



ALTER-Net Council Meeting Minutes

Budapest– 20 November 2017

Venue	Impact HUB Budapest
Contact	tessa.vansanten@inbo.be tyler.kulfan@inbo.be
Attendance	<p>[MH] 1. Maurice Hoffmann (INBO; council chair) NC [GB] 2. Györgyi Bela (ESSRG, council vice chair) [MIK] 3. Miki Kertesz (MTA) [JVD] 4. Jiska van Dijk (NINA, Chair MB) MB [AW] 5. Allan Watt (CEH – Vice - Chair MB) MB/NC [JMC] 6. Jean-Marc Callois (Irstea) NC [KW] 7. Keimpe Wieringa (PBL)NC [EF] 8. Eeva Furman (SYKE) NC [MK] 9. Mart Külvik (EMU) NC [TH] 10. Tor Heggeberget (NINA) NC [JP] 11. Joan Pino (CREAF) [AV] 12. Angheluta Vadineanu (UNIBUC) [AH] 13. Allison Hester (JHI) NC [AB] 14. András Báldi [CP] 15. Christoph Plutzer (SEC) NC [CG] 16. Chistoph Görg [ORH] 17. Olga Roig-Herrera [RK] 18. Robert Kanka [BS] 19. Barbara Satalova</p> <p>NC: network council representative; MB: management board member</p>
Absent with notification	<p>Marta Dobrovodská (ILE-SAS) Sonja Jähnig (IGB) MB/NC Stefan Klotz (UFZ) NC Diana Hummel (ISOE) NC Ulf Grandin (SLU) NC Julius Oszlanyi (ILE-SAS) NC Jesper Fredshavn (DCE) NC Marion Mehring (ISOE) NC</p>
No notification	<p>Mihai Adamescu (UNIBUC) NC Rob Wolters (ECNC) NC Tomas Mozga (HBU-CAS) NC Lawrence Jones-Walters (Alterra) NC Jan Frouz (HBU-CAS) NC Kinga Krauze (ERCE) NC</p>

	Michael Mirtl (EAA) NC Angheluta Vadineanu (UNIBUC)
Minutes	Tyler Kulfan (Alter-Net Secretariat); tyler.kulfan@inbo.be

1. Welcome and Start of Meeting

MH welcomed all those present and introduced András Báldi, General Director of MTA Centre for Ecological Research. AB welcomed everyone to Budapest and discussed the collaborative and multidisciplinary efforts of MTACER and the Hungarian scientific community.

2. Approval of Minute from Council Meeting in Uppsala (Feb. 2017)

MH presented the minutes of the previous Council meeting in Uppsala.

Decision: The Council approves of minute of previous Council meeting.

3. Follow-up of Minute from Council Meeting in Uppsala (Feb. 2017)

3.1 Minutes Open to the Network

Concerns were raised by EF regarding issuance of joint documents, noting the need for improvement in sharing methods and questioning whether sharing should be limited to Council members exclusively. The implementation of an online database where minutes could be accessed by all members was suggested by JP.

Decision: Once minutes are approved, they will be made available to each council representative; it is her or his prerogative to distribute among respective institute staff pro-actively or upon request. The new secretariat will distribute minutes sans sensitive information. Implementation of an online database as part of the ALTER-Net website will be considered.

3.2 BES Annual Meeting

MH presented an overview of ALTER-Net's planned participation in the upcoming annual BES meeting. ALTER-Net will feature a stand at the BES meeting in Ghent 12-14 December 2017, jointly organized with GfO and NecoV. TK will be tasked with staffing the stand.

4. State of Affairs: Budget

MH presented budget options, beginning with a business-as-usual option expected to exceed funds. Credit balance was noted; in light of credit balance, the need for external funding options/sources was underscored. The past year was recognized as one of the most active years for ALTER-Net; however, MH noted that if current activities continue, capital will drop by 48,000 Euro by 2020. TH stressed importance of maintaining current

level of activity.

5. New Secretariat & ALTER-Net Legal Structure

The newly hired secretariat (TK) was introduced. Duties and job description of this new position were presented by MH, who subsequently raised question of sufficiency of job description for a half-time secretariat position. General support was voiced. Concern was raised by AW that administrative support for the ALTER-Net summer school, currently taken care of by UFZ, should not necessarily be changed regardless of this new position.

Decision: Job description of secretariat position is sufficient and appropriate.

The question of ALTER-Net legal structure was raised by JVD. MH noted that ALTER-Net is not presently a legal entity and asked the Council to weigh in on the pros and cons of legal structure (society, NGO, etc.) for ALTER-Net. It was noted that legal structure would enable independent action. EF expressed concern that formal actions by ALTER-Net (as opposed to independent action by member organizations) complicates nature of ALTER-Net and that change in status may result in membership losses. MIK noted the role of legality in relation to external financing options; GB, JMC, and JVD on behalf of the MB expressed support for legality as a means of enabling external financing, while MK seconded doubts of EF. MH raised idea of stating intention of becoming a legal entity at peer meeting in Brussels. Mixed responses of support and concern were broadly voiced.

Decision: General positive attitudes exist toward investigating legal structure of ALTER-Net. The secretariat will investigate this possibility for the next council meeting.

6. MSR Call 2017-2018

JP presented the only received MSR proposal. The goal of this research would be the exploration of climate effects of the relationship between leaf traits and soil carbon storage using data from mining sites. JP stated that this project was determined to be eligible by ALTER-Net criteria. However, low number of ALTER-Net study sites and low requested budget (7,000 euros) were noted. EF, MK, and AW noted that decision was not ideal and additional time should be given for other proposals or for this research to meet ALTER-Net conditions, while JP on behalf of the MB recommended moving forward with approval with condition of additional ALTER-Net site inclusion.

Decision: Approval is not granted at this time; alteration and resubmission is recommended; proactively and actively. ALTER-Net and LTER sites should be included. A new call shall be made in January 2018 for new proposals.

7. New Candidacy for the Network: Delbaere Consulting

MH introduced the new ALTER-Net candidate: Delbaere Consulting and stated that INBO favored approval. General agreement was noted.

Decision: Candidacy of Delbaere Consulting is unanimously accepted by Council.

8. Overview Received MoU's 2017-2020

MH announced that 16,000 euros are still to be expected if all membership fees are paid for 2017. New invoices will be made in first quarter of 2018. Chair reminded members to have MoU and pledge signed prior to April.

9. Follow-up of the ALTER-Net Conference Society-Environment Interactions

CG reported on the ALTER-Net conference in regards to its treatment of society-environment interactions, underscoring tensions within institutes dealing with society-environment interactions and between the current approach of ALTER-Net and the place of social sciences within its future activities. Responses were mixed, with several council members stating that they did not detect tension and others affirming CG's sentiments but maintaining that ALTER-Net has been (and must continue to be) an excellent resource in promoting interdisciplinary collaboration. Suggestions were raised for further interdisciplinary promotion, including addressing this subject in a conference setting and including social scientists on the management board.

Decision: Tension was felt between ecological-oriented and socially-oriented institutes; several members experienced this tension as a positive things, others believed it needed to be addressed. It was questioned what can be done about it, and the conference was raised as an opportunity to actively address this subject. The incorporation of social scientists into the management board is likewise a means of achieving this.

10. State of Affairs: Network Activities

10.1 ALTER-Net conference 2019

JVD expressed the importance of commencing planning for the 2019 ALTER-Net Conference. Two themes were raised at the MB meeting in Berlin October 2017: continuing with the collaboration with the European Commission and focusing on the new 2030 Biodiversity strategy as opted and preferred by the EC, or focusing on diverse and established biodiversity research infrastructures and their potential for ALTER-Net research. AW stressed the benefits of siding with the Commission for broad international research dissemination; JP noted diverse benefits of focusing on Biodiversity strategy. CG conversely noted that siding with the Commission could be interpreted as valuing ecology over social sciences, though others maintained that Biodiversity strategy left ample room for transdisciplinary participation. KW noted alignment of Sustainable Development Goals with ALTER-Net goals; MH raised idea of a discussion of SDGs by top ALTER-Net scientists at EDF European Congress. The value of the SDG and Biodiversity strategies as they pertain to ALTER-Net were broadly debated. MIK suggested a back-to-back meeting to deal with this issue alongside a larger conference; EF proposed that it would again be organized in Ghent.

Next to this issue about the theme of the conference, it was stressed by JvD that there is an urgent need to have clarity who will take the lead on organizing the ALTER-Net 2019 conference. One needs to take into account at least a 2 pers.month in kind contribution for this. SYKE would like to play a role, but maybe not the leading role, when SDG is included the theme of the conference.

Decision: This conference is a valuable means of meeting, networking, and the dissemination of knowledge and research to policy. SDG was raised as a valuable strategy framework; and combining with the Biodiversity 2030 framework will bring added value. All partner institutes to think about their role in organizing the 2019 conference and inform the secretary on their decision (deadline Jan-Febr 2018).

10.2 Summer School 2018

AW presented the details of the upcoming 2018 summer school. Noted a proposed increase of application fees. A similar budget and funding structure will be maintained, but an additional 5k is needed to cover expenses of speakers, including ALTER-Net speakers. Three proposals were presented: (a) raising budget from 35,000 to 40,000 euros and requesting these fees from the council; (b) raising fee from 800 to 850 euros; (c) and approving and planning the 2019 summer school with a similar/slightly increase budget to support contribution of Marie Vandewalle. KW suggested different fees for ALTER-Net partners and non ALTER-Net partners (for instance 800 for ALTER-Net and 850 for non ALTER-Net partners). AW sympathized but raised concern of non-partner student finances; MH suggested such expenses could be supported by ALTER-Net. AW noted the benefit of networking between ALTER-Net and non ALTER-Net students and the negative effect of limiting participation in favor of ALTER-Net students would have on this networking capacity of the summer school.

Decision: All proposals (a, b, c) were unanimously passed.

10.3 Communication

MH presented two proposals made by AndySier (MB member for communication) for (a) allocation of 3,000 euros for the purpose of website redesign and (b) 1,000 euros for commercial printing. It is noted that this proposal and consideration was made prior to the hiring of TK.

Decision: Council decided to proactively allocate 4,000 euros for these communication purposes with the intent of having communication collaboration between Andy and TK that might also fulfill these needs.

11. State of Affairs: Network Activities (Part 2)

11.1 Exchange of Interests and Collaboration on International Calls

The issue of exchange of interests and collaboration on international calls was

introduced by MK. An associated proposal to implement an online system and clearinghouse mechanism for exchange of interests on international calls within ALTER-Net was presented, noting 4,000 euros are needed for start-up and coordination and 1,300 for clearinghouse mechanism on ALTER-Net website. TH and GB voiced support for proposal as a means of adaptation to new financing changes, with AW noting need for different means of contact and outreach and suggesting Twitter as one such means. JMC stressed the need for sufficient human capital to effectively facilitate information sharing; ORH suggested sharing call information with secretariat. MH subsequently questioned necessity of proposed budget in light of hiring of TK. The heavy reliance on email was generally criticized

Decision: Proposal is unanimously approved and budget allocation is approved at present; can be reconsidered if deemed unnecessary in light of new secretariat position.

11.2 Support to Research Infrastructure Applications Through MSR Grants

MH introduced the proposed matter of a specific MSR call referring to the infrastructure proposal by the MB (Petteri Vihervaara); this call would be supplementary rather than a replacement for the previously proposed research that needed resubmission. MH further suggested postponing any MSR call with this specific subject until 2019. JP noted that focus on LTSEER/data infrastructures should not replace MSR; MH stated focusing only on LTSEER is acceptable, but questioned the allocation of extra money for this specific purpose. MIK affirmed need for proposed measure and allocation of extra funds; AH suggested preferential treatment of projects meeting expressed criteria but no allocation of funds. JP suggested a trial run MSR-specific call in the future. MH raised concern that LTER preference would alienate social science participation in such research. No general agreement was detected; MH subsequently suggested an as-is MSR plan for 2018 and further clarification of MSR goals

Decision: MSR 2019 decision is not made at present, albeit yes/no aligned with the infrastructure proposal; MSR-specific money for the infrastructure proposal will not be allocated for 2018.

11.3 Science Policy Interfacing

A proposal to retain the option for the Management Board to actively get engaged on behalf of ALTER-Net in a joint activity with the EKLIPSE mechanism was reviewed [PROPOSED BUDGET]. AW expressed concern that the proposal was too vague, while EF stressed importance of proactivity in regards to EKLIPSE.

Decision: The Council commits to a strong working liaison relationship with EKLIPSE but will not allocate the proposed budget.

11.4 AHIA: Adapted Procedure and New Call

The timeframe for call proposals was raised by MH; the Council considered whether the

current period (1-2 months) was of sufficient length. AH maintained that while two months is sufficient, one is too short. JVD suggested that TK could promote upcoming calls prior to launching.

Decision: Present proposal call period is too short; this period will be extended to a minimum of two months.

11.5 ALTER-Net SDG Initiative

JVD presented the inter-connectedness ideas of the ALTER-Net 2017 conference as they pertain to Sustainable Development Goals. It was noted that 8,700 euros have already been allocated for following up on the 2017 conference. An additional budget of 6,300 euros is proposed (total: 15,000 euros) to be used for an Open Access publication on this inter-connectedness, assistance in writing, and related tasks. AH affirmed the importance of this measure; CG expressed support for measure. MH noted general Council support. JVD volunteered to oversee SDG Initiative.

Decision: Initiative, budget, and coordination of ALTER-Net SDG Initiative under leadership of JVD are unanimously approved.

12. New Candidacy in Replacement of Carsten Nesshöver

MH noted that Carsten Nesshöver has taken a position in Berlin; his vacancy in the management board remains to be fulfilled. Marie Vandewalle has been suggested by UFZ to fulfill this vacancy. The value of Vandewalle's expertise and the replacement of a male with a female was noted. General support was detected.

Decision: The ALTER-Net management board will include Marie Vandewalle to fulfill the vacancy left by Carsten Nesshöver.

13. Workshop on New Potential Activities

MH introduced the final portion of the council meeting, which focused on new activities, including Horizon scanning

13.1 Proposal on Horizon Scanning Meeting with Top Scientist

JVD introduced the Horizon scanning activity proposal: Organize a meeting with top scientists back-to-back with the 2018 summer school in Peyresq, with an additional requested budget of 10,000 euros. This activity would entail a meeting with top scientists dealing with the pressing scientific issues of tomorrow (what specific ecological research will be needed for our society over the next 30 years). The event would not be specific to ALTER-Net scientists; its value for networking opportunities was noted. CG, EF, and AW voiced support for proposal. The use of a questionnaire or web-based interface to stimulate topical direction was suggested. CG and AH expressed possible interest in meeting participation. EF suggested further communication with Council members' institutions to find suitable candidates. Sonja Jähnig was contacted as a potential leader

and expressed interest but requested additional help. MH noted strong general approval and requested that Sonja develops this initiative and a task force comprised of MH, EF, CG, and AH support her efforts.

Decision: ALTER-Net will advance in plans to organize a meeting with top scientists alongside the 2018 summer school, with the understanding that further development is needed.

13.2 Brainstorming on Other Potential New Activities

The floor was opened by MH to all present Council members to suggest, brainstorm, and discuss potential new activities of ALTER-Net.

- JMC: Introduced initiative for expertise and information sharing within ALTER-Net associated institutes (especially on the specific subject of social sciences within ecology)
- JP: Expressed interest in promoting the network to expand its budget so that it can be more present in social media and the European scientific community; expand profile of ALTER-Net; it was noted that activity expansion is tied to funding and that different budget allocations could yield desired changes
- KW: Proposes a workshop to organize a review of IPBES and how we can contribute to its success; ALTER-Net platform can be used to share IPBES vision
- EF: Expressed interest in IPBES idea, lending strategic support
- RK: Expressed interest in idea of JMC; MH noted that position of TK will lend support to expertise sharing database
- AW: Expressed interest in raising profile, especially within our own associated organizations
- AH: Raised idea of webinar seminars to showcase work from our associated institutes; could be publicized and organized remote seminars could be held
- CG: Vocalized need for exchange and collaboration; stated that time issue is a major concern for his institute colleagues.
- GB: Proposed establishing working groups among members; could be effective for publishing open calls--groups could use ALTER-Net logo and resources; they would then deliver a report to the Council regarding their activities; Council could require specific proposal and research directives. Also expressed interest in developing a working group on citizen science, strengthening working relationships with other research networks, and suggested capacity building activities, internships, and open days for ALTER-Net members at member institutes.
- MIK: Suggested local hubs are more effective than broad networks for raising interest among members
- JP: Suggested saving money that is saved by council members respective institutes from reduced membership fees and reallocating to ALTER-Net
- EH: Suggested broad and direct dissemination (i.e. newsletters AND linkedin)

- GB: Suggested working groups should be open to all members (not just Council members); those who are active should be rewarded by being given opportunities to organize activities of interest and direct initiatives
- TH: Agrees that primary ALTER-Net goal should be to reach scientists; that should always be top agenda priority. Suggests energy must be spent discussing and evaluating contents of the future of ALTER-Net, including finances and scientific approaches. Many suggested activities cannot be maintained without a change of budget means. Suggested a task force (where members have a particular task regarding future challenges and present specific solutions) could be a useful tool.
- MK: Raised idea of a best showcases review to objectively establish effectiveness of outreach; proposed analyzing website hits by country to determine which institutes/countries are doing a good job of outreach and raising the profile of ALTER-Net and determine successful practices.
- CP: Expressed support JMC's suggestion
- EF: ALTER-Net could facilitate a forum (perhaps using posters) regarding outreach experience. Proposed institute events be explicitly advertised as ALTER-Net-associated; could feature a brief introduction to ALTER-Net and a poster stand with information.
- MH: Noted the exceptional participation in new activity proposals.

14. 2018 Management Board Budget Proposal

MH introduced the final proposal of the agenda: the 2018 management board budget proposal. The allocations and sum total (130,550 euros) were presented. It was noted that this sum would lower the credit balance by the end of 2018 with the assumption that all budget will be spent; the persistent annual allocation of funds that are not ultimately used was likewise noted.

Decision: Allocated budget of 130,550 euros agreed upon unanimously.

15. Other Business

No other business issues raised.

16. Next Council Meeting

Next council meeting was proposed to be held in Prague. Suggestions were requested of the council for alternative locations. No other suggestions were made. Matter of date was raised; time area of November 20th was suggested. The idea of a planning meeting among the management board using Skype was raised by JVD.

Decision: The next ALTER-Net Council meeting will be held in Prague in November (around the 20th)

The 2017 ALTER-Net Council meeting (Budapest) concluded at 17:00. The activities of the meeting were followed by the EKLIPSE EU-Level Science café.