kinga: it is up to each institute to ask, sometimes they apply for different consortia, which are in competition

Eeva gives the following suggestions: inform one another if there is a call, activate the ALTER-Net community, send an email to all the partners, it is up to the coordinator/leading partner to take those in he wants; show good practice on those who are coordinating to bring it open to the ALTER-Net community

Nonetheless it is generally accepted that it is the liberty of every institute to work with those they choose themselves, we obviously cannot make ALTER-Net partnership obligatory.

Tor mentions that in Norway, the Research Council demands that all potential Norwegian partners in a proposal are consulted on their willingness to participate or not.

Allan suggests that both projects are principally approved, but that comments can be directly addressed to the initiator (ESSRG and Irstea, respectively).

Terry states that he is not happy with the 'ridiculous' procedure followed so far, he considers it to be organized too much top down, and suggests to redo the exercise on the procedure for forthcoming AHIA-initiatives, and then consider a more bottom up procedure.

Decisions

- The Council decides that the two projects that were suggested by the MB are selected as first AHIA-projects within the scope of the AHIA-project procedure as discussed at the Berlin Meeting and within the foreseen budget in 2013-14;
- Both projects are principally accepted, but especially the Vespucci proposal needs further definition of the scope (slim it down), of the detail on goals (make it concrete) and outcome (fit it in the AHIA-protocol); the MB will further supply both initiators with suggestions and comments;
- Both initiators are urged to give the opportunity to all ALTER-Net partners to select researchers from their institutes to participate in the project by invitation through council members;
- A 12 500 € budget is allocated in the budget for both proposals.

Action

- The MB is asked to reconsider the AHIA selection procedure

19. Infrastructure

- 19.1. Infrastructure activities (doc 15)
- 19.2. Think tank paper (doc15+)

After a skype introduction by Michael Mirtl a short discussion followed.

Terry testifies that a lot of the workshops were on a very high level, and that a need for a wider range of research scientist is felt; he asks how we can further engage a broader range of research scientist

Decision

- The Council agrees with the Infrastructure activities as they have been put forward in doc 15.
- Deadline for feedback of council members on the suggested activities (especially the think tank paper) and ideas on how to further engage a broader range of scientists: 10th of September.

20. ALTER-Net Mobility fund – (doc 13)

Comments:

Allan stresses that we should more frequently use it; it is suggested to promote the mobility fund once more among our fellow researchers as a direct tool to connect researchers from different ALTER-Net institutes and to promote (research) integration . There were no remarks on the restrictions on the granting of mobility funds.

Decision

that the next council meeting will again be in Brussels (the aimed location for the conference). Otherwise we select Budapest to be the next council meeting location.

Date: Somewhere in May 2015 preceding or succeeding the conference.