

Minutes: Alternet Management Board Meeting 2024

8-9 January 2024

INBO - Brussels, Belgium

Day 1 (8 January 2024)

13:00 - 18:00

Present in-person: Maurice Hoffmann (MB provisional acting as Chair, MH), Jiska van Dijk (future Council Chair, JvD), Allan Watt (MB Vice-Chair, AW), Ana Lillebo (Council Vice-Chair, AL), Mark Frenzel (MF), Marie Vandewalle (MV), Riikka Paloniemi (RP), Mart Külvik (MK), Adriana Cliville Morato (ACM), Joan Pino (JP), Philip Roche (PR), Tyler Kulfan (TK)

Present virtually: Juliette Young (JY)

Minutes: Tyler Kulfan

1. Welcome

The chair welcomed all those present. Maurice Hoffmann is now provisional chairing the MB and Jiska van Dijk will start chairing the Alternet Council from the next Council Meeting (21FEB2024) onwards.

2. Official acceptance of previous two MB meeting minutes

The minutes of the two previous MB meetings (12-13 JAN 2023, Brussels, and 17 NOV 2023, online)) were raised for approval.

Decision: The adjusted draft minutes of the MB meetings of 12-13 JAN 2023 and 17 NOV 2023 were unanimously accepted as final minutes.

3. Acceptance of agenda; AOB inquiry

Decision: The agenda was accepted.

There are some open questions regarding the Council minutes, suggestions for new activities, and follow-up on in-kind contributions. The questions posed by the Council as recorded in the minutes of the February 2023 meeting will be considered accordingly.

4. Introductions and setting the stage - Budget overview 2023, actually realized budget

MH gave an overview of the state of affairs of the Alternet bank account, which has been active since 2015. This included all activities and projects, as well as figures related to bank costs, capital transfers, external administrative support, legal advice, secretariat etc.

2023 saw the highest income of partner institutes since the membership fee was halved, following a decision at the council meeting of 28 FEB 2017 in Uppsala. The amount “to be split over # clusters” was noted; this is to be divided between different elements of the secretariat. RP recommended distinguishing between administrative and person-hour tasks in the future and to utilize overhead funding from projects in the future for administrative tasks. MH comments that to date, TK’s project hours are all accounted as person-hours, and should also remain accounted that way; internally, his person-hours are split between secretariat hours for Alternet and individual EU-project and Eclipse-hours; he did not spend secretariat hours for EU-projects; secretariat hours are so far limited to the internal activities. AW noted the risk of overspending Alternet’s means on project-related costs, as there is only one shared bank account. The present bank account overview is divided into subcategories (i.e. distinguishable strict, so-called internal Alternet activities, such as Summer School, Conferences, ..., and the individual externally financed EU-projects and Eclipse), which makes that distinction possible; adjustment will be made to the file avoiding a post called “to be split over # clusters” Costs and income should immediately and unambiguously be allocatable to specific activities’.

Action: MH will make the necessary adjustments to the bank account overview and distinguished subcategories herein, and will keep it up with potential new subcategories.

MH stated that Alternet could decide what to spend overheads on, that are expected from EU-projects and Eclipse actions, and also consider higher membership fees, etc.; but cash flow planning including secondments needs to be thoroughly vetted. MV noted that Eclipse is asking Alternet to consider hiring an accountant. Meticulous oversight (and perhaps a centralized budget officer) is needed for these webs of incomes and expenditures. Membership fees should by definition not contribute to EU projects. Other income streams are very specific (e.g. Biodiversa+ income to the Summer School/alumni activities). All financial management/administration is currently done by MH. The activities of the secretariat are estimated to focus for 40% on European projects. AW stated that he does not think project-by-project budgets will be sufficient and that the support of a financial advisor is needed.

MH noted the high cost of legal (and administrative) advice and that many partner institutes have such personnel at their disposal; and that such services should not necessarily be paid for by internal Alternet means. MH and JvD cannot remain in their positions indefinitely, especially without compensation. Given the personal decision of MH that after his retirement from INBO, he cannot take up governance functions in Alternet anymore (despite the earlier Council decision (2-3 FEB 2023) on a function exchange between JvD and MH), a new MB chair is needed (see point 8 on the agenda), and a person in charge of bookkeeping (treasurer) is needed.

An analysis of the budget after the MB-meeting - here added for your information, not communicated during the meeting - gives the following results on available budget at the end of each year; i.e. budget available for purely internal activities (i.e. AC-meetings, MB-meetings, Summer School, Conferences, Communication, Collaborative Activities, General Secretariat,

Mobility Fund, SS-Alumni, SPI-webinars. Also added, are the membership fee income per calendar year.

year	available capital on 31/12 for internal activities	Membership fee income per year
2015	263 637,87	61 500,00
2016	331 824,59	125 536,46
2017 (first year of halving the membership fee)	280 110,29	47 554,86
2018	261 538,56	51 567,86
2019	183 927,19	62 565,85
2020	184 942,92	63 000,00
2021	145 096,94	52 500,00
2022	146 183,48	73 009,00
2023	163 953,05	79 000,00

5. EU projects of Alternet - progress presentations

CO-OP4CBD - Tyler Kulfan presented on the activities of Alternet within the CO-OP4CBD project. There was general consensus that the content of CO-OP4CBD is relevant and is bringing added value to Alternet. There are particular means that can best involve the Alternet community; we should actively involve and engage our community. Advantages of the network should be visible.

BioAgora - Tyler Kulfan and Marie Vandewalle presented on the activities of Alternet and Eklipse within BioAgora and of BioAgora at large. The answering request function of the resulting science service will have a key role for Alternet. It is stressed that the science service is to be a service for the entire community and not just for the EC.

ECO-Ready, others - Marie Vandewalle presented on other projects with Alternet involvement, including ECO-Ready. ECO-Ready runs through 2026 and is momentarily driven by Nils Bunnefeld (by a secondment of Alternet with Stirling University). Marie Vandewalle is project leader on behalf of Alternet. ECO-Ready is an observatory for food system security. Alternet and Eklipse were recognized as the most promising actors by the FAO concerning policy recommendations in the future.

Riikka discussed potential approaches for engaging Alternet partners. Risks, e.g. concerning eligibility, associated with working through secondments were noted by Maurice. Marie noted that five evaluations recognized Eklipse as an added value for a proposal. Allan noted that if ECO-READY is overseen by Eklipse personnel, which is under Alternet, and the job is done well—that will be satisfactory to the evaluators. As long as the deliverables meet the expectations of the evaluators, then everything is okay; but concerns have been raised in the past. PR noted that standards for how Alternet contracts persons and entities need to be established. ECO-READY and RESTORIED were signed on behalf of Alternet by MH and approved by JvD without input from the Council; these are Eklipse-initiated projects, so there is a case to be made that no consultation is needed, as Eklipse is an autonomous mechanism within Alternet. There are comments in the group though on the scope of independence, the mere fact that Alternet representatives act as legal signatures also implies legal duties of Alternet. Hence, some kind of approval of content and budget of Eklipse initiated EU-projects should be foreseen. AL noted that Council consultation is not necessarily needed but direct communication about such projects is important.

Nonetheless, it is again emphasized that - in the end - final legal responsibility is with Alternet, not with Eklipse. That's one of the major reasons why Alternet changed its status of a de facto association into a non-profit organization with legal status. AW agreed that such a strategy is overdue. Whether involvement in EU projects is a good idea with added value should be weighed against practical considerations.

Decision: A strategy should be developed established on the future involvement of Alternet in EU projects, also those in which Eklipse takes the initiative; and a distinction should be made between Alternet itself and Eklipse (whose self-sustainability comes largely from EU projects) and requests).

6. Eklipse, progress report - Marie Vandewalle

Marie Vandewalle presented updates to the activities and progress of Eklipse since her last presentation in November 2023. She noted that better dissemination of Eklipse reports and news within Alternet is needed. 10-12 BioAgora requests are awaited. A current request on community empowerment tools and NBS is ongoing, and a second request for EmpowerUs is anticipated. The overhead that goes through Alternet for the OFB request was 15%. Small requests have 0%; ECO-READY is 25%. EmpowerUS, BioAgora, and the work of the EMB goes through UFZ. Policy impact factors were discussed.

Eklipse general discussion: state of affairs, self-sustainability

Following up on the relationship between Alternet and Eklipse (and both of their relationships with EU projects) was the next subject of discussion. There is a lack of administrative support available to accommodate the growth of Eklipse. Administrative work has been shared in-kind by MH and MV. The following statements were made by MV to avoid another year with the same administrative load as in 2023:

- Conditions for Eklipse to thrive would require restructuring and shifting the governance of the Alternet MB to better manage Eklipse and other EU projects by including more Eklipse representatives in the MB, such as the Eklipse KCB chairs (renewed every three years).
- To ensure a future for Eklipse, a Task Force Eklipse within Alternet will be dedicated to ensure the oversight of administrative aspects and budgets and look for better options for Eklipse to continue growing.

The total budget of Eklipse (€627.581,25) was shared and discussed. Overheads were included in the OFB payment made. Mark suggested that hiring could be done through one of Alternet's major partner institutes, and Marie agreed. MH noted that the problems mentioned by MV are also met within Alternet s.s., given the EU-projects that have started with partnership of Alternet, and growing issues on hiring people. Supplementary also legal issues regularly pop up that can not be dealt with by the people to take care of this presently. MH also doubts if sufficient budget is available within Eklipse for hiring, so hiring personnel internally within Alternet, supporting administrative, legal and financial issues is likely the only option.

MH stated that the yearly min budget of €25,330 should be for self-maintenance. RP questioned whether paying the potential €25k in-kind work of a partner institute to support Eklipse will make the standards of in-kind inconsistent between activities. A total of €139,212.50 of overheads is available for Alternet projects, which will cover four years. In future prospects, feasible means of dealing with three elements of Eklipse (UFZ, Alternet, and Eklipse) are needed. MV noted that the status quo is not sustainable. Admin requires too much in-kind, and ethical constraints prevent MV from doing too much of it herself. However, Eklipse's visibility only continues to grow. From a Council perspective, however, the relationship with UFZ needs to be clarified and an agreement should be established.

AW said there are two options moving forward: distinguish UFZ and Alternet projects with two different processes and financial officers, or an agreement and a transparent structure is established. An oversight strategy to funding streams and the institutions involved would be a first step. Eklipse's funding is not a limiting factor for its growth—its administration is. If this weren't a concern, there would be far more requests than are currently being processed.

AL noted that all projects need administrative support, not just Eklipse ones. These are normally the responsibility of the relevant project coordinator, and for Eklipse this currently stops with Marie. A governance strategy is needed for, in particular, deciding who takes financial responsibility. Riikka notes that financial risks also fall on Alternet and, therefore, how these are taken needs to be agreed. Maurice outlines the legal and financial responsibilities normal for EU projects. But there is also the need to ensure financial advice to those with such responsibilities.

The possibility of expanded Alternet MB representation with more Eklipse personnel was considered; MV stressed that there cannot be any quotas of Alternet involvement/representation in Eklipse. JY stated that an Alternet representative in KCB could be a consensus solution. AL

noted that Alternet is the legal entity so everything else falls under Alternet. MH is presently the legal and financial signatory, but advisors of administrative and financial matters are needed; this is where (paid) expertise from a large institute with experience in EU projects is a potential solution. If not readily available, assistance from a private institution will be needed.

Decision: MB agrees that a draft contract should be drawn up. It should deal with administrative/financial/legal support of both Alternet and Eklipse and should primarily be put on the internal Alternet market. If no valid internal offers are given, then an external quote request could be the next step. To accomplish this, a clear overview of available budget should be made up. Term limits on the next leadership (including financial and legal signatories) of Alternet should also be firmly established – they cannot be indefinite. The MB agrees that this proposition will be presented to Council.

7. Alternet identity and direction (what should Alternet be?) - Maurice Hoffmann, general discussion

Maintaining participation in EU projects vs limiting involvement to facilitation of call exchange, priorities, etc. This discussion was merged with earlier and later agenda points.

8. Mid-to-long term future of Alternet leadership - Maurice Hoffmann, Jiska van Dijk, Allan Watt, general discussion

MH and JvD are swapping roles. This swap was foreseen by the 1st of October 2023, and as such accepted by the Council in February 2023. Given unforeseen circumstances, this swap had to be postponed, and is now foreseen at the start of the next Council meeting on the 21st of February 2024. Meanwhile, MH decided that he is no longer available to chair the MB, given his retirement from INBO on the 1st of November 2023, and hence has no institutional bond with Alternet anymore. Hence a new MB-chair must be appointed by Council 21 February 2024. A call for nominations must be organized ahead of the Council meeting. The governance itself also needs to be assessed. Financial and administrative support is needed to guide those stepping into these roles. JY noted that all agree that relying solely on in-kind is unsustainable. Fulfilling the roles that are needed internally (most likely but not necessarily from one of Alternet's large institutes) but with funding set aside for this work seems to be the consensus solution. She gave support for potentially expanding the MB with more Eklipse personnel. A potential task force could/would be more focused on content. A list of tasks that need to be dealt with concerning Eklipse (with the framing that it is growing and dynamic) should be addressed to all Alternet institutes (of all sizes). MH expressed resistance to the idea of dividing tasks up, although JY stated that it could be a way of avoiding one institute having to take on everything (i.e. split up social media, finance, admin, etc.). It was agreed that this could be an option if there is no interest in one institute taking on all roles. RP and AW spoke on the need for mechanisms to ensure commitments and register risk. RP suggested a decision on these scenarios by the Council, upon which all other activity proposals would hinge.

Decision: an agreement is to be established with UFZ on housing the Eklipse EMB.

Decision: A candidate should be found from internal or external sources to handle the financial and legal administration of Alternet and Eklipse together.

9. Brainstorming - Different models and options. This agenda point was merged with earlier and later agenda discussions.

Dinner was enjoyed at the Restaurant Wakamama in the city center of Brussels.

End of day one

MB Meeting 2024 Day 2 (9 January 2024)

09:00-16:00

Day 2 commenced with a summary of day 1 decisions:

- The council will be presented with the proposition to hire support for financial, administrative and legal support. They will be inquired to offer their internal services. These services could be parceled or separate.
- The way forward on EU projects will be raised to the Council, with the sense that it will continue to be part of Alternet's future.
- Jiska van Dijk will take over as Council chair at the Council Meeting in February 2024. Maurice Hoffmann must step down from all leadership given his retirement of INBO, and the position of MB leadership is open for recruitment. PR has expressed interest in possibly taking over the chair of the MB. There must be linkage to Brussels, according to the present statutes. MH can continue to manage the bank account to provide linkage to Belgium. INBO can no longer be the Alternet address; a PO box will be sought as the official seat address in Brussels/Flanders . The MB chair does not need to be based in Brussels; appointment of a new MB chair must be decided by Council. Hence, a nomination procedure must be started prior to the next Council Meeting.

10. Activity plan 2023 based on the consensus/decisions of day 1 (9:00-10:45)

Conference

TK provided an update on the state of the art of conference planning for the 2024 Alternet Day at the Sustainability Research + Innovation Congress 2024 in collaboration with Sustainability Science Days, to be held in Helsinki in June 2024. This initiative was originally introduced by Syke, who continues to provide organisational support.

AL suggests not charging for students. MV recommended not charging any additional fee in the interest of showcasing Alternet to everyone. Inclusion of Eklipse and BioAgora and showcasing of Alternet should be stressed. AL recommended revising the chosen session themes to offer more explicit showcasing. The task force is responsible for choosing the structure, and for sufficiently including and showcasing the identity of Alternet therein.

Decision: The message from the MB is that this isn't an Alternet conference and, as such, our purpose in participating is to showcase Alternet. We will inform Lisa Norton accordingly. MV, ACM, AL, PR, and MH volunteer to join the task force. Everything must be set by the time of registration.

A full Alternet conference in 2025 could require too much time and effort to begin planning while planning the Alternet Day in 2024. AL has volunteered to host the next conference with low costs at CESAM. The next true Alternet Conference could be held either in 2025 or 2026. It was officially confirmed following an outreach from AL that CESAM/U Aveiro can organize the next Alternet Conference in 2025.

Decision: Ana Lillebo will take the lead in organizing, including the establishment of scientific and organising committees. She will take the initiative to have a first online meeting with the task force as soon as possible.

Initial task force: AL, PR, MV, JY, and MH. Lisa Norton will be inquired as well.

Alternet 20th Anniversary

It was noted that 2024 is the 20th anniversary of Alternet; AW recommended putting a lot of energy into the Alternet Day event and the showcasing opportunity. The anniversary can be displayed on the website and acknowledged in all events and activities. **Official start** of the Alter-Net Network of Excellence, financed by the EU 6th Framework was **1st of April 2004**. Hence the 1st of April 2024 is the 20th anniversary date of Alternet. A news story is foreseen; interviews are also suggested.

Summer School

The summer school's organisation for 2024 has already been positively decided and commenced. The 17th summer school was held with 12,000€ of support from Biodiversa+. There was a record-breaking number of applicants; 35 students were invited; 28 students attended from a wide range of countries.

AW perceived 2024 as a year when a refresh is appropriate. AW has added an additional 5k to his proposed budget to support a March meeting of conveners and tutors, in addition to the 17k€ standard funding request. This figure assumes the continued support of Biodiversa+. It is intended to raise the attendance fee to €1,100; or €1,200 with the provision of more grants for students lacking institutional funding. The Council will likewise be requested to approve the

organisation of the 2025 summer school. Discussion was given to the intended BioAgora school that has been proposed with a focus on mid-career researchers.

There are strong indications (checked during the meeting with a Biodiversa+ representative) that Biodiversa+ will again support the summer school financially, with an intention to increase the budget. They also intend to support the A4CAP.

Collaborative activities

A draft of an open collaborative call has been worked on by PR and JP. This would incorporate the contents of AHIA and MSR. It needs to be decided if this will be open or fixed, if it is decided to proceed with an open collaborative activities call. Small project funding of €5k or medium project funding of €10k has been suggested. A call for the 4th of April is an option. A maximum budget of €10k is proposed and the format is open to discussion from the Council.

It is important to stress that funding is for a one-year project and that a one-year timeline is established upon funding. Strict adherence to contracts should be ensured.

Decision: PR's draft will be send to the MB-members ASAP, commented on by the MB. Remarks will be included by PR in a final proposal, that will be shared with the Council at the next Council Meeting; the doc is needed before the 7th of February 2024.

A4Cap (alumni network)

Prior to the MB meeting, a report and proposal was distributed by the A4CAP alumni network to the MB members.

The A4CAP group has organized two workshops in Spa, with the most recent one focused on establishing a governance structure. 20 people attended. Collaborative research, skills exchange, lectures, and field trips were included in the programme. Poster presentations, conference sessions, a publication in Biodiversity and Conservation, AHIA projects, and the report have been produced to date by this group as added value for Alternet.

Their proposal requested €10k in funding, either from collaborative activities fund or dedicated funding for this activity. Support from Biodiversa+ is also foreseen. Official recognition as an activity of Alternet with branding usage is likewise requested.

This group does not encompass/represent every single Alternet alumni, but rather a particular group (open to all) of active, engaged alumni. In the upcoming weeks before the council meeting, several representatives would be interested to meet with the MB or an MB task force to further discuss this proposal. There is interest in contributing to the 2024 Alternet Day in Helsinki, either within a session or at a side-event. Organizing a survey to alumni on activities of interest was suggested. An idea of handing over the project of recognizing the history of the summer school and 20 years of Alternet to the alumni was also raised.

Decision: A discussion with the A4CAP representatives will be planned as soon as possible. Tyler, Marie, Allan, and Maurice volunteer to participate in a meeting with the A4CAP. Tyler will take the lead in organizing the meeting.

Communications

ACM presented on the communications activities of Alternet in 2023 and proposals for 2024, both in terms of priorities and content. IT support on a regular basis is needed by Eklipse, and a call for IT support will be released. Requesting 6k instead of 4k, ACM and TK noted that this year will be a conference year, anniversary activities have been proposed, and new IT costs are foreseen. Adriana will detail the specific expenses foreseen and associated costs. A higher budget is requested because of the conference and anniversary activities of 2024.

Decision: As asked at the last Council meeting, a PhD specific opportunities page is requested on the Alternet website.

In-kind

The MB was requested to find a way to recognize and incentivize in-kind. JvD suggested a webpage with recognition of in-kind by institute. Engagement for in-kind was discussed; MK suggested direct communication on in-kind opportunities with contact persons and Council members. A more modern approach to engagement was suggested by RP. Engagement by submissions on an intranet was suggested; and, conversely, personal task-specific outreach was advocated for by AW.

Decision: Both recognition of contributions (e.g. displaying on the website) and targeted outreach will be implemented.

Call exchange

Status quo operation, with a drop off in engagement in 2024 was detailed. More proactive call sharing is needed, especially of draft calls. Synthesis of old (direct communication) and new methods will be tried. MH recommended proactively contacting umbrella funders and funding organisations (e.g. Biodiversa+, Future Earth, IUCN, etc.) on potential and upcoming calls and activities as a privileged organisation. There was agreement that this will be worth pursuing.

Decision: MK can take this initiative and formulate a way to convince potential financing bodies of proactively informing Alternet of information and opportunities.

JvD noted that Eeva Primmer has suggested Alternet could be a commenter on draft calls, policies, etc. from the EC.

Decision: Mart will pursue clarification from Eeva and advancement of this idea. he will discuss this with Eeva and elaborate on how her idea can be integrated into our proactive approach.

Reflection on best practices could be engaged from PEER, as well–PR can help with this initiative.

SPI

The next (INRAE-organised with PEER) webinar is on 11 January 2024. All are encouraged to register and attend. JY has been in touch with MV and Candice Pouget who will lead a webinar in March on biodiversity and pandemics. Another webinar will be led by Ana Lillebo and CESAM (on oceans missions) as well. Three webinars in 2024 are foreseen so far. Engagement of new webinars is intended, with a possibility for one of them to organise a webinar toward the end of 2024.

There are no updates to the one-stop-shop, which is in static operation as a resource for reference. The Council had also expressed interest in a series of science lecture webinars, which hasn't taken shape yet. A similar model could be considered. This would not be an SPI activity. AL suggested older alumni as potential contributors to such a series. She also advised to organise such an event on a regular basis, e.g. once every month. As the model and format exists already, it would be easy to manage–but a relevant person to lead the activity would be needed (it will not be JY). JY recommended consulting the webinar SWAT analysis for reference.

Decision: There is an intention to move forward with this prospective activity, with MH, AL, and MF expressing interest in being involved. Jacques Berlo and MH originally proposed this activity; MH will take initiative on discussing and developing this proposed activity with him and will present a proposal to Council on 21 FEB 2024..

Eclipse

It was suggested by JY that someone from the MB could be included in the SAB. PR agreed that this would be a more appropriate place for Alternet inclusion than in the KCB. Presently, the Alternet Council is selecting the head of the EMB with advice/approval from the SAB. The current SAB members are the ones to decide which new organisation is joining the SAB. If Alternet would like a MB member to join the SAB, Eclipse Management Body will need to add this item for decision in the next SAB meeting.

Regular meetings to discuss Eclipse involvement in EU projects was discussed. MV suggested having an MB personnel dedicated to EU projects. At present, one person represents Eclipse in the MB; PR recommended not expanding that number, but rather having a person generally allocated to covering project activities. JY noted that Eclipse would benefit from MB representation, at least via a task force. MV noted that Eclipse is a mechanism, not a standard activity. With that in mind, RP suggested that Eclipse could benefit from more workers rather than representatives. The idea of three Eclipse representatives was raised, but JvD expressed concern about inflated power being given to Eclipse within the MB.

JY suggested a task force could be established for EU projects, with members that are not MB members. They could make decisions, manage aspects, etc. without asking more of the MB. They could join the MB to discuss relevant issues. Whoever is selected to help with legal/administrative elements would be included in the task force (the task force would include both volunteers, MB members, and paid personnel). PR said that we can be flexible concerning the structure of the task force, and what is important is that someone is assigned to report back to the MB (a representative). It was stressed that this task force must be flexible and effective.

Decision: The MB agrees that we will not proceed with particular activities represented in the MB; instead there will be a task force dealing with EU projects (including Eklipse initiated ones), content-wise filled with well-informed and involved personnel and contracted workers (e.g. legal, administrative, and financial staff)—and which reports to the MB. Marie Vandewalle will represent Eklipse on the Management Board, and reciprocal representation of Alternet in a governing body of Eklipse is to be pursued.

11. Budget proposal - including allocation for accountant/lawyer and executive members

MH shared a summary of the allocation so far.

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- 30 k General Secretariat for internal activities (based on a 60% input for Alternet and a 40% input for EU-projects)
- 22k summer school
- 10k collaborative activities
- 6k showcase activity in Helsinki, june
- 6k communication
- alumni : ? (to be extracted from the meeting with alumni, proposed so far is 5k €))
- 3k for MB activities
- 1k for Council activities
- Other activity are budget-free
- Alternet anniversary (20 years): €0
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State of the art is that the sum of allocated budget is 78-82 k€ (depending on the result of the discussion on A4CAP)

MH suggested a one-time budget for the 20th anniversary. Elaboration is needed on what the budget will be used for exactly. ACM expressed the need to clarify who the audience for these activities is, as well. AL suggested using the collaborative activities fund (5k) which was not used last year rather than a budget increase. A paper on Alternet's history could also be written.

It was noted that we are requesting 78-82kk in funding, while our income in 2023 was 79k.

Decision: If the Council is not satisfied with the proposed potential capital loss (taking abstraction of not yet elaborated ideas on alumni and the 20th anniversary) they will be asked to prepare a revised budget for 2024.

12. Gender equality plan

RP had previously shared the draft gender equality plan with the MB and integrated the comments that were provided. She proposed focusing on a few particular gender equality themes for 2024 and 2025. These themes can then be shared with the Council.

Diversity and gender balance in management and decision making of Alternet is suggested as the first theme of focus. AL noted that a safe, encrypted, and anonymous platform for submitting complaints should be available, with the expectation of replies (which can be hard to balance with GDPR). MF noted that there should be performance indicators.

Decision:RP's plan will be re-shared with the MB and then presented to the Council for approval, publication, and implementation. Items that are more attainable will be pursued in 2024 with more intensive undertakings withheld for future years. The Council will be asked to approve the plan (with action points as shared in green and yellow); and then the next step will be the specifics of implementation.

It is suggested by RP that at the next MB meeting (in Autumn 2024) we will decide upon action points and how to go about implementation.

13. Preparation for pre-Council meeting work – deadlines, task assignments

Decision: MB members are to send final proposals for the Council by 7 February to Tyler, JvD and MH.

14. AOB

JvD raised the issue of the ethical committee, which MV previously proposed and which the Council had been supportive of. The status will be checked with MV.

MF will address the LTER MoU before the Council.

Budget for Alternet anniversary-specific activity may be needed. MH has suggested a one-time €500 per institute fee. JvD, AW, MV, ACM, and MH volunteer to join an anniversary-focused task force.

End of meeting. The meeting concluded at 15.45 on 9 January 2024.