

	<h2 style="margin: 0;">ALTER-Net Management Board Meeting Minutes</h2> <p style="margin: 0;">Tartu, Estonia – 28-29 October 2019</p>
<b>Venue</b>	IAES, Tartu
<b>Contact</b>	<a href="mailto:tscottkulfan@gmail.com">tscottkulfan@gmail.com</a>
<b>Attendance</b>	<p>[JVD] 1. Jiska van Dijk (NINA, Chair MB)</p> <p>[MH] 2. Maurice Hoffmann (INBO; Council chair) [day 2]</p> <p>[AW] 3. Allan Watt (CEH [former] – Vice-Chair MB)</p> <p>[SJ] 4. Sonja Jähnig (IGB)</p> <p>[MK] 5. Mart Külvik (IAES)</p> <p>[JP] 6. Joan Pino (CREAF)</p> <p>[MV] 7. Marie Vandewalle (UFZ)</p> <p>[PR] 8. Philip Roche (Irstea)</p> <p>[AS] 9. Andy Sier (CEH) [remote]</p> <p>[PV] 10. Petteri Vihervaara (SYKE) [remote]</p> <p>Attending, non-MB member:</p> <p>[TK] Tyler Kulfan (ALTER-Net Secretariat)</p>
<b>Minutes</b>	Tyler Kulfan; <a href="mailto:tscottkulfan@gmail.com">tscottkulfan@gmail.com</a>

### **ALTER-Net Management Board meeting, IAES Tartu, 28 & 29 October 2019**

#### **Welcome and Opening of MB Meeting**

IAES representative MK welcomed all to Tartu and introduced the Head of Sciences Kalev Sepp, Chair of Science Council of IAES, EMU, who additionally welcomed the MB and noted the great value of IAESs partnership and membership with ALTER-Net.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

JVD opened the meeting. Prior to commencing with this year's agenda, JVD discussed the minutes of the previous year's meeting in Brussels and the MB meeting via Skype (January 2019), which are still in unofficial draft state. Jvd asked if all approve of the draft minutes of these meetings, available online. JVD proposed that draft minutes of this meeting would likewise be sent to the Council, in draft form.

**Decision:** Unanimous approval of previous meetings' minutes and to distribute the present meeting's minutes to Council in draft form.

## Review and Objectives

JVD reviewed plans to discuss current ongoing activities and proposals for future activities during today's meeting, as well as important updates from the past year.

In June of 2019, ALTER-Net merged with EKLIPSE. This merge will have many implications for the work and status of ALTER-Net; in particular the need for a legal structure. MH was not present due to political obligations in Belgium, but distributed a draft document of the legal structure proposal. Before the meeting, the MB members received and commented on this document and the draft version was sent to the Council. The 31st of Oct was established as the deadline for comments from the Council on this document.

MH has met with a legal solicitor, who reviewed the MoA and draft proposal and recommended a revised structure. A new revised document will be sent to the Council members. MV recommended that the Council members be promptly informed of this delay and associated complications so that they can proceed accordingly.

The Council meeting is scheduled for the first week of December and will be the opportunity to get the final legal structure approved by the Council. JVD stated that preparation for the legal structure and consideration of a sustainable future for ALTER-Net should be the top objective of the MB meeting, in addition to the standard review of ongoing activities. Additionally, it was noted that the MoA expires at the end of 2020. As such, JvD emphasized that the MB should take the opportunity of this meeting to consider the post-2020 future of ALTER-Net.

Prior to the meeting, all participants were posed the question "what would like to get out of this meeting?" Each representative provided a response.

- JP: Prioritized the reframing of MB activities.
- PR: Would like a clear idea of restructuring of activities and how it relates to the budget.
- MV: Expressed excitement about changes facing ALTER-Net. Noted that we are at a critical moment for ALTER-Net and that this meeting will be a key point in the transition between the old and new structures of ALTER-Net. Prioritized discussion of EKLIPSE management.
- AW: Expressed appreciation of the MB meeting as an opportunity to constructively critique ALTER-Net activities. AW is very comfortable about the status of the Summer School; but noted that the big challenge is the SPI activity and the management of EKLIPSE
- SJ: Would like to collect ideas for the network, including the outcome of the internal survey. Legal structure progress represents a challenge and should be discussed in detail.
- MK: Noted agreement with MV that this is an exciting and interesting moment for ALTER-Net. Prioritized discussion of marriage with EKLIPSE, legal structure, and joint action for projects.

- Petteri: Prioritized continued discussion of post-2020 research goals and how the evolution of ALTER-Net can align in a productive way.
- AS: Expressed agreement with majority opinions that had been stated. AS would like to provide clarity about communication activities, realistic action and goal setting. AS additionally noted that he has been involved since the start of ALTER-Net and has reached a point where he is ready to transition out of ALTER-Net and stop working on its communication portfolio by the end of 2020 at the latest. The legal structure transition could perhaps represent a good opportunity for this change to be made, noting that TK has managed the majority of communications activities in the past year and that fresh blood will help to optimize communications. JvD thanked AS for the great work he has done and recognized that many of the partner institutes are in a personal time of transition.
- TK: Prioritized discussion of the joint operation of the EKLIPSE and ALTER-Net secretariats, the communication of Key Messages from the 2019 Conference, and how an efficient ALTER-Net legal structure transition can be ensured.

**Due to the absence of MH, discussion of the ALTER-Net legal status, EKLIPSE merge, and implications for the MB meeting was postponed until Tuesday, 29 October.**

### **Overview of 2019 MB Work**

JvD opened the discussion of work done in 2019, noting the high volume of work done and funds spent.

### **Budget Overview**

JvD shared the ALTER-Net budget.

The total cost of expenses in the past year was €109,497. Spending was higher than income. The estimation of yearly cash contributions was €63,500 and actual partner income was €45,565 as of 1 October 2019. Several partner institutes have not paid yet, including CREAM, WENR, UNIBuC, SYKE, MTA-OK, and DCE; it is expected these institute will pay, which will bring income to 63,500€. It was noted that every other year is more expensive because of the conference (20k more). The income of 65k juxtaposed with continued activities would yield a reduction in about 50k annually. As of 5 October 2019, the ALTER-Net credit balance is €248443.

JvD noted, however, that some total costs are still pending. The Summer School will likely amount to 35k. The communication budget was used for the conference, but the overall conference spending was lower than expected because of the partnership with EKLIPSE. Since several months remain in 2019, it is expected that Secretariat costs will exceed the allotted budget.

JVD gave a reminder that two years ago, partners were keen on a pay reduction (large institutes: 10k to 5k) to encourage more partners joining; this did not occur, however. Nonetheless, many partners have stated that they do not want a fee increase and the EKLIPSE decision was agreed upon with many partners making this stipulation. MV and AW suggested producing convincing arguments for raising partner contributions (and thereby, raising income) to avoid being in the red. MV additionally noted that we cannot bring in external funding without a legal structure.

PR noted that ALTER-Net is short of income but has cash as a buffer and recommended not scaling down activities, as that would discourage robust membership. To maintain sustainability, ALTER-Net must remain active and dynamic to encourage investment. MV voiced agreement and recommended investing in visibility activity. JVD voiced agreement, noting that all activities are highly valued in the internal evaluation, so the issue is one of visibility.

All spending figures and estimates can be seen in the budget file, which was shared with all MB members.

## **Communications**

AS and TK provided a review of communications progress and activities over the past year.

Activities included preparation and promotion for the Ghent conference, a trip by TK to SYKE for tender support unit training and a research infrastructure video project, outreach to stakeholders to maximize the impact of the Ghent conference outputs, additions to Call Exchange to better display expertise and facilitate partnerships, as well as ongoing newsletters, social media outreach, news items, and improvement of the website. AS noted the continuously increased public engagement with ALTER-Net communications platforms.

Proposed communications for 2019-2020 include a full update of the ALTER-Net flyer (already started) and brochure, implementation of a means to categorize Call Exchange calls by topic, editing and reworking of the research infrastructure project, creation of an overview video of ALTER-Net or a series of short videos highlighting ALTER-Net's various activities, coordinated communications with EKLIPSE, and new hosting/design of the website.

The MB considered the merits of transferring the hosting of the ALTER-Net website to a different institute (other than CEH) and hiring a designer for an overhaul. AW noted that the website was excellent when created; it has simply become outdated with time. The Council has already agreed to 5k for work on the website last year. PR stated that a larger budget would be needed to hire a web designer, but that money could be saved if the design were to be handled internally. JP offered the assistance of the CREAM communication team for website updates and offered the possibility of hosting the website.

Finally, AS stated that ALTER-Net mailing lists currently have CEH as data controller. In light of Brexit, he suggested moving the ownership of these accounts to an EU partner.

### **Multi-Site Research (MSR)**

JP presented an overview of progress on the two ongoing MSR projects: *Multi-Lake Research of Fish Ecology and Management using High-Resolution 3D Telemetry Systems* led by the Czech Academy of Sciences (BC-CAS) and *Roadmap for a European multi-site Wildlife Research Infrastructure using camera traps* led by INBO.

The ending date of the first (BC-CAS) project will be September 2020; another year of work remains. A first version is done and materials have been prepared for continuation and completion. The 2018 workshop was missed; conditions state that a workshop must be held each year.

In the INBO project, there were certain discrepancies; there was reference made previously to three workshops, but there is only one workshop planned. Two outcomes are planned, including data standards and a publication. The MB must determine if the two projects merit another year of funding. JP stated that he believes these outputs are tangible and interesting for ALTER-Net.

It was agreed that closer track should be kept of these projects and that they should be promoted via all available communications channels. The MSR funding recipients likewise must be instructed to more intentionally promote ALTER-Net.

### **ALTER-Net High Impact Actions (AHIA)**

Two AHIA projects are currently funded: *Land-sparing vs. land-sharing for functional green infrastructure that sustains biodiversity and ecosystem services? – European landscape approach initiatives provide regionally adapted solutions* led by Per Angelstam of Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU); and *From meta-system theory to the sustainable, adaptive management of rivers in the Anthropocene* led by Thibault Daltry of IRSTEA.

The participation of ALTER-Net partners in the project of Per Angelstam is notably low (2 of 25). Two papers are to be submitted by the end of the year but journals are not communicated. When complaints were raised about the lack of ALTER-Net participation, contributions from several partners (MK, BD, etc.) was proposed, but Per has not been in contact with these persons.

The second project (of Thibault Datry, IRSTEA) already has secured sufficient ALTER-Net participation. A workshop will be held the following week, in which SJ is participating.

The MB discussed the pros and cons of AHIA, noting that it is not an expensive activity; it is flexible, cost efficient, and state of the art. However, the budget is limited, as is ALTER-Net participation. Communication issues might be a concern and threats include the limited budget, support of non-ALTER-Net actions, and the frequent funding of research that continues as ongoing business-as-usual (an issue also seen in MSR projects). There are opportunities connected to this activity, however, including visibility, status as an ALTER-Net flagship action, networking. Relevance to EKLIPSE and linking has potential and should be considered.

MK stressed that small participation can actually be a benefit in some regards if we can foresee a high impact and high citation. AW voiced support for the value of AHIA and its potential to contribute to the network, stating that the broad participation of other institutes (i.e. in the project of Per) could offer potential for expanding the ALTER-Net profile. JVD expressed concern that institutes will not see value in funding non-ALTER-Net partners, especially if it's not significantly raising the ALTER-Net profile. It was broadly agreed that better channels of two-way communication with AHIA project leaders need to be developed.

PR stated that the AHIA call should be maintained, but with the requirement that >50% ALTER-Net partner participation is guaranteed and revised deliverables: 1 HI paper, 1 policy brief/media brief, 1 web page for the ALTER-Net website. Topics could focus on: human society dependence on biodiversity and ES; landscapes of tomorrow; sustainable futures for Europe; evidence of ecosystem service-related climate mitigation in European urban areas. MK agreed that three meetings is excessive and that one well-planned meeting would be sufficient. It was additionally suggested that, while cutting budget to 15k could potentially work, one well-funded project may be preferable to two poorly funded projects.

Broad support was expressed for keeping both MSR and AHIA but approaching the applications and oversight for both highly critically.

### **Clearinghouse Mechanism**

MK and TK presented an overview of progress regarding the ALTER-Net Call Exchange (clearinghouse mechanism).

MK displayed present calls and listed partners that are currently using the platform. TK noted that there has been a recent uptick in use of the platform, as he has been able to dedicate more time to updating it. Recent updates include individual overviews of partner expertise linked to the Call Exchange and TK encouraged all partners to share relevant expertise.

Baseline support for the platform's maintenance was expressed, but numerous critiques were given. PR and AW noted that such websites and platforms are commonly used to build consortiums, especially among young researchers with fewer established connections. TK suggested that researchers interested in building connections through the platform could have their profiles added to their associated institute expertise page for other potential partners to

access. PR recommended that proposals that have been initiated via the Call Exchange advertise it in their outputs. JVD proposed organizing a researcher speed-dating event back-to-back with an event that many ALTER-Net researchers will be present at.

### **ALTER-Net Data Infrastructure**

PV provided a review of data infrastructure remotely via video chat. It was noted that the status of eLTER is very good; eLTER has been funded and is actively being represented in ESFRI for the 2018 roadmap.

The main data infrastructure activity of ALTER-Net this year has been the production of an infrastructure-for-dummies video, of which  $\frac{2}{3}$  of budget was spent. In this video, PV and TK highlight ALTER-Net-relevant infrastructures and show examples from partner institutes; however only a handful of institutes were represented as a consequence of a lack of engagement. TK stated that three main concerns were voiced when the preliminary video was shown to the ALTER-Net Council in Ghent: that the presence of LTER is insufficient, that too few partner institutes are featured, and that more diverse infrastructures need to be discussed in order to make the video a useful guide for ALTER-Net researchers to the infrastructures that are at their disposal.

TK will discuss and collaborate with Michael Mirtl and continue to work with the freelance videographer. JVD recommended creating a group of people who are actively engaged from institutes with infrastructures to open contact with.

Lastly, JVD stated that the representative of EEA brought up the issue of a belated contract for working on DEIMS. The contract was unsigned, but the Council agreed to 10k of funding for this initiative. The contract still is yet to be returned to the ALTER-Net secretariat and this money is still unspent. JVD recommended having Tessa van Santen and MH send a reminder to get final closure on whether they are interested in signing this contract and moving forward or whether this contract should be finally cancelled.

### **ALTER-Net Summer School**

AW provided a report on the 2019 ALTER-Net Summer School in Peyresq. 28 students attended this year; 32 were selected with reserves. 20 countries were represented, demonstrating the huge international impact of the SS event; approximately two thirds of attendees were from Europe. 22 ALTER-Net institutes have been represented at the SS, both in student and instructor participation. 16 speakers were present this year, with eight from ALTER-Net partners, plus speakers like Martin Sharman who are effectively a part of ALTER-Net.

AW noted that, at this point, the SS runs like clockwork because of the support of ALTER-Net and the partnership with the Peyresq Foundation. He shared two emails, one from tutor Brooke

Wilkerson who noted that 40 alumni were present at the recent ESP conference in Hannover. This showed that students trained by ALTER-Net are networking together, moving forward in productive careers, and representing ALTER-Net. An email from Nicolas Dendoncker was also shared, which said that the IPBES Value assessment had four participants that were themselves involved in the SS.

MV suggested that an alumni page on the ALTER-Net website would allow people to keep in contact, network, and show the wide-spanning impact of this ALTER-Net activity. Networking and the activity of this community should be cultivated. On Facebook, events that may be of interest are shared and potential alumni attendees are linked; likewise could be done on the website and a stream of recent activities could be shared. AW expressed agreement that there would be value in hosting and stimulating alumni activities, but also noted that self-organizing networking is even better and stated that he was pleased to see that this self-organizing activity has been happening and building momentum. JVD noted that alumni are only likely to come to events if they are piggybacked with another event that is already of interest to them; otherwise costs will likely be too much of an obstacle.

### **Sustainable Development Goals**

JVD presented on the recently completed SDG report. 15k was given by ALTER-Net for the production of a background report on biodiversity and health and its connection with the SDGs. NINA published this report as a NINA report with both ALTER-Net partners (6) and external researchers (6). In 2020, JVD is willing to follow up on the contract and see if a different use can be found for the 15,000 in funds; JVD does not anticipate that a scientific paper can be produced from this background report.

### **Science-Policy interface**

MV shared an overview of this past year's SPI activities.

A task force was created to explore future management of the EKLIPSE mechanism, which presented its work and opinion at the EKLIPSE proof of concept conference. An SPI seminar was hosted at UFZ, which was streamed on the ALTER-Net website. The website will be updated with new video files from UFZ seminar, which are no longer working at the moment. EKLIPSE was a joint organizer at the Ghent conference with ALTER-Net and was represented at the Council meeting held jointly with this meeting. At this meeting, the Council voted to approve ALTER-Net management of the EKLIPSE mechanism. The EKLIPSE pollination call for experts is open through November 3rd and will be promoted via all communications channels by TK.

MV stated that a new vision of EKLIPSE under ALTER-Net is needed, and suggested as "creating a culture for evidence informed decision-making" as a potential option. ALTER-Net agreed to accept EKLIPSE as a whole package, meaning that EKLIPSE and all its activities will

be transferred to ALTER-Net as-is, including the five functions:

1. Answer key questions
2. Identify current and future emerging issues
3. Create a responsive and active network
4. Improve citizens' engagement
5. Link up with international SPIs.

A strong focus on networking will also be central to the strength of EKLIPSE under ALTER-Net; this includes capacity building and strengthening of the network of networks. MV recommended not to wait until the end of the transition period to establish a means of making the mechanism sustainable. Establishing sustainability will entail ensuring a smooth transition to ALTER-Net management, ensuring finances in the long run, and ensuring the momentum of EKLIPSE continues to grow (to ensure self-sustainability).

The EU agreed that EKLIPSE can now include a price for answering the request. First requesters (between 01.01.2020 and 30.06.2020) will be given a discount. Money cannot be accepted during the project, but money for work to be done after 01.07.2020 can be accepted. MV noted, however, that it will not be possible to prove self-sustainability within the next 6 months. EKLIPSE needs to prove its concept to ensure not only that new requests can be managed, but also to ensure that current ongoing requests will be completed and disseminated successfully. The first joint call for requests will be made in the beginning of 2020 following the establishment of the ALTER-Net legal entity.

MV discussed immediate means of ensuring a smooth transfer, including establishing a task force database, task force for communication, task force on capacity building, and task force on governance as necessary steps. Crowdfunding was noted as a possible funding means that has not yet been tried or explored. MV noted the success of the IPBES request; linking with international SPIs has a great deal of potential and should be further developed. Coordination will be needed for task forces and for joint communication. MV recommended SYKE as a potential partner for societal engagement via an in-kind contribution.

On the subject of societal engagement, AW raised concern with the request-and-answer model (under payment schema) and the potential that questions which society wants answered (rather than individual requesters) may be bypassed, stressing that the societal engagement element of EKLIPSE should not be neglected. He likewise stressed that the management of EKLIPSE is daunting but thoroughly manageable with the work of a dedicated team and immediate movement.

### **ALTER-Net Conference in Ghent**

SJ presented a review of the biannual ALTER-Net conference in Ghent, Belgium. The topic (The EU Biodiversity Strategy Beyond 2020) was chosen approximately one year ago. The Scientific

Committee was tasked with overseeing the content and structure of this conference and by the end of the planning involved 27 members, 11 meetings, and significant contributions from Janine Van Vessen, Tessa van Santen, and TK. 2-3 publications are foreseen in a special edition of Sustainability under editor PR.

SJ noted that the conference yielded fewer participants overall, less EC participation, and a somewhat limited number of young scientists. The representation of ecologists greatly outweighed those of governance and social science. The structure was established in a democratic way (resulted in longer decision processes); the format of the conference was less interactive than originally envisioned. There are remaining questions about the Key Messages of this conference. She advocated for clear topic definition, organizational and scientific organization, PR/communication coordination, a clear timeline, and repository of documents/experience to improve the next conference.

AW noted that the key messages approach during the conference was too complicated in hindsight, but enabled a more democratic and interactive approach to conference output. TK has been in contact with the Green New Deal for Europe about policy applications for the conference outputs. AW also stressed that the conference was exciting, engaging, and successful—it brought excellent researchers together and enabled excellent networking. Though discussion was minimal, there was an excellent roster of speakers. He recommended formal thanking of JvV from the MB.

It was noted that in 2017, a topic that was more appealing to scientists was chosen, but the participation of the EU Commission was somewhat lost. AW argued that the broad participation of ALTER-Net partners should be the main goal; organization should prioritize ALTER-Net partners and the Commission can participate as they wish (as for the 2017 conference). It was noted that this year's topic was custom-designed for the EC and their participation was nevertheless minimal. PR noted that the specific topic of this conference necessarily made it less appealing to social scientists. AW recommended a more transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach in alignment with ALTER-Net's goals and identity.

JVD recommended beginning the forming of 2021 plans with a new proposed topic. The MB and Council should both be involved in this decision. A budget will be needed for the 2021 conference; and the question of topic and leadership (organizing committee and scientific committee) should be opened up. The MB either has the option of proposing specific types of topics or opening the issue up to the Council. SJ noted that session headings (i.e. freshwater, societal engagement) could be proposed without a specific topic. MK suggested an urban subject matter for conference.

### **Internal Evaluation ALTER-Net**

A task force including Eeva Fürman, Trine Setsaas, Alison Hester, Marie Vandewalle, and Gyorgyi Bela was formed to conduct an internal evaluation of the added value of ALTER-Net.

The main work of the evaluation was overseen by SYKE; and the great contributions of Liisa Varumo and Panu Kontio were noted. The value of all major ALTER-Net activities were raised to participants in this internal evaluation survey.

JVD presented the results of the survey. Participation in this survey was low, but it demonstrated that all ALTER-Net activities are valued by those who are aware of ALTER-Net; awareness and engagement are the greater concerns. The Summer School and Events (conferences, etc.) were most highly rated, followed by AHIA and MSR. CESAM had a much higher participation rate than all other institutes (20%), which was greatly appreciated. The networking objective of ALTER-Net was seen as the most important, followed by SPI. The most important objectives were development of partner institute integration and establishment of a vibrant interdisciplinary research community. Key stakeholders were EU Commission and research funding institutions; and target groups for ALTER-Net outputs were the scientific community and policymakers (with the primary purpose of outputs being research). Comments that had been submitted were reviewed. JVD recommended sharing the internal report results with the Council.

JVD shared a chart of the beneficiaries of ALTER-Net activities prepared by herself and TK, which has been shared with and updated by the MB. JVD recommended additionally sharing this document with the Council to demonstrate how each institute has benefitted from ALTER-Net activities. Publications that have been produced should be tracked and shared to further demonstrate the added value of the network. PR recommended adding another column to the beneficiaries chart for projects (such as OpenNESS, BESAFE, KNEU, IMAGINE etc.), including not only such features as the call exchange but also projects that stemmed from the ALTER-Net network.

There was broad agreement that the amount of value involved in ALTER-Net membership is proportionately huge compared with the small cost of membership-and the more that is put into the network by each ALTER-Net member (e.g. engagement, following up requests from secretariat), the more the member will get out of it.

**Day 1 concluded at 19.00. Due to the extended discussion, the planned evening activity - visiting the Science Center - was cancelled.**

**Day 2 of the MB meeting commenced at 8:30.**

JVD opened the second day of the MB meeting and welcomed MH, who arrived in Tartu overnight. The agenda for day 2 included discussion of the legal structure and the presentation of proposals to council regarding the work plan 2020.

MH informed the MB that developments concerning the legal structure would not affect the planned MB activities. As such, the meeting proceeded as originally planned.

## **Communications**

Final proposals for communications were discussed. MH questioned if a survey should be made of users of the website in order to better understand expectations and what purposes the website serve. MV noted that there is already a wealth of information from SS students about their opinions regarding the website. JVD voiced support for proceeding efficiently under the direction of a working group rather than spending too much time on surveys, etc. AS noted that input from internal and external users is valuable, but it's unrealistic to try to meet all expectations and that a website redevelopment plan should be composed. AW stated that the question posed to Council should be "what could be improved?", noting that the website was excellent when introduced and that it is simply out-of-date. PR stated that the purpose of the website is quite clear and recommended delegating authority to the working group. JP offered potential hosting of the website at his associated institute.

TK and AS will compose a proposal to council concerning the website redesign. Funds will be allocated to use for this purpose, specifically. If additional communications materials and budgeting is needed, they can be derived separately from this proposal, but it is anticipated that funds will not be needed for other materials as 2020 will not be a conference year.

Funds will also be allocated for video projects and other communications needs. MH advocated for the production of a promotional video that covers the full scope of ALTER-Net activities, while PR argued that the website should be first priority, followed by the videos. TK maintained that the DI video should be completed, then a second general ALTER-Net video can be created. MV stated that the upcoming year will play a strong role in redefining ALTER-Net and that any branding-type video should come after this redefining process has been completed.

**Decision:** 5k will be proposed for communications and the website. A web design overhaul, including the potential hiring of an external or internal web designer, will be carried out using these funds. A working group will be formed to oversee the website redesign, consisting of Joan and selected CREAM personnel, TK and AS and someone selected by MV to represent EKLIPSE.

## **MSR**

The MB discussed the merits of the extended funding of the current two MSR projects.

The Czech Academic Sciences is proposing an additional year of project; in the case of the INBO project, this is not justified. The proposal to council will be for the extension of the funding period for the Czech Academic Sciences project.

Concern was expressed about the type of projects ALTER-Net is supporting; JP advised proposing to the Council that no new MSR call be released in 2020. AW questioned whether the issue of extension of funding for presently approved projects must necessarily require Council approval. MH stated that this can be an update to the Council, rather than a Council decision.

The decision to not release the MSR call, however, should be a Council decision. MH noted that ALTER-Net has already ceased funding the LTER-Europe secretariat and anticipated that ending MSR may be perceived as a full separation of ALTER-Net from LTER. AW noted the unique value of the MSR tool and recommended putting it in hibernation until excellent proposals are received. JP agreed and noted that MSR has become too similar to AHIA.

**Decision:** Only the current Czech Academic Sciences project funding will be extended for its last year, and the MSR initiative will be put on hold for 2020.

## **AHIA**

PR reviewed the status of AHIA projects, including the issues surrounding the project of Per Angelstam. PR stated that it is too late to change the participation of ALTER-Net in this project, but JVD requested that as a condition of this last payment, clear and intentional branding be made on the outputs of Per's project. Follow-up with Timo on the conclusions of the EcoHealth project led by SYKE is still needed. TK is to contact Hans Keune <hans.keune@inbo.be> to ask for an update.

PR recommended opening another AHIA call in December following the Council decision, closing the call by a deadline 15th of March (approx), and reaching a decision by the 15th of April (approx). PR additionally recommended: a reduction of the AHIA budget to 15k; requiring a minimum of 50%+ ALTER-Net participation; reduction of required workshops to one; and a themed call rather than an entirely open call. PR will produce suggestions for themes. SJ recommended providing particularly important topic themes but stating that excellent proposals on other themes should be accepted as well.

**Decision:** The MB will propose opening another call with the above-mentioned deadlines, reducing the AHIA budget to 15k, requiring a minimum of 50% ALTER-Net participation, and reducing required workshops to one. A theme or themes will be promoted but accepted proposals will not necessarily be limited to these themes.

## **Mobility Fund**

As it is not being used, JVD suggested proposing the phasing out of the Mobility Fund to the Council and using the money in other places where it is more needed. Broad agreement was voiced, though it was expressed that the fact that this resource went unused is quite unfortunate. It was suggested that the MF could be linked with capacity building in the future and reinitiated. It was also suggested that individual council members could share it directly on their own websites. Finally, it was recommended to no longer explicitly state that it cannot be used for consortium building purposes when an ALTER-Net consortium with a high number of partners is the result.

**Decision:** The mobility fund will be maintained and the success of it can be assessed. It will no longer explicitly exclude use for ALTER-Net consortium building.

## **Clearinghouse Mechanism**

The clearinghouse mechanism activity is ongoing and requires no funding. MK will request that partners share it on their own websites. TK will continue developing the Call Exchange platform and will request that more detailed expertise sharing/description be included from all partners, if possible not only on the level of the institute but preferably also on the level of teams/labs.

## **Cost Action**

Mart reviewed the small meeting on COST actions at the Ghent conference and displayed the COST topics that were perceived as of interest to ALTER-Net. MK posed the question of ALTER-Net engagement with a COST action as a means of external funding for ALTER-Net. It was noted that COST funding would be limited for meetings, travel, and workshops. JVD suggested the option of MK overseeing the formation of a working group. MH questioned whether ALTER-Net could serve as a facilitator and promote relevant topic options via MK and the website. MK noted that the issue of COST actions could also be raised to the Council for consideration.

## **Data Infrastructure**

TK, PV, and the freelance videographer will move forward with editing plans for the DI video using the currently remaining budget. Final closure on the EEA contract will be pursued. No new budget is needed.

## **Summer School**

Funds are already approved for the 2020 Summer School. AW advised that the MB request Council support for the Summer School in 2021 and more intentional promotion of the opportunity of the Summer School internally within their respective institutes.

The question of different costs for ALTER-Net vs. non-ALTER-Net students was raised. AW noted that fee-waivers are available and that the fees are simply for food and accommodation. MH stressed the added-value of mobilization of alumni and asked if they could become personal members of ALTER-Net. AW agreed that formal recognition of the contributions of SS participants who are not technically associated with ALTER-Net (both leaders and possibly students) as associate members would be beneficial. PR voiced opposition to individual membership, as it would greatly change the makeup of ALTER-Net. AW stated that such a change would need to be a Council decision, but emphasized the importance of branding the SS as centered around ALTER-Net (rather than just Peyresq) and culturing students to become associates of ALTER-Net to expand the network and its impact.

**Decision:** The MB will propose funding of 2021 Summer School to Council. The 2020 SS dates will be 18-28 of August. Recognition of and appreciation for Martin Sharman, Ute Frish, and Brooke Wilkerson should be formally expressed.

## **ALTER-Net Conference**

In-kind contributions will be requested from the Council for the 2021 ALTER-Net Conference. Volunteers are welcome for the organization of this event. The budget will remain the same: 15k for 2020 and 15k for 2021. JVD proposed launching an organizing call for 2021 conference themes on a subject that is relevant to all ALTER-Net institutes in order to mobilize interest among ALTER-Net scientists.

## **Science-Policy Interface**

SPI issues were broadly discussed. The question of which SPI areas should be opened up to in-kind contributions from ALTER-Net members, which will be handled by the management board, and which will be managed by the EKLIPSE secretariat and the ALTER-Net secretariat requires final determination. MV noted that the SPI seminar at UFZ was extremely successful and advised that other institutes host similar SPI activities. MV does not advise requesting funds for such activities in 2020, suggesting that top-down SPI efforts in the next year should be focused on the anchoring of EKLIPSE.

Dissemination of EKLIPSE output will be left to the requester. The Strategic Advisory Board advised more involvement in dissemination, but this is difficult without appearing activist.

The merging of AHIA with EKLIPSE was raised and considered.. Distribution of tasks related to EKLIPSE transition will be delegated to many MB members where possible and task forces organized by MV. EKLIPSE issues will be further discussed at the governance meeting in the afternoon (AW, MV, MH, JvD, TK and Juliette Young (remotely) will attend).

**Decision:** The following vision of EKLIPSE under ALTER-Net will be proposed: promoting a culture of evidence-informed decision making. MV will likewise send this new vision to the consortium of EKLIPSE. The transfer of all EKLIPSE components to ALTER-Net will be carried out and work will begin immediately to ensure a smooth transition of the EKLIPSE project to sustainable operation under the management of ALTER-Net. Scenarios for EKLIPSE Phase 2 will be investigated.

## **Secretariat**

Considering the given proposals for next year's activities, an expansion of the duties and workload of the ALTER-Net Secretariat is foreseen (as well as a high quantity of secretariat work for the transition of EKLIPSE). In the allocated budget earlier approved by the Council, 20k is available to fund the secretariat (equivalent to circa 0,5 fte position). In addition, MV and AW agreed that there is enough work and EKLIPSE budget for TK to perform secretariat work for EKLIPSE (0,5 fte). It was proposed that TK could work for ALTER-Net and EKLIPSE under a formal contract at UFZ. MV will consult with UFZ regarding the drafting of the contract ASAP.

## **Legal Structure**

MH briefed the MB on progress toward the adoption of a legal structure for ALTER-Net.

By 6th of November, legal counsel will be given and the organization of the legal structure can be made. There are complications intrinsic to the International Non-Profit status that had been previously proposed. MH recommended pursuing a standard non-profit under Belgian law with a seat in Belgium. This status will nevertheless enable full international participation in the organization. Two people are needed to start this organization (at a minimum, MH and JVD); not every director will need to be involved. MH advised that all partners be informed about this process. MH reiterated that at present, he, as a legal person, is personally holding all assets of ALTER-Net. On the 30th of November, a final document concerning the legal structure can be produced.

### **Conclusion**

JVD thanked everyone for their numerous contributions and commitments, which she highly appreciated, and closed the meeting. Suggestions for the location of the next MB meeting are welcome. Additionally, a Skype meeting will be organized at the end of January with possible additional meetings later. **The meeting closed at 12:00 on Tuesday, 29 October.**