

Alternet Management Board Remote Meeting

Date: 19 April 2021, 13.00-15.00

Agenda:

- Status Science Service Mechanism consortium/proposal led by SYKE, co-lead by Alternet
- Short update on Council decisions
- Communication
- Summer school
- Conference
- Eklipse
- SPI (webinars & platform)
- Call exchange platform
- AHIA and MSE

Present: Jiska van Dijk (Chair), Maurice Hoffmann, Tyler Kulfan, Juliette Young, Marie Vandewalle, Sonja Jaehning, Adriana Cliville Morato, Riikka Paloniemi, Philip Roche, Allan Watt

The meeting commenced at 13.00; Chair Jiska van Dijk welcomed all those present.

Science Service Mechanism

Discussion began with the proposed science service mechanism call, which was officially released last Friday from the Horizon Europe program. SYKE agreed to lead the SS proposal with a strong role from Alternet. During the Council's in-between meeting, SYKE presented initial ideas. Jiska, Maurice, and Eeva Furman subsequently prepared a letter to the Council to indicate willingness to participate and contribute. Tomorrow (April 20) is the deadline for replies. About seven institutes have replied to date and Jiska suggested releasing another reminder. The larger institutes have not yet responded. Eeva has also connected PEER institutes directly on their interest in participation but the status of their responses is not presently known. Maurice expressed surprise at the minimal responses, given the interest expressed at the Council meeting.

Juliette noted that INRAE is definitely interested, but will not be able to share the details of the exact nature of their contribution for several days. Maurice stated that the present issue is how to proceed. All institutes that have expressed interest (rather than only those who responded) should be recognized in the in-between Council meeting; and thus a reminder message will not be necessary. Marie expressed that UFZ is similarly certain in its interest but the details still need to be worked out. Joan noted that the response on behalf of CREAM is presently being prepared. Maurice noted that the expectation was that small and medium institutes would engage via Alternet and the larger institutes would engage as their own entities and expressed hope that the small to medium institutes would respond before the end of the week.

Riikka shared a brief series of slides that outlined the proposed structure of the science service mechanism in relation to SYKE and Alternet. Marie noted that Eclipse has initiated the Network of Networks and 12 networks have responded positively. She asked how the NoN would be positioned in the science service landscape. Riikka outlined where and how Eclipse would be recognized in the science service mechanism; her slides will be shared with the MB following the meeting.

The signature from PEER on the MoU between Alternet and the PEER directors has not been received; and presently it appears that it will not be signed after all. Allan Watt will speak with Bridgett Emmett on the PEER subject from a CEH perspective.

Short Update on Council Issues

The email Management Board mailing list has been updated and should presently be fully functional.

The Council approved of the budget at the in-between meeting, following presentation of a four-year projection of budget, costs, etc. The Council received the presentation positively and requested that such outlining of the budget continue in the future. Reinier has offered his assistance. A closer inspection of the budget could be a project to be overseen this spring.

Since this meeting, Tyler has been offered a contract via Floris. The hosting arrangement for this contract is now hosted by IGB-Berlin; he will also be managing the administration of the Summer School. He will also oversee the Call Exchange and SPI One-Stop-Shop activities, though addition of these items to his contract is pending while Floris is on leave. Science editing has been added to Tyler's tasks, pertaining to the release of products and papers produced by Alternet (including AHIA outputs).

AHIA and MSR

It was agreed that AHIA would be jointly arranged with the MSR, with AHIA and MSR calls released in alternating years. A 2021 AHIA call was not and will not be released, in light of delays in last year's project led by UK-CEH.

Philip outlined outstanding issues with this project, including a request to spend cash on an intern or masters student. He expressed feeling that the project is blocked, following a slow start and present budget issues. Jiska recommended extending the project another year and allowing spending of some of the money on an internship. Joan stated that the delays of AHIA reflect those of MSR, brought on by coronavirus. Philip stated that the proposed exception would be based on the fact that travel, meetings, and workshops are not presently possible. Without exceptions, it is possible the project will be unable to be fulfilled.

Internship spending is presently not allowed, but in light of the coronavirus situation an exception could potentially be made for this particular instance. Jiska recommended the formation of a working group with Joan and Philip to work on the joint AHIA-MSR activities.

Maurice expressed that he would feel comfortable with the hiring of an intern if it would enable the project to be completed and that legally speaking it would be okay as long as AHIA funds aren't used for salary, but noted that such actions would open doors and a clear case exception rationale should be elaborated. Riikka expressed her opinion that the money should be able to be used for labor costs and favored extending funding for another year. She suggested a series of online workshops for team building. Marie recommended extension and provided details on the work and ambition of this AHIA team. Philip will provide the AHIA team with an update from the MB to define options.

Communications

Adriana provided an update on the communications activity of Alternet, in particular the newsletter which she is currently compiling with Tyler. May 5th is the currently proposed deadline for this newsletter. New communications materials for this year's conference and comprehensive updates of the Alternet flyers, posters, and brochures will be the next communications major project.

The Alternet website still has some sections "under construction", as the new Call Exchange and updated communications and media materials are yet to be built. Joan suggested changing the Eklipse name to the Eklipse logo in the Alternet website; Maurice suggested placing a link to the Eklipse page under the main title, reflecting the Eklipse linkage to Alternet on their own page.

Summer School

A meeting of the conveners and Tyler will be held on Thursday (April 22) of this week to further consider the possibility of holding an in-person summer school. Prospects do not look optimistic, but the possibility of a reduced attendance, European-exclusive summer school remains. An alternative online event likewise remains an option, as does a hybrid version. The idea of hosting the next Management Board meeting in Peyresq has likewise been proposed. Maurice asked for next-step updates in the potential membership of the Peyresq Foundation. Marie is working with Jaque on an application form presently and it should be completed soon. Juliette questioned whether other summer schools are being held this summer and what a hybrid approach would look like. Allan noted that this subject will be discussed at the conveners meeting. Juliette noted that this year could be a test run for a model that could be utilized in the future for international engagement. Most of the other reservations in Peyresq have been cancelled until mid-August.

Maurice noted recurrent requests from the Council on the discussion for the long-term future of Alternet, and suggested that Peyresq would be an appropriate place for such a meeting.

Alternet Conference 2021

Philip will update Tyler and distribute a doodle for a conference planning meeting. Maurice will cancel reservations at the Ghent Monastery and prepare a reservation for later in the year pending the decision on the rescheduled dates.

Eclipse

Thanks to an extension, Eclipse is still a European project until 2022. However, Eclipse has already launched as an autonomous mechanism under Alternet management. The launch event was received as a success. New calls have been released since, as well as a series of podcasts. The call for requests has been open since February and ends today, with six requests received. An FAQ has been created and a series of social media posts has been overseen. The Call for Experts on the request from the French Ministry of Environment and Agriculture remains open through Thursday the 22nd of April. Eclipse's third activity is a request on the connection between COVID-19 and biodiversity. The Eclipse report on health and biodiversity has been released and will be featured in the Network Nature platform.

Jiska inquired about the call for experts and the associated in-kind work that would be involved, noting that clarity is essential for the long-term support and relationship of Eclipse and Alternet. Marie stressed that the methods protocol must be determined and finalized by the experts themselves and the Method Experts Group. Maurice raised the question to the Council on Science Policy Interface on state levels and expressed that it could be a good question/request for Eclipse; Marie has seen and noted this question from Maurice. Marie will share relevant notes on the science service mechanism to the MB.

The latest updates from Hilde concerning the potential for an annual request to Eclipse from the European Commission have been largely positive. Marie provided an update on Eclipse in relation to the Science Service proposal and hopes that a more focused discussion on the role of Eclipse will be included in the next meeting.

Juliette stated that she hasn't done anything on SPI seminars but, as progress is made, she will reach out to Jiska and Maurice and then pass the information on to Tyler, who can distribute it to the Alternet mailing lists and gather interest from institutes that might be willing to participate or host. A taskforce for the SPI One-Stop-Shop will be arranged by Tyler and Juliette; Adriana expressed her wish to be included.

Next Meeting and Conclusion

The next MB meeting will ideally be in person and likely flexible ad-hoc MB meetings will be arranged between now and then. Proposals regarding the physical meeting are welcome. Intentional thought and discussion on the sustainable future of Alternet needs to be arranged; Peyresq as a discussion site will be considered. **The meeting concluded at 15.00.**