

	<p><b>Draft Minutes</b>  <b>ALTER-Net Council meeting</b>  <b>Antony (Paris) – 2-3 December 2019</b></p>
<p><b>Venue</b></p>	<p>Irstea, 1 Rue Pierre Gilles de Gennes, 92160 Antony, France</p>
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<p><b>Participants</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ben Delbaere (Delbaere Consulting, Netherlands); BD</li> <li>2. Nicholas Dendoncker(ILEE, Belgium); ND</li> <li>3. Alison Hester (JHI, UK)(Arriving midday Monday); AH</li> <li>4. Maurice Hoffmann, Chair (INBO, Belgium, council chair ); MH</li> <li>5. Sonja Jähnig (IGB, Germany) SJ</li> <li>6. Onno Knol (PBL, Netherlands); OK</li> <li>7. Mart Kulvik (IAES, Estonia); MK</li> <li>8. Reinier Hille Ris Lambers (WENR, Netherlands); RL</li> <li>9. Ana Lillebo (CESAM, Portugal); AL</li> <li>10. Raoul Mille, Host (Irstea, France); RM</li> <li>11. Johannes Peterseil (EAA, Austria); JP</li> <li>12. Trine Setsaas (NINA, Norway); TS</li> <li>13. Marie Vandewalle (UFZ, Germany); MV</li> <li>14. Jiska van Dijk (NINA, Norway, MB chair); JVD</li> <li>15. Allan Watt (CEH, UK); AW</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Monday only</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16. Eeva Furman (SYKE, Finland); EF</li> <li>17. Ulf Grandin (SLU, Sweden); UG</li> <li>18. Stefan Klotz (UFZ, Germany); SK</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Also present</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>19. Tyler Kulfan (ALTER-Net); TK</li> <li>20. Louise Vaast (IRSTEA); LV</li> <li>21. Clara Savary (IRSTEA)</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Absent</u></b></p> <p>Bridget Emmett (CEH, UK)  Robert Kanka (ILE-SAS, Slovakia)  Eszter Kelemen (ESSRG, Hungary)  Kinga Krauze (ERCE, Poland)  Lisa Norton (CEH, UK)  Juliette Young (CEH, Eclipse Mechanism, UK)  Mihai Adamescu (RCCES-UNIBUC, Romania)  Jesper Fredshavn (DCE, Denmark)  Diana Hummel (ISOE, Germany)  Miklos Kertesz (MTA OK, Hungary)  Joan Pino (CREAF, Spain)</p>
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**Day 1:**

*The 2019 meeting of the ALTER-Net Council commenced at 9.00 on Monday, 2 December 2019. The meeting was held at the IRSTEA facility in Antony, France.*

### **Welcome and Round-table Introductions**

RM welcomed all those present to IRSTEA and Antony and introduced IRSTEA staff Louise Vaast and Clara Savary, who assisted in the administration of the meeting. Chair MH expressed gratitude to the partners of IRSTEA for hosting and officially opened the meeting.

Chair invited each Council member (and other present associates) to provide a brief self-introduction and brief statement of priorities for the meeting. One new member of the Council had been appointed since its last meeting: RL of WENR. The legal structure and management of the EKLIPSE mechanism were noted as the most prominently featured priority items, with the strong support of the Summer School and MB activities additionally noted.

### **Approval of the agenda**

The first agenda item following introductions was the approval of the agenda itself. Chair questioned the Council concerning any needed revisions to the draft agenda. JVD recommended that agenda points 7 and 12 are consolidated into one agenda point (12). This request was approved; no further revisions were suggested.

### **Approval of council meeting minutes**

The minutes of the 2018 Council meeting in Prague had already been approved at the in-between Council meeting, which was held in Ghent in June with the express purpose of voting on the management of the EKLIPSE mechanism. The Prague minutes have been published on the ALTER-Net website. As such, approval was only needed for the minutes of the Ghent meeting. Unanimous approval was granted by the Council with no suggested revisions or alterations.

Decision: The minutes of the 2019 in-between Council meeting in Ghent are approved and will be published on the ALTER-Net website.

### **Introduction by Council Chair**

Chair provided a brief introduction to the Council on matters to be addressed during the course of the meeting. It was recommended that members reserve maximal discussion time for novel items such as the legal structure, SPI mechanism discussions, and votes on the new Vice Chair and Treasurer, rather than business-as-usual items and discussions that could be handled remotely or by relevant task forces.

### **Management Board Work 2019 (MB minutes)**

JVD (Management Board Chair) presented a review of the past year's MB activities, noting that the past year was among the busiest and most productive to date for the MB and

ALTER-Net at large. The minutes of the October 2019 MB meeting in Tartu, Estonia were shared with the Council prior to the start of the meeting; these minutes detailed the proposals which would be presented later in the Council meeting.

### **SoA: Budget**

Maurice Hoffmann presented the state of affairs on the ALTER-Net budget. Spending figures and income from 2019, proposed budget allocations for 2020, and the credit balance were shared.

- Total spending in 2019: €142,888
- Estimated partner income in 2019: €58,565
- 2020 proposed and ongoing expenditures: €197,000
- Credit balance on 1 December 2019: €192,000

The membership fees have been halved in 2017, which has significantly reduced income. The original €20k fee for large institutes was reduced to €10k, then €5k.

RL questioned the high credit balance and questioned if there was an intended strategy for reducing this credit balance. MH noted that many funds have been allocated but not spent and proactively suggested that the EKLIPSE mechanism may have a significant impact on the credit balance. The question of EKLIPSE funding and its prospect as a source of external funding was raised, but it was decided this would be discussed at length later.

External funding has additionally been proposed to reduce the credit balance, but progress has not yet been made and to date there is no external income. For the past three years, ALTER-Net has spent more than it received. No serious action has been taken to look for external funding. Raising conference entry fees was proposed to make conferences more feasible. UG suggested lowering partner fees for more capital; but AW noted that this could send ALTER-Net into the red. EF maintained that maximizing partnership and the number of institutes participating in activities is the key goal and that this cannot be compromised.

Spending of €212 k€ is recommended by the MB relative to expected €63,5000 income. Two standing issues are how to address credit balance and the business model of ALTER-Net. EF stated that the key point for SYKE is to maximize number of partners and number of institutes participating in activities; this cannot be compromised. MH noted that the MB needs to consider how external funding will be obtained and/or how to make ALTER-Net membership and sustenance feasible.

JP addressed the unresolved contract with DEIMS, announcing that the signed scanned copy has been produced, consistent with the amount allocated (€10k). As such, the matter can now be considered settled.

**No decision** was made at this stage of the meeting concerning budget allocation. Decisions will be made pending the discussion of proposed MB activities and their proposed funding.

### **Internal Alter-Net survey added value**

In September, the final results of the ALTER-Net internal survey on added value of ALTER-Net membership were released. Liisa Varumo and Panu Kontio of SYKE organized and oversaw the conduction of this survey, which was requested at the 2018 Council meeting, over the course of several months in 2019. EF presented the results of the survey to the Council

Notable trends and features of the results were highlighted. Network building was seen as most important objective of ALTER-Net, followed by the science-policy interface. Events featured the broadest participation.

The following questions were posed for discussion:

- What did we learn about the activities to be developed?
- Are there objectives that are not supported by the activities?
- Should businesses as a target group be enhanced somehow in activities (as they score very low)?

It was agreed broadly that the survey was very useful and provided good input that can be applied in the formation of the new MoU. TS noted that this is an opportunity for considering how ALTER-Net can network in the business sector; which would likewise be an opportunity for stronger EU Commission collaboration (and possible funding), as they are looking for closer business involvement in the next part of the Horizon initiative. TS also raised question of how ALTER-Net can more closely contribute to IPBES. OK suggested that ALTER-Net can help individual scientists involved in IPBES to be more coherent. RL suggested outreach to those not involved in IPBES to become involved in ALTER-Net. AW noted that ALTER-Net is unique in that it is a network of institutions and promotes international collaboration; and that partners of ALTER-Net must also be treated as a major stakeholder.

In summary, members expressed interest in and the importance of IPBES and ALTER-Net's involvement as (a) a stakeholder (in a less passive manner); and (b) as a facilitator to organize workshops when new issues emerge (as well as other collaborative IPBES work) for members and representatives of IPBES. It was agreed that it is important to clearly distinguish the added value of ALTER-Net from that of IPBES.

The question of how impact of conferences can be ensured was briefly addressed, as was the related issue of policy brief production. It was stated that policy brief publication has never been a key goal of ALTER-Net; rather, it has been used as a post-conference output so that these events can have tangible output impact and validate conference results. It was noted that policy briefs are not the only way of producing sound scientific advice for policy; hence the investment in EKLIPSE. RM noted that the Agenda 2030 SDG and research workshop was coordinated at Irstea; these outputs will be shared with TK and promoted internally/externally

### **Beneficiaries of ALTER-Net activities**

JVD presented the chart overview of ALTER-Net activity beneficiaries that had been produced by herself and TK. The chart displays the participation of members of each institute in the various activities of ALTER-Net. JVD expressed her opinion that the benefits to partners shown on the chart demonstrates the high value of membership relative to the small associated cost. MH questioned the Council as to whether this chart will be sufficient to

demonstrate the added-value of ALTER-Net to their respective institutes. Affirmation of the value of such charts and succinct visualizations of added-value for directors, institutes, and general interest was broadly expressed.

MH requested that if anyone has additional means of displaying the added-value of ALTER-Net in a simple way, to please propose their suggestions. One proposal was provided by EF: tracking the impact of a particular activity, outlining every step from its commencement to its conclusion and identifying all products of the activity (including papers, research partnerships, policy impact, etc.). AW noted that ALTER-Net activities (from joint papers to the Summer Schools) tend to create lasting joint partnerships, as demonstrated by the ongoing production of joint papers, etc. by partners connected via these activities.

### **SoA: Legal Structure**

The discussion of the Legal Structure for ALTER-Net was intended to be held after the arrival of AH and BD; BD arrived shortly before the commencement of this agenda item but discussion was initiated without AH due to time constraints. MH presents the state of affairs on the legal structure issue and moderated discussion on the associated statutes and any other related business.

A brief recap of the matter was presented and the key reasons for creating a legal structure were restated. These included:

- Enabling ALTER-Net to hire personnel
- Enabling ALTER-Net to receive and distribute funds, invoices, and requests (essential for the operation of the EKLIPSE mechanism)
- Enabling the possibility of ALTER-Net responding to calls as a coordinated body

A draft document detailing the legal statutes was distributed to the Council by MH. MH has now received and distributed a restructured draft following review and revision by legal consultants. The revised document and statutes were distributed very recently among Council members; it was not expected that discussion within institutes was possible yet. The goal for the legal structure remains realization in time to take over the EKLIPSE mechanism and officially hire personnel in the first quarter of 2020.

Several members requested pointed explanation and discussion of the structural specifics and the three structures contained within the legal framework; TS noted that it would be beneficial to discuss what each structure (Council, MB, and Organizing Committee) would do and the associated benefits of the decided structures. Conversely, EF suggested minimizing Council discussion and instead putting those legal experts within each ALTER-Net institute in charge of negotiation; the Council may discuss principle (political) issues, but such legal experts would be better suited to discuss fine details. Council members representing institutes that presently are barred from joining NGOs raised concerns about membership under the proposed legal structure. EF expressed that SYKE legal experts are confident that there is a way forward for such institutes and that no issues are foreseen for fellow PEER network members. As a single legal person and not a legal entity, BD raised concern of his own membership.

MH stressed that it is only required that two members join the legal structure initially. MH additionally noted that it is impossible to have a European legal institute and that Belgium is the only country that offers an international legal structure of any kind. JP requested information on the background of the relevant Belgian legal framework, as the structure must be understood in German legal terms. As any major revisions that are foreseen would be responsive to concerns raised by the legal departments of member institutes, Council members are encouraged to share the draft documents with their legal departments.

*The discussion was paused for a one-hour lunch break. At this time, AH arrived and joined in the resumed discussion.*

The discussion of legal structure resumed. MH stated that the next step in the process is to deliver those questions raised today to legal counsel in Brussels; MH will then communicate their responses to the Council. If this is insufficient, then MH will instruct each institute to be in touch with their own institutional legal counsels. In this way, the need for a task force is eliminated. JP added that the role of the institutes' legal advisors will likely be a reactive one; advisors will simply check if the documents given are in line with what they can legally achieve.

*The discussion shifted to the matter of EKLIPSE management and proposed new activities.*

AW reminded the Council that EKLIPSE has the means to be funded for an additional eight months, so legal structure progress must be made promptly or the mechanism will no longer be able to function. RL questioned the feasibility and value of EKLIPSE management and the associated processes that must commence in order to maintain it. MH noted that the current status of both the legal structure progress and EKLIPSE management represent the culmination of many officially approved steps and that the issue now is practical realization.

TS observed that many partners have expressed possible legal issues associated with joining the structure; ALTER-Net must therefore consider if this structure is viable in light of these issues, because otherwise there will be major issues with its governance. If EKLIPSE manages to bring in projects through 2020, she will want to see that progress. She noted that the present matters of EKLIPSE and the legal structure may serve as a starting point for a broader discussion of ALTER-Net post-2020, including the reconsidering of statutes as we determine who we are and what we wish to achieve. RL proposed the compilation of a one-page summary of ALTER-Net purpose, summary of value, etc. which can then be presented to institutes and legal departments. SK stated that ALTER-Net must adapt to the new ideas and challenges that have emerged since its emergence and that step-by-step consideration should be given to the identity of ALTER-Net in 2030. TS subsequently proposed tasking the MB with drafting an ALTER-Net 2030 document, which JVD noted could be relevant to both the horizon scanning activity and the new MoU. AW added that the MB exists to implement the strategic vision which the Council comes up with; the Council should therefore synthesize this vision. MH voiced agreement with this statement. RL stated that a legal structure should follow a vision document; SK noted that ideally that would be the case, but with such urgent matters currently at hand (such as EKLIPSE) reversing this order is merited.

UG proposed a breakaway Council workshop activity in which Council members are separated into target groups with specific questions about future vision to discuss and respond to with concrete conclusions. JP conversely voiced concern with unresolved practical

day-to-day issues regarding the maintenance of EKLIPSE and how funding will be managed in relation to ALTER-Net allocations, arguing that these issues should take precedence over the establishment of a vision document. MV will be presenting on the issue of EKLIPSE later and MH encouraged the Council to suspend discussion of new activities until the designated point on the agenda.

**Summarizing conclusions:** The timetable for consultation is bound by the need to have the issue resolved by 31 March 2020. MH will visit legal counsel with the issues raised and a legal document will be distributed in December. A remote workshop of legal counsels will be organized and planned for January and a related task force will be established. EF requests that Council members provide TK with the names of their legal representatives within the immediately upcoming weeks and that the legal counsel meeting be scheduled immediately following the distribution of the legal document.

### **State of Affairs: Network Activities**

*Discussion began at 11.20 prior to the above SoA Legal structure discussion due to the absence of multiple representatives.*

MB Chair JVD presented an introduction to the Management Board and its work. Currently 11 persons make up the MB, including Tessa van Santen and TK. JVD reviewed the core activities of ALTER-Net and it was noted that AS intends to withdraw from the communication activity. As such, there will be a subsequent MB vacancy.

Accomplishments of 2019 included a successful conference in Ghent; the production of Key Messages (mostly finalized), which represent the output of both the conference and the horizon scanning event; the SPI seminar at UFZ; and more. Ongoing work includes such projects as the research infrastructure video led by TK and Petteri Vihervaara (a working group with Michael Mirtl will be established to oversee production of a revised version); and the SDG background document produced by NINA (produced in 2019 and ongoing in 2020). Dissemination of the Key Messages will be handled by a working focus group. From the beginning it was the intention that the KMs would be published in a journal. From there, the focus group will handle how policy impact can be ensured. TS requested an EU delegation or the invitation of a representative from Climate & Environment so that proactiveness can be demonstrated to Norway and will be in touch with MV on this matter. Gratitude was expressed to Frederic Gosselin and the Key Messages team.

JVD provided a summary of the main conclusions of the MB meeting in Tartu: in order to maintain attractiveness and encourage partner investments, ALTER-Net activities must remain active, vital, and dynamic; and work should be done to make activities and their results much more visible.

### **MB Activity: Network Communications**

AS was not present at the current meeting. TK introduced the activities, progress, and proposals relevant to communications.

Engagement with ALTER-Net communications output and social media has increased significantly over the course of the year. Such outreach and engagement was essential for the

promotion of the ALTER-Net & EKLIPSE Conference, which, alongside the infrastructure video project represented the largest communications undertakings of 2019. Planned work in 2020 will include the coordination of communications with EKLIPSE, new hosting and redesign of the ALTER-Net website, full updates of outdated promotional materials (including flyers and brochures), and the finalization of the infrastructure video. A series of videos highlighting other ALTER-Net activities has been informally proposed, but is not planned at this time. Status quo communications work, such as newsletters, website content, social media, and call exchange population will likewise continue in 2020.

Two documents were distributed to the Council: a revised communications strategy and a communications proposal for 2020. The proposal called for communications integration with EKLIPSE, website redesign and future-proofing under the leadership of a working group comprised of Andy Sier, Tyler Kulfan, and representatives from CREAM and EKLIPSE, and the immediate movement of the current website to a different server at CEH to avoid going offline. A budget of €5,000 was requested for external website hosting and the possible hiring of a web designer.

**Decision:** The Council supports communications funding proposal.

*The remaining MB activity items were addressed following the Legal Structure discussion.*

### **MB Activity: Mobility Fund**

JVD presented on the Mobility Fund activity. It was noted that the MF is an excellent means for exchange and collaboration. The MB proposed to maintain this fund and a budget for €10,000 was requested. It was recommended that individual council members share the Mobility Fund directly on their institute websites to better promote it. It is further proposed that the fund could be used for travel/accommodation for consortium building events when ALTER-Net consortia are concerned.

AH suggested that this year's opening of the Mobility Fund to consortium building be explicitly recognized as a trial. EF suggested that the funding should be limited to one institute member per consortium or activity.

**Decision:** Budget allocation approved, along with the proposed amendments.

### **MB Activity: Clearing House Mechanism**

MK and TK presented on the network Clearing House Mechanism: the ALTER-Net Call Exchange. The past year has seen increased engagement and consortium building initiation on this platform. TK has continuously populated the exchange, but requests notification and input from partners when they become aware of new calls that may be of interest and can be listed. He has recently implemented a feature on the exchange to display relevant partner expertise, and requests that those institutes which have not yet shared a profile of expertise do so.

No budget is needed for this activity. TK will reach out to Call Exchange contact persons regularly to increase participation.

## **MB Activity: AHIA**

Philip Roche of Irstea is responsible for the AHIA activity; JVD presented on AHIA progress and proposals in his absence. A publication form for the second AHIA project (led by Timo Assmuth of SYKE) was just produced. Two ongoing projects are currently being funded by AHIA: the 2018 project of Per Angelstam of SLU and the 2019 project of Thibault Datry of Irstea.

It was proposed that the AHIA call be maintained and that a new call be opened in Jan 2020 with an application deadline of 15 March and a max budget of €15,000. 50%+ of project participants should be from ALTER-Net institutes (partners defined as institutes, not individuals) and deliverables should include 1 HI paper, 1 policy brief/media brief, and 1 web page for the ALTER-Net website. The MB suggested the following topics (see below) but proposals on other excellent topics will be considered:

- Human society dependence on biodiversity and ecosystem services
- Sustainable futures for European landscapes
- Evidence of ecosystem services climate mitigation in European urban areas
- Excellent proposals on other themes will be accepted as well

UG suggested that the topics should be topically ALTER-Net specific, falling within the network's areas of work. AL suggested that if there are two excellent proposals, the budget should be doubled and the full funds of €15,000 should be rewarded to both. She also (or alternatively) suggested favoring the proposals of those institutes that have not yet led proposals if they are scored equally. JP suggested that now is perhaps not the appropriate time to double effort and budget surrounding this activity. It was suggested by AW that if there are two equally good proposals, preference should be given to the proposal with the higher number of ALTER-Net partners present.

**Decision:** The requested budget was approved. It was agreed that there should be a fixed, allocated budget and that spending would not exceed that amount. Secondly, it was agreed that the funding should not be split between two proposals. Third, it was agreed that preference should be given to the proposal with the highest number of ALTER-Net partners. TK will announce the forthcoming call ASAP. Suggested topics were approved, as were the stipulations that proposals on other excellent, relevant topics would be accepted and that topic themes must be ALTER-Net/biodiversity related.

## **MB Activity: MSR**

Joan Pino of CREAM is responsible for the MSR activity, JVD presented in his absence. A progress report was shared and the Council was updated on the status of the two ongoing projects: Multi-Lake Research of Fish Ecology of BC-SAS and Roadmap for a European Wildlife Research Infrastructure of INBO. According to the evaluation of the MB, the BC-SAS is deserving of another €10,000 for its third year (2020) and the INBO project should receive no further funding.

It was recognized by the MB that MSR projects tend to be large ongoing projects that only receive a small amount of funding (relative to the whole of the project) from ALTER-Net and do little to acknowledge or promote ALTER-Net. The MB proposed putting the MSR call on hold temporarily but keeping the activity in hibernation for the future.

JP questioned how the participants could better acknowledge and promote ALTER-Net. TK will maintain closer oversight and ensure more two-way communication and promotion. The Council is encouraged to consider measures that could be taken to help ensure that the practice of this initiative better achieves its intended goals.

**Decision:** The proposal is accepted; the BC-SAS project will receive another €10,000 in funding for another year of work and the MSR activity will otherwise be put on hold, with no new call released in 2020.

### **MB Activity: Research and Data Infrastructure**

JVD introduced the activity of Research and Data Infrastructure on behalf of Petteri Vihervaara with contributions by JP on behalf of Michael Mirtl. The past year's primary research and data infrastructure project was that of the infrastructure promotional video, which was previously addressed during the Communications discussion.

JP noted that one of the two of the main issues raised by Michael Mirtl have already been addressed: the infrastructure video and the formation of a working group. A proposal made by Mirtl, which concerned an MoC between ALTER-Net and LTER-Europe, was then presented. Both organizations are undergoing changes (as LTER becomes a European entity and ALTER-Net becomes a legal entity and adopts EKLIPSE); thus, revisiting and revising the MoC is appropriate. Members of ALTER-Net and LTER produced a new document outlining their cooperation. The original draft MoC was sent to Council members to initiate the revisiting of this MoC by ALTER-Net and LTER. The present proposal is to move forward with this process to update/finalize the MoC, under the oversight of MB member Petteri Vihervaara.

Mirtl has additionally expressed concern that the ALTER-Net and LTER names and slogans are too similar and that distinction is needed to be clearly established in any new branding developments.

**Decision:** All proposals are approved. The MoC revision will advance and the video revision will be overseen by TK, AL, PV, and designated LTER figures.

### **MB Activity: Summer School**

AW presented a review of the successes of the past summer schools and a proposal for the funding of the 2021 school (2020 funding was already allocated at the 2018 Council meeting).

The school is held with the help of five conveners, including among them AW, MV, and ND. 20 nationalities were represented this past year. 16 speakers were present, half of whom are associated with ALTER-Net. Honorary recognition was given to the non-ALTER-Net members who are an integral part of this activity. It was noted that BiodivERSA mentioned

the ALTER-Net Summer School as indicative of the value and reputation of ALTER-Net and that the school is a major element of the ALTER-Net brand and reputation.

An alumni page will be added to the ALTER-Net website as a component of the planned redesign, and it was requested that relevant alumni events be promoted by TK. The idea of establishing a similar school for later-career scientists and other target groups (i.e. private sector) was raised by an associated alum. It was agreed that developing a second school in the model of the SS should be given consideration. The question of GDPR in light of the legal structure transition was also raised.

The principle allocation of another 35k for 2021 is proposed, as the 2020 funding is already secured.

**Decision:** The funding proposal for 2021 was unanimously approved.

### **MB Activity: 2021 Conference**

The 2021 Conference activity was the final agenda item addressed on Monday. SJ represented the conference and noted its successes and areas for possible improvement. It was proposed that another conference be held in 2021 with the aim of attracting ALTER-Net scientists rather than targeting the Commission topically. Topic proposals are needed and volunteers for organizing and scientific committee roles are needed. The required budget will remain the same as in past years. A desire to make the conference financially self-sustaining was expressed. It was recommended by past participants that organization of the conference start early and that the work of the scientific committee be clearly distinguished from that of the organizing committee. To date, this conference has always been in Ghent but other hosts are also welcome.

MV announced that she received a conference theme suggestion on the topic of the Sustainable Development Goals. EF and RM support this idea. AW recommended a wide-open topic range and focusing primarily on maximizing ALTER-Net scientist participation. TS recommended looking at “nature as part of the solution” and nature’s benefits for society under the context of the SDGs. MH noted that the SDGs were the subject of a major conference in Lisbon recently and that an original topic is needed; he suggested transformative ecology as a potential topic option. SJ recommended establishing a team dedicated to the development of the topic and associated content. In order to attract established figures, AL noted that it makes the most sense to host it again in Ghent as this location is now a part of the ALTER-Net conference brand.

Prior to the next Council meeting, organization and development is needed and leadership roles must be fulfilled. It is expected that the leading institute will contribute 3.5 months of work. Partner institutes were asked to come forward to show their willingness to chair the conference (in-kind contribution of 2.5 person months). ND expressed willing to help in organizing the conference, but not in taking the chair position. AL likewise expressed willing to help. If no chair comes forward, the conference will need to be postponed to 2022.

**Decision:** The Council decided not to allocate the requested budget for the 2021 conference in the present 2020 budget and prefers to organize a self-sustaining conference with a higher

entrance fee to cover costs. If this proves impossible, the Council will revise its decision and allocate funds next year.

***Day 1 closed at 17.00h; Dinner followed at a restaurant chosen by host RM.***

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## **DAY 2**

***The second day of the ALTER-Net Council meeting commenced at 08.30 on Tuesday, 3 December 2019.***

### **Slogan of the ALTER-Net Non-Profit Organization**

The first discussion of the second day concerned the possible revision of the ALTER-Net slogan to better reflect its current and future identity. The current slogan is “Europe’s Ecosystem Research Network.”

MH introduced the issues, noting that for the legal structure, a change of the acronym ALTER-Net is not foreseen because it is already widely known. It will no longer be encouraged to explain its original meaning in branding anymore, however, since it does not cover the present-day scope of the organization anymore. ALTER-Net is no longer limited in scope to ecosystem research; it is important that those newer focuses, such as the SPI, are given equal weight in the ALTER-Net slogan and branding. Additionally, LTER has raised concerns about the similarity between ALTER-Net and the LTER name and branding.

BD voiced his opinion that the present slogan is a bit static and proposed the use of a slogan that includes a verb and, preferably, an explicit focus on sustainability. MH noted that partners have in the past expressed the wish to have research explicitly stated in the slogan/name. It was also suggested that the link between science and society/policy should be highlighted.

OK stated that if a word is eliminated, “Europe” is the most disposable; however, AL and AW expressed that the European element is important to branding, as Europe is recognized as a sustainability leader. AH expressed that “ecosystem” can more broadly replace “ecosystem services” and related concepts. MK expressed that “sustainability” is too broad and favored the idea of including networking research. It was noted that the ALTER-Net background is research, but the mission and activities that ALTER-Net facilitate extend beyond this and are more centered around integration. TS noted that she aims for ALTER-Net to be perceived as a facilitator for regional assessments (relevant to IPBES). AH expressed that including science-policy is important and favored its inclusion. MH noted the key difference between Europe and European in slogan meaning.

Proposed slogans include:

- Europe’s knowledge Network on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
- Integrating European Research For Sustainable Ecosystem Policy

- Networking research on biodiversity, people, ecosystem services
- Ecosystem Science-Policy Research for Europe's Future
- Europe's Ecosystem Science-Policy Network
- Connecting Ecosystem Science and Policy for a Sustainable Future (similar to IPBES)
- Connecting Europe's Science and Policy (+ research)
- Bridging Europe's Science and Policy
- Connecting European Ecosystem Science-Policy
- Europe's Science Network on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
- Europe's Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Science Network
- Europe's Network of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Research Institutes
- Europe's Research Network on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
- Research Network on Biodiversity-Ecosystem Services-Society
- Science Network on Biodiversity-Ecosystem Services-Society
- Research Network on Biodiversity-People-Ecosystem Services
- Science Network on Biodiversity-People-Ecosystem Services
- Research Institutes Network on Biodiversity-People-Ecosystem Services
- Linking ecosystem research for a sustainable future
- Networking ecosystem research for a sustainable Europe
- Assisting nature through our ecosystem science-policy network

**Decision:** No decision is made at this time. The MB will select three viable slogan options and allow the Council to vote on them.

### **ALTER-Net Membership in UIA**

MH announced that ALTER-Net has become a member of the Union of International Associations under his direction.

The Union of International Associations (UIA) is a research institute and documentation center, based in Brussels. It was noted that UIA is non-profit, apolitical, independent, and non-governmental in nature; it has been a pioneer in the research, monitoring and provision of information on international organizations, international associations and their global challenges since 1907.

MH stated that UIA membership will assist ALTER-Net in the construction of a legal structure and will help ALTER-Net to find other networks that are of immediate or indirect interest. The membership is free of charge and MH noted that there are no consequences of this membership that will impact ALTER-Net or its partners in any way.

### **MoU: PEER**

MH shared an update concerning the formation of an MoU with PEER. At the last directors meeting of PEER in November 2019, ALTER-Net proposed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding to PEER, expressing the potential for cooperation between both networks. At that time, the PEER director was unable to have a comprehensive discussion on the MoU which RM proposed at the meeting. The director of CEH which has served as PEER president for two years postponed the decision to May (DBM in Leipzig). This issue will be taken up at

the next PEER meeting in 2020. UFZ, SYKE, Irstea, DCE, INOB, and CEH are already members of PEER.

The draft MoU was shared prior to the meeting. MH suggested commenting at this time whether it would be beneficial for ALTER-Net to sign on to this MoU. MH and RM noted that PEER is led by its directors. AW stated that an MoU is absolutely essential and would like the explicit inclusion of EKLIPSE to be retained.

MH concluded that a final MoU will be distributed and recommended to PEER at their May meeting; comments can be made on this second draft.

**Decision:** The Council agreed to proceed with the preliminary establishment of an MoU with PEER. Possible connections with other networks will be proactively explored, taking the legal structure into account. Joanne Chamberlain of CEH is to be consulted.

**State of affairs Network activities (continued):  
Science Policy Interface & EKLIPSE: State of the Art & transition phase**

*The discussion of EKLIPSE and the ALTER-Net SPI activity was held on Tuesday instead of Monday, beginning at 9.45.*

MV noted that the decision to absorb EKLIPSE was already made and provided an explanation of EKLIPSE and update on the current status of EKLIPSE. She highlighted the no-cost extension and proposed funding of €35,000 from ALTER-Net during the transitional period. At the moment, it is not expected that EKLIPSE will need to use this money at the conclusion of the project, but it was noted that it is important to have buffers in place.

Following her update and presentation, discussion was opened up. AH questioned the additional time requirements from ALTER-Net in terms of working on the mechanism in people days. Each request demands about 10% of time, not counting standard secretariat management time. The existing body of governance structures will be renewed at the start of the next year. Attention was drawn to the areas in the structures where ALTER-Net participation would be beneficial; nothing has been decided to date, but it is expected that such bodies as the knowledge coordination body would be open for participation. The secretariat requires funding and will be paid by the income from requests. AH questioned what would happen if insufficient requests are made for self-sustenance. MV stated that there will be a discount for first requesters and the interest already expressed by requesters is cause for confidence. RL questioned the value of EKLIPSE as an ALTER-Net investment. MH noted that as long as the EKLIPSE project is self-sustaining, ALTER-Net will continue its operation; however, if it does not prove to be self-sustaining, EKLIPSE can be treated as any other activity and may be concluded after 2021 (until which ALTER-Net has voted to support this mechanism). The decision can be revisited annually.

It was questioned how the individual ALTER-Net institutions would be involved in the outputs of EKLIPSE. AW stated that there is an open call for experts which are selected by the KCB; these experts may come from ALTER-Net. BD suggested that in terms of branding, EKLIPSE should be treated as an ALTER-Net tool. It was questioned whether there will be a return of investment if the mechanism is successful and yields lots of paid requests. AW stated that this aspiration would be valuable but that consideration must be given to those

requests that cannot pay; thought should be given to crowdfunding and the importance of responding to societal concerns which may not be paid or associated with a paid request. MH noted that secretariat costs should be self-sustaining by the end of 2020. There has been discussion of everything being done in-kind in the future.

MH reminded the Council that the current issue at hand is to determine if ALTER-Net will provide the requested buffer of €35,000 to EKLIPSE for the second half of 2020, noting that EKLIPSE has demonstrated that it has a plan and that there is little risk for ALTER-Net, as this can be revisited on a yearly basis. TS questioned the matter of regional criteria in EKLIPSE; MV explained that there is international parity, gender parity, etc.

**Decision:** The Council approved the proposal to provide a buffer of €35,000 and to evaluate the maintenance of EKLIPSE on a yearly basis hereafter at each Council meeting. RL abstained from this vote.

### **Alter-Net role in the forthcoming Biodiversity Partnership**

The next agenda item was a brief video conference with the personnel of BiodivERsA to discuss a forthcoming Biodiversity Partnership. Representatives of BiodivERsA were invited to introduce this Biodiversity Partnership and to contribute to a discussion on the role of ALTER-Net in the partnership.

Europe plans to create a so-called Biodiversity Partnership and BiodivERsA has taken the lead in organizing such a partnership. MH stated that this partnership will be extremely vital for the biodiversity and ecosystem services fields in the forthcoming six years. The partnership is likely to channel European funding and BiodivERsA funding in research projects (Horizon Europe), capacity building, knowledge integration, science policy outreach, and more. The engagement of as many European member state environmental ministries as possible is essential, along with research ministries and their funding bodies. It was recognized that ALTER-Net could play an important role in this partnership through such functions as its education (Summer School), conferences, and its facilitation of the science-policy interface through the EKLIPSE mechanism.

This new partnership approach is an element of Horizon Europe and is set to formally begin in 2021. OK asked how partnerships are to be established and who is entitled to partnership; i.e. whether individual members are to be partners or if ALTER-Net (as a network) will be partnered as a whole. The present intention is for ALTER-Net to be partnered as a network. MH questioned how, aside from EKLIPSE, conferences and summer schools would fit into this partnership. It was stated that there is potential for interaction and collaboration at summer schools recognized depending upon objectives, added value, etc. Conference collaboration would depend heavily on the topic of the conference. It was stated that a meeting can be organized to address questions, specifics, and for further preparation. A text proposition from ALTER-Net along with key points and ideas can be shared with BiodivERsA ahead of a meeting.

### **Election of Vice-chair**

*Moved to end of meeting, vote was held at 12:00 on Tuesday.*

The next points of discussion and decision were the elections of the new Vice-Chair and Treasurer.

MH noted that at the last council meeting, regrettably Györgyi Bela had to withdraw as Vice-Chair since she no longer works for ESSRG; MH expressed gratitude for the valued work and service of Györgyi. Prior to the Council meeting, Council members were asked to submit nominations to fulfill this vacancy, with any Council representative able to be nominated. The chosen nominee would then take up all those duties associated with the Vice-Chair position as listed in the MoU.

Nominations were received for Alison Hester, Ana Lillebo, Marie Vandewalle, and Jiska van Dijk.

**Decision:** The Council unanimously voted to make Ana Lillebo Vice-Chair, noting her excellent contributions to ALTER-Net and the high engagement of the partners at CESAM.

### **Election of Treasurer**

Due to the establishment of non-profit organizational legal structure, ALTER-Net is obliged to appoint a council member as treasurer of the new organization. He/she would preferably also take part in the Management Board. The draft statutes distributed by MH contain further information on the tasks of the treasurer. Council members were requested to submit nominations prior to the meeting.

Nominations were received for: Johannes Peterseil, Ben Delbaere, Joan Pino, and Sonja Jähnig.

**Decision:** No decision made at this time, as several nominees were absent and several others declined their nominations.

### **Council Chair Announcement**

MH announced that the ALTER-Net council should elect a new council chair at the conclusion of 2020. The Council was requested to think proactively of potential nominations for this position so that a decision can be made at next year's Council meeting.

### **ALTER-Net in the CBD-SBBTA**

Announcement and discussion of a possible role and/or mentioning of ALTER-Net in the technical and scientific cooperation supporting the post-2020 global biodiversity framework was planned on the Council meeting agenda. This was one of the issues at the last CBD-SBBTA (Convention on Biological Diversity – Subsidiary Body of Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice) meeting in Montreal in November 2019. It was noted that ALTER-Net membership would require a membership fee.

Because of a lack of necessary remaining time, this agenda item was skipped at the meeting. It will be discussed at a later time or by email.

## **New Activity Proposals**

There was insufficient time for a full discussion of proposed new activities. However, TK compiled a list of new activity ideas that were raised throughout the course of the meeting. These included the following:

- Production of a one-page summary of ALTER-Net purpose and added-value that can be shared with institute directors and officials
- A roundtable meeting of partner institute legal counsels, organized in December and held in January
- Development of a second school in the make and model of the ALTER-Net Summer School (potentially for later-career scientists or other target groups)
- Production of an ALTER-Net 2030 vision document that considers the current and future identity of ALTER-Net

It was requested that Council members share additional new activity ideas to TK to disseminate to the Council and MB.

## **2020 Council Meeting**

The final item of the agenda was the determination of the location of the 2020 ALTER-Net Council meeting. MH noted that the next council meeting will be of utmost importance, both because of the expiration of current phase of ALTER-Net (and establishment of a new MoU) and because it will involve the follow-up on the first year of EKLIPSE management.

Newly-established Vice-Chair AL volunteered to host the next meeting at CESAM in Aveiro, Portugal CESAM. Gratitude was expressed both to AL for her willingness to host and to RM for the excellent facilities and hospitality of the present meeting.

**Decision:** The Council unanimously supports AL's proposal. The 2020 Council meeting will be hosted by CESAM. Date and time are to be determined.

**The Council meeting formally concluded at 12.30 on Tuesday, 3 December 2019.**  
*Immediately following the conclusion of the meeting, RM presented an informational overview of the new merger between IRSTEA and INRA, which will be jointly known as INRAE.*