ALTER-Net Management Board Meeting Minutes

Brussels – 1-2 October 2018

Venue	INBO, Brussels
Contact	tscottkulfan@gmail.com
Attendance	[JVD] 1. Jiska van Dijk (NINA, Chair MB) [MH] 2. Maurice Hoffmann (INBO; Council chair) [AW] 3. Allan Watt (CEH [former] – Vice-Chair MB) [SJ] 4. Sonja Jähnig (IGB) [MK] 5. Mart Külvik (EMU) [JP] 6. Joan Pino (CREAF) [MV] 7. Marie Vandewalle (UFZ) [PR] 8. Philip Roche (Irstea) [AS] 9. Andy Sier (CEH) [PV] 10. Petteri Vihervaara (SYKE) Attending, non-MB member: [JVV] Janine van Vessem (INBO) [TK] Tyler Kulfan (ALTER-Net Secretariat)
Minutes	Tyler Kulfan (Alter-Net Secretariat); tscottkulfan@gmail.com

Management Board meeting commenced at 13.00 on 1 October, 2018.

1. **Introduction, Meeting Objectives, and Status Update on Council Issues**
   MH welcomes all present to INBO and Brussels; Chair (Jiska van Dijk) commences the 2018 meeting of the ALTER-Net Management Board. The meeting agenda will be a review of the progress made over the past year and consideration of the 2019 programme. It is announced that any documents composed throughout the course of the meeting will need to be sent to JVD by the end of October for collection prior to the Council meeting. The agenda has been shifted to accommodate JVV of INBO, who will chair the 2019 ALTER-Net conference and who also participated in the Horizon Scanning meeting at Peyresq.

   ALTER-Net minutes and meeting documents have been made available on the ALTER-Net webpage. The MB agrees that documents are approved, finalized and available on the webpage.

   Decision: The MB agrees to final approval of 2017 MB meeting (Berlin) and February, 2018 MB remote Skype meeting documents and minutes.

MH introduces current status of Council issues and reviews Council minutes. Noted activities of the previous year included:

- Council meeting in Budapest; minutes of meeting will require approval prior to distribution on the webpage
- Hiring of TK as ALTER-Net Secretariat on freelance basis
- Acceptance of MV as MB member
- Acceptance of three new institutes to ALTER-Net: CESAM, UNAMUR, and Delbaere
- Partial funding of two MSR proposals
- Acceptance of AHIA proposal
- Decision of post-2020 biodiversity strategy as 2019 ALTER-Net conference theme
- ALTER-Net representation by Secretariat at EAB conference in Ghent
- Presentation of ALTER-Net to PEER community in Brussels by MH
- Horizon Scanning meeting in Peyresq

MH addresses issues of relationship with the PEER network and the issue of non-contributing members of ALTER-Net. On matter of PEER, the higher number of small institutes and distinct geographic distribution of ALTER-Net was noted by PEER, but no new initiative/invitation to join the PEER meetings was received by MH. This may be because ALTER-Net is not a legal entity yet and thus difficult for PEER to be included as PEER member. MB discussed the issue of legal entity and suggest to move forward in this respect and find out what the options are for ALTER-Net. On matter of non-contributing members, stricter payment deadlines, exclusionary consequences regarding participation in ALTER-Net activities, or activity fees for non-contributing members were suggested by MB.

Next council meeting will be held in Prague. New council members have been appointed; their names should be sent to secretariat.

Decision: The MB proposes to Council to introduce stricter payment deadlines and exclusionary consequences as ALTER-Net partner for non-contributing members. MB also proposes to investigate possible pathways to become a legal entity.

2. **Communications**

Andy Sier and Tyler Kulfan introduced the past year's progress and achievements in ALTER-Net communications. The hiring and taskforce of TK was noted, including the implementation of the Call Exchange, establishing key partner contacts, and advancing social media activity. Social media activity and following has increased substantially and new platforms have been added. The ALTER-Net website was not redesigned content wise, however it has been updated and maintained regularly. The ALTER-Net poster was likewise updated. The introduction of the EU GDPR meant that privacy notices needed to be revised and mailing lists needed to be deleted. At present, newsletter mailing lists feature 413 external subscribers and 143 internal partner subscribers.

Costs incurred over the past year were small; they included renewing the website domain name and transferring the domain from Jurgen Tack to NERC-CEH. AS noted that he only has very limited time to devote to ALTER-Net communications. TK stated that he has newly open time availability to dedicate to ALTER-Net, but will need full-time (standard) employment, a wage increase (substantial enough to prove independent financial security), or both to maintain residency in the European Union and continue his work at ALTER-Net in the future. These issues were broadly discussed; JVD stated that either TK's employment should be revised or other institutes should begin allocating time and resources to communications. JVD, MH, JP, AS, and TK discussed the need for reliable top-down communication contacts at each institute (including communications related to the Call Exchange). AS additionally recommended that partners contact himself and TK on a rolling basis with interesting news and materials from their activities so that they can be included in newsletters. Question of the Mobility Scheme funds is raised, with general agreement that this programme should be maintained. AS, TK and JVD will send an updated and revised version of the communication strategy to Council. A reminder to all MB members: there is a template available on setting up your [communication plan](#) for your activity!

Decision: AS to send proposal to Council on communication 2019 + budget needed. Updated and revised communication strategy will be given to council as well.

3. **Multi-Site Research : Status & Review Process Proposal to Council**
   Joan Pino updated the Management Board on the status of the ALTER-Net Multi-Site Research programme. Two proposals are currently in the finalization process (signing contracts); JP suggested that either a new call may be launched for 2019, the present call text may be modified, or it can be decided that the present status and outcome are not in line with what the MSR was meant for (i.e. starting/executing a multi-site research from scratch rather than extending with a bit more money from ALTER-Net already ongoing work). JP further presented the opinion that issues with MSR initiatives may be due to insufficient funding to meet the needs of proposed projects without additional external funds.

   The Management Board discussed the issues affecting MSR programme. JVD underscored that lack of ample submissions prevents ALTER-Net from making discriminating proposal shortlists (in past year, only four projects were submitted; the funds of 20,000 per year for a period of max 3 years were split between two projects). The question of MSR's integral value to ALTER-Net was raised. JP maintained that MSR encourages collaboration, closer partnerships, and takes advantage of ALTER-Net's broad geographic distribution; further noted that recent proposals have addressed interesting and cutting-edge subjects. MV proposed that MSR funds could alternatively be used to annually fund a young researcher producing valuable work (perhaps on MSR topic or linked with Summer School or ALTER-Net Conference). PV expressed support

for MV's proposal.

On subject of LTER programme, PR stated that the programme is producing expected and desired results. JVD expressed agreement that a 2019 call should maybe not be launched and that the question of restructuring the LTER initiative be raised to the council prior to moving forward.

Decision: <u>JP to summarize the above notion of MB to council.</u>

4. **ALTER-Net High Impact Actions: Status & Review Process Proposal to Council**
   Philip Roche introduced the status of the AHIA (ALTER-Net High Impact Actions) initiative. Two AHIA projects have been finished. The first project, conducted by lead partner James Hutton Institute, was entitled *Monitoring and Evaluation for Ecosystem Management (MEEM)*; the second, conducted by lead partner Irstea, was entitled *Cultural Ecosystem Services: an Empirical Approach across European Landscapes and Beyond*. Three proposals were submitted for the 2018 call and a project entitled Land-sparing vs. land-sharing for functional green infrastructure that sustains biodiversity and ecosystem services was selected, led by SLU SLU is not currently a paying institute and 50% ALTER-Net team member criteria was not met; project lead has been requested to invite all ALTER-Net members to participate to ensure at least 50% of team members belong to ALTER-Net. PR will check with SLU if this is now the case. Question of 2019 call distribution was raised and MB proposes to Council to launch a new call early 2019.

   PR presented the revised AHIA call programme document. Though original goal was to receive at least ten proposals, PR proposed reducing goal to five or six proposals to maintain realistic expectations. It is additionally proposed that selection committee is comprised of five members (including council members) rather than seven or more. In the event that several projects could be selected for funding, AHIA call coordinator will propose a ranked list of projects based on selection committee reviews. Final proposal that at least 50% of participants should be ALTER-Net members was presented. PR suggested regarding deliverables that a presentation for a wide, general audience be produced and further consideration be given to the treatment of the ALTER-Net labelled policy brief.

   Decision: <u>PR to propose to council the launch of AHIA 2019 call and present to Council the revised call text/procedures.</u>

5. **Clearinghouse Mechanism & ALTER-Net Collaboration**
   Mart Külvik reviewed the status of the ALTER-Net clearinghouse mechanism, noting that the original task was to organize timely and permanent inflow of semi-confidential information on upcoming calls—and to introduce an effective ALTER-Net internal

clearing house process of project proposals. The appearance and usage of the Call Exchange was shown on the ALTER-Net website for MB members. Several items were shown to have garnered interest, but to date usage has been minimal. Some confusion was noted regarding the contact persons and the general use of the Call Exchange; AS and TK provided clarification. A number of suggestions were raised regarding the Call Exchange, including the following:

- ○ Adding a search function (MV)
- ○ Designated periods for expressing interest (PV)
- ○ Removal of expired items (MK)
- ○ Making headings such as 'BiodivERsA', 'Life projects' etc. to get more structure and order into the list(JvD)
- ○ Regular reminders to contact persons of role (JVD)
- ○ Organized meetings of members with relevant research interest; workshops on new projects (possibly as conference side-event (JP, JVD)
- ○ Using Mobility Fund seed money to support producing projects coordinated by ALTER-Net (JVD, PR, MK); this idea is to be raised to Council

The question was raised by MH and MK of how the diverse interests of different institutes can be accommodated without creating an excessively long list. JVD noted that shortening the call list would be bad for ALTER-Net's transdisciplinary interests; JVD and MH both oppose scaling back lists.

Lastly, MK introduced the COST project. Council approval already exists for COST initiative (proposal to Council last year).

Decision: TK looks into the suggestions mentioned above to improve the mechanism and realize them where possible. MK starts the COST initiative.

6. **ALTER-Net Data Infrastructure**
Petteri Vihervaara introduced the topic of the ALTER-Net data infrastructure, noting that the Council did not support this data infrastructure proposal last year. However, LTER research infrastructure has seem more activity and has been granted a key framework status (i.e. on the ESFRI road map); consequently it is expected to get improved funding and organizational infrastructure access.

PV further informs the MB that the idea of membership in research networks should be raised to any individual researchers interested in monitoring or ecological science. GEO-BON was referenced as a source of infrastructure well-suited for ALTER-Net's research initiatives, also including LTER sites. MH questioned the long-term value in ALTER-Net financially contributing to the well-funded LTER-Europe organization. In closing, PV discussed the Copernicus datasets, as a third very relevant infrastructure

network.. PV will collaborate with the communications team on composing text regarding the relevant data infrastructures for the ALTER-Net website.

Decision: PV will provide text for on the ALTER-Net website regarding the 3 relevant data infrastructures.

7. **ALTER-Net Summer School**

AW and MV presented a review of the 2018 ALTER-Net Summer School; this year's programme was considered to be another overwhelming success. 28 students (of 31 available places) attended; missing places were due to illness and visa issues. A wide range of ALTER-Net partners were represented, as well as 18 nationalities. Additionally, two students from the European Commission attended. 20 speakers presented, including eight ALTER-Net partners. It was noted that this year's programme helped to strengthen ALTER-Net's relationship with the European Commission, as well as its relationship with the Peyresq Foundation, to which MV provided crucial support. AS requested that conveners write small news items with pictures to be shared on the webpage following each summer school. MV additionally requested that the website be reorganized to include a participant register, testimonials, and an annual SS programme-specific webpage. Further discussion with the communications team is advised and it is suggested that TK attend next year for on-site communications work and material.

AW proposes a similar Summer School structure and the allocation of a similar budget for the 2019 Summer School to the Council. It was likewise proposed that the same five conveners are approved. Finally, it was proposed that the 2020 Summer School is approved as well, so that organization can begin and the Peyresq foundation can book the reservation.

Decision: AW and MV to give a summary of the 2018 summer school (how many ALTER-Net students, how many ALTER-Net speakers etc) to Council, together with the proposal for the 2020 summer school.

8. **SDG Initiative**

Chair opened discussion of the ALTER-Net SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) initiative. The initial idea for this initiative was a follow-up off the 2017 conference, including a paper on synergy between the SDGs. However meanwhile a request was distributed by Eeva Furman of SYKE to contribute to the SDG 2019 progress report on positive pathways that have been met toward SDG targets.. Eeva suggested to write a background paper on the relationship between biodiversity and health. JVD gathered a group with interested researchers from several ALTER-Net institutes (open call to contribute) that provided this contribution. A background report with biodiversity-health cases is in preparation; this report is to be published as a NINA report and will be

available on the ALTER-Net website.

A budget of €15,000 was allocated for the SDG initiative. When the background paper is finished JVD will organize a meeting with the group in order to work on a peer-reviewed scientific publication. ALTER-Net group might also be interested in working with the PEER group on SDGs (Risk analyses, led by Eeva Furman, SYKE, and Kurt Jax, UFZ).

Decision: JvD will report back to Council about status and way forward SDG initiative.

Conclusion of Day 1 meeting at 17.00.

Day 2 of Management Board meeting commences at 8.30 on 2 October, 2018.

9. **Science-Policy Interface**
    Chair introduced the agenda for the second day of the MB meeting and welcomed JVV.

    MV presented on the topic of the ALTER-Net science-policy-society interface. The past year has included several activities concerning ALTER-Net science-policy interface. Noted activities included:

    ○ EKLIPSE calls for requests regarding knowledge syntheses, KCB, expert groups (all involving members from ALTER-Net)
    ○ Science-policy interface subject matter at ALTER-Net Summer School
    ○ Horizon Scanning workshop on EU Biodiversity Strategy - Peyresq
    ○ Meeting in Peyresq with local high officials to discuss potential collaboration with EKLIPSE to give back to Peyresq region (MV). Options are being reviewed by local Peyresq board and include linking student projects with regional needs, organization of new summer school, and submission of corporate request to EKLIPSE of particular wishes
    ○ Attendance of CBD post-2020 workshop in Bonn (MV)

    Upcoming activities include EKLIPSE activities (including a Proof of Concept conference in Brussels), contribution in the development of the Euro post-2020 BD strategy (which serves as follow up for the Horizon Scanning workshop) and conference in Ghent, as well as consideration of contribution in the development of the CBD post 2020 BD framework. MV recommended consideration of how ALTER-Net SPI activity can be even more improved.. Noted options included more SPI activities (such as Horizon Scanning), more capacity building on SPI within ALTER-Net institutes (such as the SPI seminar series she is organising within UFZ), linking ALTER-Net members more closely to EKLIPSE activities, and the addition of an SPI page and homepage icon on the ALTER-Net website with fact sheets, links to key website, guideline access, and event monitoring.

On the subject of EKLIPSE partnership, MV raised the possibility of submitting a formalized request to EKLIPSE, participation in a PoC conference in January 2019, Council signing a letter of commitment between ALTER-net and EKLIPSE, and longer-term collaboration between ALTER-Net and EKLIPSE. MV suggested to organise an SPI seminar in other ALTER-Net institutes (similar to the one at UFZ), which was supported by MK because of its potential to stimulate ALTER-Net SPI; SJ expressed support, suggesting seminar organization rotation by different member institutes. Video seminars are suggested by MH as another possibility. In conclusion, it is agreed that Council members need to discuss what strategies/options are effective for their institute and that the communication strategy should be reviewed with a general invitation for partner feedback.

Decision: MV will summarize status and way forward SPI activity to council.

10. Horizon Scanning Activity

MV likewise presented the ALTER-Net Horizon Scanning activity, a joint initiative with EKLIPSE. This event was hosted in Peyresq following the Summer School; it included 18 participants, 14 of which were from ALTER-Net and 6 from EKLIPSE The goal of the meeting was the gathering of insights regarding the post-2020 biodiversity strategy. A list of follow-up activities was compiled by MH and distributed internally to participants. These include: keeping contacts with the European Commission, searches for similar activities and parallel organizations, composing a call to relevant individuals/organizations for science contribution participation, writing a paper on thematic input, bringing together a scientific committee and an organizational committee (both led by JVV), and a possible e-conference.

MH stressed the importance of tangible outputs from the HS meeting. A draft text of the meeting and its relevance to the biodiversity strategy prior to the October meeting in Paris will be produced by MV. MH made note of mixed levels of interest regarding Horizon Scanning within institutes. PV and MH expressed that clarification on what and how exactly scientists can contribute to the strategy would help to build interest in this initiative.

Decision: MV will finish the text on the summary of the meeting, both for presenting it to Council but also for the October meeting in Paris and for keeping track of the status/ongoing work of the follow-up activities.

11. ALTER-Net Conference (2019)

A review of past conferences was presented, noting the varying degrees of participation by the European Commission. MH noted that the format of the 2019 conference will largely determine how much the EC is willing to contribute and participate. For past conferences, the format was determined by a scientific committee. For the most recent

(2017) conference, all planning was conducted via Skype; JVD notes that 45 persons were ultimately involved and the conference was considered to be a major success. It was stressed that conference planning will be a large time commitment and that intensive planning needs to be conducted urgently.

JVV discussed conversations in Peyresq, noting that several volunteers for a scientific committee were established (including Ann Milbau); MH added that 14 participants of the Horizon Scanning meeting could serve on committee when interested.. It was suggested that 15 participants would be an ideal size for this committee, but also others than those participating in Peyresq may want to participate.. JVV additionally inquires about volunteer interest among the MB, but no commitments were made apart from SJ and JVD. MH and JVV suggested an "ALTER-Net and Friends" collaborative approach to the conference, including EKLIPSE and other organizations possessing expertise beyond the scope of ALTER-Net. It is also noted by MH that an IUCN official has expressed a high level of interest in the conference theme.

The topic of the format and structure of the conference was emphasized as of particular importance by the MB. AW proposed idea of a flexible workshop format, which was met with general support from the MB; only criticism raised was that a workshop structure would require more work and planning. MK suggested that raising interest is dependent upon shaping conference around participant interest; AW seconded this thought and raised highlights from internal research, an EPBRS format, and inclusion of a Summer School workshop as three possibilities for achieving this end. MK additionally suggested an internal scan of partner institute research and projects. The balance of science and policy focus concerning the conference was raised; PR suggested that the conference should be primarily science focused with policy subjects incorporated. Subject of conference deliverables was addressed and it was noted that high-impact deliverables would be a major draw. PR announced that he has received an invitation from the Joint Sustainability Journal to make special issue on biodiversity, which could serve as a conference deliverable. This option was considered to be attractive for potential attendees and was met with great interest from the MB. The deadline for a special ALTER-Net issue publication would be July 2019. Further exploration of this opportunity was encouraged.

A final decision regarding structure remains to be made, as does final decision for conference title. JVD advised urgent planning of the first scientific committee meeting with JVV. JVV additionally noted need for a pre-conference announcement with dates. The final deadline for MV's scientific committee document will be 27 OCtober.

Decision: JVV sets up the scientific committee and organizes the first virtual meeting asap. Because of the two intertwined activities (i.e. the horizon scanning activity & the 2019 conference and because of the active participation of ALTER-Net on the one hand and EKLIPSE on the other hand there is a need for a small steering committee to make

12. EKLIPSE & ALTER-Net: Proposal to Council

The final item to discuss prior to budget proposals was the relationship between ALTER-Net and EKLIPSE. MV introduced this issue, informing the MB that EKLIPSE in its present form will expire in January 2020, followed by a transition period wherein EKLIPSE will become a self-sustainable non-profit business (not EU funded). Four funding streams (EU commission, private requesters, crowdfunding, and foundation/donations) have been suggested in the roll-out plan. MV sees this as an opportunity for the establishment of a mutually-beneficial official relationship between ALTER-Net and EKLIPSE. EKLIPSE needs to establish a self-sustainable EU mechanism with a secretariat; it additionally needs a research network for being able to answer requests. This research network can be provided by ALTER-Net. Potential steps forward include a draft letter of commitment with ALTER-Net and EKLIPSE and a written document to present at the council meeting. It is noted by JVD that this type of partnership needs Council approval.

The MB broadly discussed the merits and practicalities of partnership with EKLIPSE. AW stressed that EKLIPSE could help to make the best use of ALTER-Net knowledge, ensuring that ALTER-Net (and other) knowledge is brought together to deliver specific requests to policymakers. This would help the profile of ALTER-Net, and is likely to be cost-neutral in future years. AW further noted that EKLIPSE is a project, not an institution, and could be absorbed into ALTER-Net. MH stated that this would move ALTER-Net toward policy influencing and strengthen its SPI, which he is supportive of. SJ questioned the legal and organizational structure of such a partnership; it was noted that legal non-profit structure for ALTER-Net could resolve this.

General support for presenting this proposal to the Council is expressed by MB. MH noted that ALTER-Net was formed to give expert scientists a platform to elevate research for high impact, and that EKLIPSE fits perfectly within this framework. JVD recognized general feeling among MB that science-policy interface is important to ALTER-Net, and noted that this would be a mechanism for this initiative. MK and AS expressed support for presenting proposal, but AS noted that he is abstaining from supporting proposal itself on the grounds that he would need more information before forming an opinion. It was recognized that a strong recommendation from MB regarding this proposal is needed prior to presentation to the Council.

Decision: MV will draft a commitment letter and a proposal to Council.

13. Budget Proposal & Other Proposals

Chair announced that 26 October will be the final deadline for proposals to council including budget proposal. Current budget figures were not available, but ALTER-Net spending was generally under the allocated budget for 2018. A budget overview will be circulated by JVD and a Skype meeting for updates on ongoing activities will be organized for ealy 2019 (Jan-Feb).

The ALTER-Net Council meeting will most likely be held in Prague at the end of November. The next physical MB meeting will be held in October of 2019.

The 2018 ALTER-Net Management Board meeting (Brussels) concluded at 12.50. The activities of the meeting were followed by a light lunch before final departure.