

## **Management Board Meeting - December 2022**

**Location:** Remote

**Date:** 7 December

**Present:** Jiska van Dijk (NINA); Maurice Hoffmann (INBO); Joan Pino (CREAF); Adriana Morato Cliville (CREAF); Marie Vandewalle (UFZ); Allan Watt (UK-CEH); Riikka Paloniemi (SYKE), Lisa Norton (UK-CEH), Ana Lillebo (CESAM), Mark Frenzel (UFZ), Mart Klvik (IAES), Tyler Kulfan (Altnet)

**Minutes:** Tyler Kulfan

### **1. Welcome and approval of last MB minutes - Jiska van Dijk**

Chair Jiska van Dijk opened the meeting and welcomed all those present. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the activities of the past year; the SWOTs that have been assembled is to be the subject of discussion during the physical meeting in Brussels in January 2023. All SWOTs have been received except for Eclipse and AHIA. Likewise, the activities of 2023 will be reserved for the January in-person meeting.

The minutes of March 2022 were raised for approval, along with Ana Lillebo's minutes from the in-between meeting following the Ghent conference. No objections were raised to the approval of both sets of minutes.

**Decision:** The minutes of the previous two meetings are officially approved and will be published on the Altnet website.

### **2. MSR – Joan Pino**

Joan Pino shared a presentation covering the MSR activity progress of 2022. The most recent projects of BC-CAS and INBO were reviewed. The BC-CAS project has produced excellent results, with two papers published in high-quality journals; there has been no project development or expenditures from the INBO project, the support of which was discontinued.

An MSR call was released in early 2022. Two proposals were received, but the quality of these proposals was deemed insufficient and the 2022 call was suspended. The first proposal was considered to not feature enough recognition or added value for Altnet; and the second proposal was unclear, expensive, and featured minimal Altnet partner involvement.

€15k was budgeted for MSR in 2022 and €0 was spent. There is a pending €5k from INBO, which is not intended to be spent. Clarification is needed concerning the INBO budget and when

this money will be returned to Alternet. MH will ensure that the money is returned to Alternet from INBO. It was agreed that Joan would find out if it was 5K or more, and what amount we can expect to get back from INBO.

### **3. AHIA – Philip Roche (not present)**

Philip Roche was not present. There is relatively little information on the progress or status of the ongoing AHIA project, entitled “Demonstrating dependencies between humanity and nature for a sustainable future: A nitrogen case-study” and led by a group of 2019 Alternet Summer School alumni. The most recently published output was a blog post. Updates on status and upcoming outputs will be pursued. Half of the contract money was paid to Nicolas Dendonker and his affiliation.

### **4. Call Exchange - Mart Külvik, Tyler Kulfan**

Mart Külvik introduced the activity of the Call Exchange. TK presented a report of 2022 progress and activity. This included:

- Continued development of new webpage
- Populated platform with current and upcoming calls (eliminated outdated calls)
- e.g. Horizon Europe Clusters 5 and 6, Horizon-INFRA and Horizon-WIDERA calls, Biodiversa+
- Shared call releases with CE contact persons
- Publicly shared all expressions of interest from CE contact persons
- Coordinated consortium building for calls with multiple expressions of interest
- Designed and implemented redesigned interest sharing system with automated form, spreadsheet, and full survey response fields

MV noted the existence of a European Commission call exchange; and an UFZ internal system, which is preferred by UFZ over Alternet engagement. MK noted the level of engagement from contact persons as a weak link in the chain, and suggested that he could engage with them more directly and collect views to see how engagement could be improved. MK will pursue feedback from the contact persons before the January meeting.

GDPR consent needs to be added to the webpage. MH noted that Alternet as an organization is now involved in three EC projects. Checking calls for relevance to the entire organization is not being regularly done presently, but has yielded success when done in the past. To address the added value of the call exchange for Alternet, recognition is needed of what is majority-relevant—and to be accordingly proactive. AW suggested that it might be valuable to have both passive and proactive systems in place.

## **5. SPI One Stop Shop and Webinars – Juliette Young (not present); presented by Marie Vandewalle**

Marie Vandewalle presented on behalf of Juliette Young on the SPI activities of 2022. Three SPI webinars were hosted (by SYKE, ESSRG, and CESAM). The next webinars will be hosted by INBO (January 2023) and James Hutton Institute (March 2023).

The one-stop-shop was brought online in March 2023. This new site contains information on the SPI landscape, SPIRAL briefs, experience-sharing platforms, and SPI webinar repositories. MV recommended further linkage of the OSS with Eklipse.

€1882.00 of an allocated €2000.00 budget was spent. JvD suggested that further consideration of the added value and role of this OSS is needed in light of the one-stop-shop of Oppla and the new BioAgora project. MW noted that, based on the difference in purpose, competition with Oppla should not be an issue. She stated that she brands the OSS as an introductory platform for understanding the broad overview of SPI. MF questioned how we can measure the impact of the webinars after the fact. MH stated that he agrees with MF on planning outcomes/outputs for each webinar, and will seek to apply this idea to the upcoming INBO webinar. MW recommended to send an invitation to the KCBD for the INBO webinar. Marie noted that the webinars have a strong internal impact within institutes, as well. The value of physical seminars was also raised.

## **6. Conference – Jiska van Dijk**

JVD presented on the 2022 Alternet Conference, entitled “Transformative Changes for Biodiversity and Health,” which was held in June 2022. A total of 108 attendees were present, with 56 Alternet partners and 17 Alternet institutes represented. A large number of Alternet alumni were also in attendance. The conference included a poster session, Call Exchange side event, six keynote speakers, and ten sessions.

The total income was approximately €23,000, with income of approximately €35,000—resulting in a total cost of €13,205. This meant that the self-sustaining goal was not reached and the €10,000 budget was exceeded. 150 participants would have been needed to break even. An evaluation was performed after the meeting and new ideas and proposals have been collected. If conferences are to continue as an Alternet activity, an assigned leader is needed with the MB to execute its organization.

AW stated his opinion that the conference was nevertheless a success, with excellent sessions and keynotes. Considering that earlier conferences had a budget of €30,000, it was noted that organizers have done very well with the resources available. MF noted hybrid technological needs as a major source of costs. JP suggested that conference organization role(s) could be offered to researchers at partner institutes, which is attractive for building CVs. The costs and added value associated with the venue in Ghent were discussed.

## **7. Eklipse – Marie Vandewalle**

MV introduced the Eklipse activity and presented the progress and activities of Eklipse during 2022. Eklipse was introduced as a knowledge brokering mechanism. Eklipse has also become central to the BioAgora project. 10-12 knowledge syntheses will be processed by Eklipse as part of BioAgora. Eklipse's role in the future SPI landscape was discussed. The status and progress of Eklipse's many requests were presented, as well as the outcome of its various calls.

In terms of budget, Eklipse had a total income of €13,65.25, after costs—but more incoming funds are expected before the end of the year. Overtime of Eklipse Governance Body members was raised for consideration, alongside other standing issues. JvD noted that many of the Eklipse money transfers are not included in the spreadsheet of Tessa Van Santen and asked MV to make sure to send an overview of these to JvD a.s.a.p..

## **8. Summer School – Allan Watt**

Allan Watt presented on the 2022 Alternet Summer School, which took place (as always) in Peyresq, France. This was the 16th Alternet Summer School. 27 students from 13 countries (representing 18 nationalities) attended in 2022. A student from Ukraine attended for free, and a student from the European Commission was also in attendance. 21 speakers were featured, including four new ones. 2022 was also the first year with support from Biodiversa+.

The activities and events of the summer school were presented, and the contributors were thanked. The total income was €25,100 and total costs were €64,600 (preliminary budget overview). A possible contribution of €12,000 from Biodiversa+ may still be incoming. A meeting with Biodiversa+ will be held in the upcoming weeks, during which this can be clarified and payment may proceed. This would account for approximately one third of costs.

## **9. Communication – Adriana Morato Cliville, Tyler Kulfan**

Tyler presented an overview of Alternet communications activity in 2022 including graphic design, website maintenance, social media, and other internal/external communications. A budget of €6,000.00 was allocated for 2022, €1,833.55 of which were spent.

Adriana noted that more engagement from communication contact persons is needed in order to better populate the newsletters and news section. Issues with search engine results need to be resolved. Marie suggested having a meeting (and possible budget) dedicated to IT issues of Alternet and Eklipse. Alternet and Eklipse have a joint communications meeting planned for later in the day.

**10. Miscellaneous that result from the establishment of iNGO Alternet and from Alternet its inclusion in different EU projects & project proposals (i.e. gender equality plan, data management plan, contracts and Treasure support for financial reporting).**

JvD raised the need for a proper gender equality plan; she has been in contact with RP, MH, and Sonja Jaehnig on this subject. It will need to be sent to the Council for final approval; workshopping of the plan of SYKE and/or IGB has been proposed.

Apart from activities that are presently ongoing, there have been many changes since the establishment of the Alternet iNGO. Jiska and Maurice have approved an offer from a treasury firm. They will be in charge of yearly accounting and tax rules. They will not do invoicing or transfers, which will remain Alternet's responsibility. Their sub-partners (lawyers) will, however, be able to help with contracts and the related legal issues—and the accounting firm will help in an overall effort to professionalize financial bookkeeping.

BioAgora and CBD projects have commenced. The process of hiring a person for the CBD project is undergoing. JvD proposes to use the same process as BioAgora - SYKE is going to use for cascading funding for BioAgora - in getting Alternet partners contributing to BioAgora who are not BioAgora consortium partners. JvD and MH are looking into the statutes and considering possible proposals for alteration and adaptation. The next step is to get a data management plan in place. There have been a number of meetings surrounding secretariat work, which is currently based at IGB with 60% time and which cannot presently include the work from Alternet's EU funded projects.

Plans for the January 2023 meeting, which will take place on January 12-13, were announced. It was requested that all documents are proactively shared, including activity overview docs/presentations from today and SWOT analyses, with JvD and TK prior to the meeting. Proposals will be prepared after the January MB meeting and will need to be sent to Council 14 days before their meeting. A date for the 2023 Council meeting has not yet been set, but should be planned for roughly early February.

JvD thanked the MB members for their participation and contributions.

**The MB meeting concluded at 12:15.**