

ALTER-Net Management Board meeting, Berlin, 10 & 11 October 2017

Attendance: Joan Pino (CREAF), Mart Külvik (EMU), Carsten Neßhöver (UFZ), Andy Sier (CEH), Maurice Hoffmann (INBO), Philip Roche (Irstea, only on 11 October via SKYPE due to travel difficulties), Petteri Vihervaara (SYKE), Allan Watt (CEH) and Jiska Van Dijk (NINA, Chair & Minutes)

Absence with notification: Sonja Jähnig (IGB-Berlin)

- 1) Agenda approved after noting that Maurice will elaborate on 'legal structure ALTER-Net' under agenda item 2) New secretariat.

Draft minutes of ALTER-Net MB Skype meeting, 6 April 2017, approved with one textual change under the heading Summer School (i.e. 'September 2017 Summer School' is 'September 2017 conference')

- 2) New secretariat & Legal structure ALTER-Net

After the job interviews for a 0.5 fte ALTER-Net secretary position (20.000 Euro salary), one candidate was chosen and offered the position. However, in the meantime the situation at INBO changed in such a way that the remaining ALTER-Net savings can't be transferred to the next calendar year and had to be secured in a private bank account. In addition, and due to this situation (i.e. ALTER-Net not being an official project at INBO), INBO hasn't the possibility to appoint the 0.5 fte ALTER-Net secretary. After discussing this issue, the pros and cons of becoming a legal entity and the need to appoint this secretary as soon as possible, it was decided that each MB will see if their institute has the possibility to subcontract this person for the remaining 3 months in 2017. This person will have to work from Brussels while ALTER-Net will not lose unnecessary money on overhead. *However, the MB would like to propose to Council to change the current non-legal identity of ALTER-Net to a legal status such as foundation, society or federation, not-for-profit association.* This will also have the advantage that ALTER-Net may apply for funding, as a legal institution.

Action: Maurice and Tessa to prepare for Council meeting in November the pros and cons of different legal structures.

- 3) Council issues

- a. Make MB Minutes also open to the network, same as Council Minutes? MB agrees to this, adopting the same procedures as for Council Minutes (i.e. neutral briefing). In addition the draft minutes will be sent to the MB participants so that they can screen the minutes to see if they agree to the wording before they become final and open to the network). Open to the network is interpreted as uploading them under a password-protected 'members' part of the website.
- b. PEER. Maurice as chair of ALTER-Net has been invited to take part in the PEER meetings. The first PEER meeting will be 24th of November. Apparently PEER would like to start a small project on SDGs (initiated by Eeva Furman and Raoul Mille), similar to the ideas from Eeva and Jiska (see conference 2017). *The MB encourages PEER to make minutes of the PEER meetings to aid collaboration between PEER and ALTER-Net.*

Action: Maurice to report back to MB & Council regarding PEER meeting November.

- c. New activities workshop during Council meeting November: According to Council minutes (Uppsala) there is the wish to include time for a workshop during the upcoming council meeting to discuss possible new activities in the MB. This is meant to increase active involvement of council members.

Action: Maurice/Tessa will ask council members to come up with subjects for this workshop.

- d. Council needs meeting documents first week of November, thus deadline for sending MB documents to Jiska: 29th of October
- e. **Additional Action:** Maurice/Tessa to remind Council about the extra funding to certain activities, as mentioned in the pledge to the MoU. When council approved the new partnership fees, an additional clause was added to the pledge stating that partner institutes could fund certain activities in addition to the partnership fee.

4) Budget status

While the credit balance of ALTER-Net (5 Oct 2017) is about 340.000 Euro, the estimated yearly cash contribution of partners is about 55.000 Euro. In addition to this overview, we have several ongoing and long-term approvals by Council spending much more than 55.000 Euro (e.g. summer school, conference every other year, 0.5 fte paid secretary, MSR, AHIA). When discussing the activities and making the yearly work plans (2018, 2019 & 2020), we need to take this into account and look for sustainable solutions in the (near) future. This may include recruitment of new partners, higher partnership fees, co-funding of certain activities, and/or less or different activities. This issue should also be discussed by Council.

5) MB activities

a. Communication (Andy)

Although Andy doesn't have much time and possibilities to run this activity, he is doing an excellent job. In the (near) future he will get help from the secretary, which hopefully will also lead to the continuation of different communication activities, such as sending out newsletters to those that are interested. The secretary could also play a crucial role in profiling ALTER-Net in social media, for example. However, there is a huge need for information from the partner institutes.

Action: Andy and new secretary: Skype meeting to discuss communication work plan 2018, including possibly a new web design, the implementation of a 'live' table for the exchange of interests for upcoming calls (see 'collaboration'), and taking forward the issue of sending regular newsletters.

Action: All of MB: look at the website and see if your activity text needs to be updated.

b. Summer School 2017 & 2018 (Allan)

Several students from 6 different ALTER-Net partner institutes participated in the 2017 summer school. In addition 2 students from the commission participated and 12 speakers from different ALTER-Net institutes were included in the programme. The MB expresses its gratitude to the organisation team and the convenors, also for their huge in kind contribution. The work by both Marie Vandewalle and Allan is especially appreciated.

The summer school 2018 is also planned to be in Peyresq. MB endorses the convener's team (Allan Watt, Marie Vandewalle, Uta Fritsch, Nicolas Dendoncker and Brooke Wilkerson). Allan would like to continue also in 2018 and be the main person organizing the summer school, as CEH fellow.

For the 2019 summer school probably more budget is needed to cover for the in kind contribution of, for example, Marie Vandewalle, but also the option of a joint summer school (ALTER-Net & EKLIPSE) should be explored.

Action: Allan: request to council to approve to 2019 summer school and allocation of budget (35.000 Euro + X Euro for intensification of labour of one of the current conveners other than Allan).

c. Multi Site Research (Joan)

The deadline for sending MSR proposals was 01 October. Joan screened the one received and also the other MB members had a chance to read the proposal. All MB members agreed the proposal was suitable for funding but would like to see if the proposed mining sites could be extended by a number of sites operated by ALTER-Net partners. Joan will ask the principal investigator. Of course additional funding will be available in case the MSR study is able to increase its number of sites accordingly.

In addition the text on the website regarding MSR needs to be updated and new pictures added.

Action: Joan: get in contact with principal investigator of MSR proposal to explore possibilities to increase sites with additional ALTER-Net partner operated sites and agree on total budget needed (suggested timeframe: per year for a period of 3 years).

Action: Joan: request to council to approve to MSR proposal.

Action: Joan / Andy: update website + new pictures

d. AHIA (Philip)

Many thanks to Philip for updating the AHIA procedures text and the proposal template. During this MB meeting we went over his suggestions and we agreed Philip would make a clean version, which will be sent to all in MB one more time for approval, before launching the call by 01 November. Proposal deadline: 2 months after launching the call. It would be advisable to communicate 'early 2018' for example regarding the next call so we do not pin ourselves to certain dates. Also for the AHIA the website needs to be updated.

Action: Philip: Making a clean version and send both clean version and the version with the suggestions to all in MB for final check before 01. November.

Action: Philip / Tessa: launch call 01. November.

Action: Philip / Andy: update website.

e. Science-Policy interface (Carsten)

Carsten informed MB members about the IPBES stakeholder meeting in Hungary. Review processes of global and regional assessments are about to start and Carsten will forward the requests to review to the ALTER-Net community. EKLIPSE has 3 outstanding calls at the moment which were also forwarded to the ALTER-Net community. For the Council meeting Carsten will produce statistics to see how many ALTER-Net partners are involved in the ongoing and past EKLIPSE 'projects'. We may want to put certain quotes selling EKLIPSE on the ALTER-Net website to promote and increase ALTER-Net engagement. EKLIPSE and Maurice to prepare for the Science café on nature valuation, back to back with the Council meeting in Hungary. MB discussed the possibility of organizing a joint summer school in 2019 with EKLIPSE & ALTER-Net, in line with EKLIPSE's intention and available budget on capacity building. ALTER-Net (via Maurice) is an in-kind partner in setting up a future business model for the EKLIPSE mechanism á la OPPLA. The next meeting on the business plan will be in December

and in February 2018 the first draft of this business model will be open for broad consultation. It would be good to discuss this item in Council.

Action: Carsten: Prepare a short summary of the EKLIPSE mechanism and suggestions for the business plan to be discussed at Council meeting.

Action: Maurice / EKLIPSE: Prepare Science café.

Action: Carsten / Andy: update website regarding EKLIPSE, adding quotes and selling EKLIPSE.

f. Exchange of Interests and Collaboration on International Calls (Mart)

Because of the different opinions within ALTER-Net when it comes to the importance of this activity and because of the sensitivity of this issue when it comes to competition, Mart proposes to opt for an online system (table) where institutes (with contact persons) can actively indicate their interest to collaborate on certain calls. The key here is information sharing and trying to serve as a clearing house.

However there are two types of calls: one type is the calls such as H2020 on certain themes / special expertise and the other type is the calls suitable for ALTER-Net to apply for as a network (for example COST, TNT). For this second type of calls, Mart proposes to initiate coordinating meetings where the way forward for the particular call and who will do what is further crystallized.

Whether this Clearing house mechanism will work or not remains to be seen but it could work if the different capabilities of the ALTER-Net partners are highlighted and much better profiled than at the moment. How do people know where good expertise can be found? How can we make the most from the broad geographical width we have within ALTER-Net?

Action: Mart: Proposal to council regarding Clearing House mechanism for Type 1 calls and Proposal to council + requested budget regarding coordinating meetings for Type 2 calls.

Action: Mart / Andy: Technical interface for Clearing House.

Action: Maurice: remind council about ALTER-Net partner profiles in which different capabilities are highlighted. This information can be added to the Clearing House.

g. Biodiversity Research Infrastructure – LTER (Petteri)

The eLTER proposal was sent in successfully and we expect an answer maybe early 2018. In this proposal, future work on DEIMS is also included. MB discussed the issue of continuing our support on the DEIMS work and proposes not to continue this. The positioning paper written by Michael needs to be placed on the ALTER-Net website. Petteri reports on several recently finished, ongoing and new initiatives in the area of biodiversity data infrastructure and observation networks (for example GEO Bon, EU Bon, Copernicus). It is clear (see also appendix with the 2 figures) that ALTER-Net, who initiated some of the infrastructures and whose work is entangled heavily in these infrastructures, is in a very good position to show how eLTER and related research infrastructures can benefit biodiversity and ecosystem research in Europe. Petteri is, for instance, closely involved in the work of the GEO group on earth observations and reports back that applications are still missing (LTER is now also included in the GEO group). This could be an excellent opportunity for ALTER-Net to design and present applied case studies, relevant for many ALTER-Net partners. We could consider implementing this not only in a new MSR in 2018, but also as a possible conference theme (2019 conference). In this way we make policy and science aware of the huge potential for application and integration.

Action: Petteri / Andy / Michael: Positioning paper LTER on ALTER-Net website.

Action: Petteri: Proposal to council for MSR 2018 on GEO application and ALTER-Net integration.

Action: Jiska: Proposal to council with several 2019 conference themes (see also below), including the GEO application and integration.

h. ALTER-Net Conference (Jiska)

The deliverable from our 2017 Conference, the policy brief, was successfully delivered at DG R&I and DG Env. However no feedback was received afterwards and it is unclear what was done with it internally. Also our request to forward it to other DGs was not followed up, or at least not to our knowledge. Jiska is aware there are individual papers in progress as a result of the different sections, but it remains to be seen if it will be enough for a special issue. Jiska and Eeva Furman are initiating an umbrella paper, highlighting the different outcomes of the conference and their contribution to the interlinkages work of the SDGs (keynote by Eeva). Jiska is of the opinion this could be a very good option for an additional ALTER-Net activity 'Ecosystem research underpinning the Global Sustainable Development Goals' and leading to ALTER-Net contributions to the Global Sustainable Development Report 2019' in which Eeva Furman is involved. Because PEER is also thinking in this direction, it is of utmost importance that there is an exchange in this respect on how to proceed and who will do what, so as not to work in isolation but in fellowship.

For further dissemination of the policy brief (2017 conference) and general information of ALTER-Net, we may want to buy some 'space' at the 'Ecology across borders' conference, Ghent 11-14 Dec 2017 (among others organized by EEF).

Possible conference themes for the 2019 conference were discussed, and because our first and main aim is to attract our own people, we may not opt per se for the recommendation by the Commission to have a conference on the biodiversity targets (evaluating where we stand now and proposal for future). Both the conference theme and who would be willing to lead the organization should be discussed during the Council meeting.

Action: Jiska: Ask session leaders about ongoing work / status manuscripts as a result of their sessions. Initiate umbrella paper with Eeva Furman on interlinkages and SDG.

Action: Maurice / Tessa: Dissemination of policy brief and ALTER-Net information at 'Ecology across borders' conference.

Action: Maurice / Carsten / Jiska / Eeva: Synchronize ALTER-Net 'SDG' work with PEER initiative.

i. Horizon Scanning (all)

MB discussed this issue and proposes to council to organize a meeting with top scientists on what ecological research is needed for society for the next 30 years, back to back to the 2018 summer school in Peyresq. Also BiodivERsA (Xavier / Hilde) could be invited. This should result in a position paper and could feed into the next horizon 2030 calls.

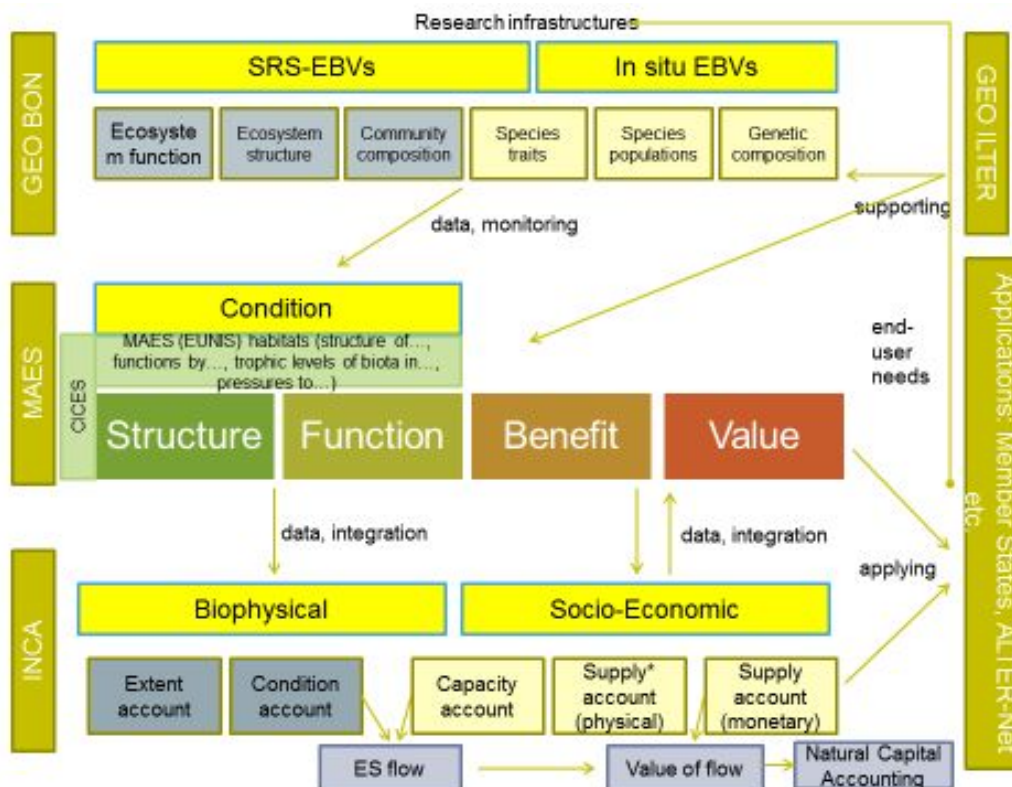
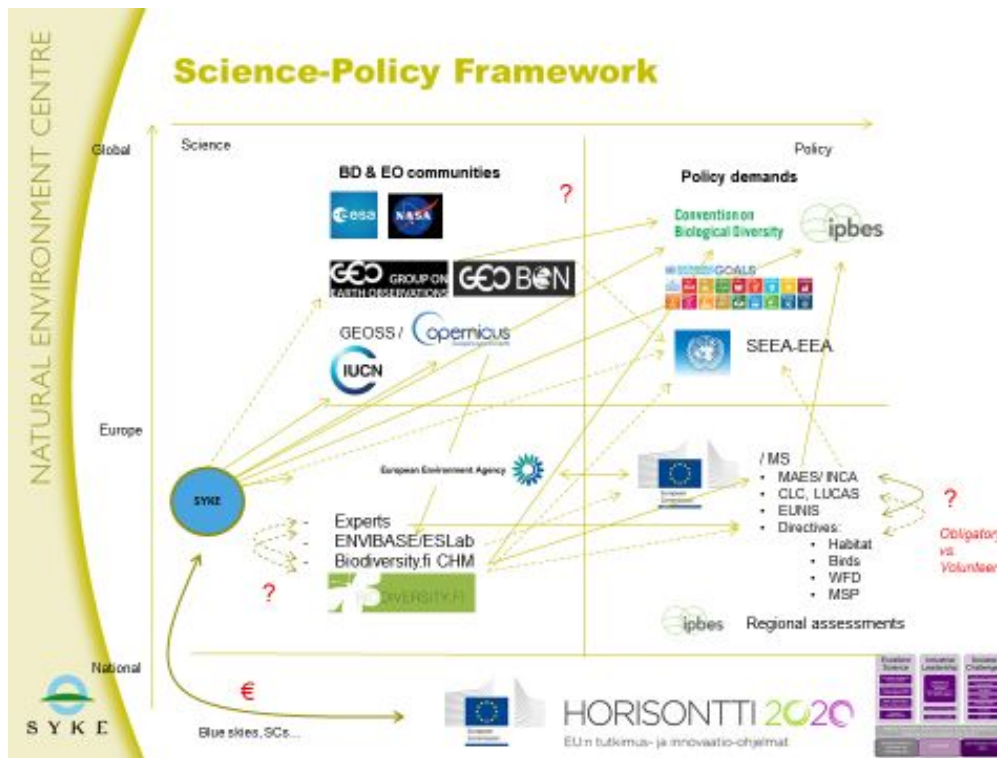
Action: Jiska: Proposal to council to organize a Back-to-back meeting in Peyresq (2018) for top scientists.

6) Any other business, next Skype meeting, end of meeting

Deadline Council meeting documents from MB to Jiska: 29th of October 2017

Andy pointed out once again the wish that we somehow need to keep in touch between the two yearly meetings, not to lose the momentum. The new secretariat will hopefully be able to do this. Jiska will send out a DOODLE for our next SKYPE meeting, spring 2018, and thanks all the MB members for their contributions to the meeting and their extremely valuable work for ALTER-Net.

APPENDIX to Minutes ALTER-Net Management Board meeting, Berlin, 10 & 11 October 2017



Biodiversity research infrastructures and the ultimate position of ALTER-Net