

Minutes from the in-person meeting of the Interim Board of the European Astrobiology Institute on 14 February 2019 at CNES, Paris, France

Present in person: Muriel Gargaud, Nigel Mason, Wolf Geppert, Frances Westall, Michel Viso, Stephane, Mazevet, Michel Viso, Kalle Kisimäe

Present via telecon: Emmanuelle Javaux, Karen Olsson-Francis, Ruth-Sophie Taubner, John Brucato, Victor Parro (for Miguel Mas Hesse), Jean-Pierre de Vera (for Tilman Spohn),

1. Identity of the EAI

Since the question of the identity of the EAI (virtual institute, society or network) has been coming up in intervals the Interim Board has unanimously decided to suggest to the General Assembly (which, of course, has the last word in this matter) that the EAI will be a Virtual Institute, which describes it best. Societies usually refer to associations of individuals and there exist already EANA and a number of national and regional astrobiology networks in astrobiology in Europe.

2. General points about the statutes and legal issues concerning the Memorandum of Understanding

It was decided to keep the Memorandum of Understanding as short as possible (as it is now) and the legal text as unambiguous as can be achieved. The text has already been checked by legal representatives at CNES and no points of criticism have so far been raised so far.

3. Decision and working bodies of the EAI (Chairs, Vice Chairs, Executive Committee, Management Committee, Board of Trustees) and their competences and relative role towards one another.

A discussion on the number of votes per Core Organisation ensued. Michel remarked it might be difficult for an organization like CNES to send 3 delegates to the General Assembly and give them the mandate to speak and vote on behalf of the CNES there. Also, the different roles of Core Organisations (which might be less interested in the day-to-day work of the EAI and the personnel running the institute but more in the general policy and the overall plans of the Institute).

It was therefore decided to suggest to revive the suggestion of the inclusion of a Board of Trustees into the statutes. Its tasks are to review and endorse Reports, budget proposals and Action plans by the Management Committee and make suggestions on the general policy of the institute. Each Core Organisation has the right to send one delegate to the Board of Trustees.

4. Profiles for Chairs, Vice Chairs, WG leaders and co-leaders

Three documents for the tasks and the profiles for candidates of the Chair, Vice-Chairs and the WG leaders were discussed. Whereas the tasks will be (at least partly) included into the statutes, the profiles will be an internal document and should be adopted as Guidelines by the General Assembly. The profiles of WG leaders and Deputy Leaders will be discussed by the Working Groups.

5. Recruitment strategy for future leaders of the EAI

Since time is running fast and there have been delays in the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, it might not be possible to recruit people for each

positions in the Management Committee and so the following approach was endorsed by the Interim Board.

At the first General Assembly (Liblice, CZ, 28 – 30 May 2019) the following things should be accomplished:

- Decisions about the identity and the Statutes of the EAI
- Decisions about the number and identity of Working Groups
- Discussions about the scientific and activity programme and a Working Plan for the Year 2020.
- Discussions about the budget for 2020
- Decision about the Host Organisation
- Discussions about the future scientific and other activities of the EAI
- Election of an Interim Management Committee. This Interim Management Committee should consist of an undefined but not too large number of people and have the following tasks:
 - Recruitment of candidates for chairs, vice-chairs and WG leaders and Deputy Leaders. While the Interim Board should make suggestions for candidates for the chairs and the vice chairs (whose number was suggested to be 3), this should, of course, not prevent other candidatures. A bottom-up approach was advocated for WG leader and Deputy Leaders. The WGs should be created first and then candidates for their leaders should emerge from within the WGs through discussions within them.
 - Preparation of the General Assembly 2020
 - Preparation of the bid for the Research Infrastructure Starting Community under the Horizon 2020 programme.

It was decided to suggest that Nicolas and Wolf will function as Administrative and Scientific Secretary of the Interim Board, respectively. The board will discuss which person will be suggested as Chair of the Interim Board.

It was also suggested to invite people from the biochemistry community to the Interim Board and concrete names have been suggested.

6. Status of participating entities so far and recruitment of further Participating Entities.

As of 14 February we have had positive responses of at least 6 Core Organisations and 10 Participating Institutions. This is nice but we should intensify the recruitment. Michel requested to produce a short presentation especially aimed for decision-makers covering the following issues:

- Necessity for the EAI

- Uniqueness of the Institute
- Usefulness for such a body for Europe
- Timeliness to create such a body
- List of Interim Board Members

The Board has now prepare such a presentation and it will circulate it to all other people interested and via the website.

7. Recruitment of Working Group Members

A generic recruitment letter and a Doodle poll has been sent out. The Board will send a reminder and also mail people directly for joining different Working Groups

8. General Assembly at Liblice (and subsequent ones): Status of preparations (programme, opening ceremony, etc.)

The venue and the time for the Second General Assembly (La Palma, 21 – 24 April 2020) have been presented. Also, the preparations for the First General Assembly in Liblice are on track.

9. Administrative issues and the Role of the Host Organisation

The Board will prepare a task list and a budget for the work performed by Host Organisation and based on the three alternatives presented earlier depending on the funds available.

10. RI Starting Community proposal

The deadline of the proposal will be in March 2020. So far not much detailed information is available about the call. Several strong astrobiology structures have been identified by the Board as possible key organisations to be involved in the write-up of the bid. It is important to consider that access to research infrastructures and field sites will have to be key ingredients in the bid. Wolf will coordinate the bid and apply for funding for necessary travel and lodging for meetings of future beneficiaries from the Swedish National Space Board. The bid should have a strong terrestrial component and excessive overlap between the Europlanet bid should be avoided

11. Any other business

Ruth-Sophie sent out announcement for the Logo Contest. The deadline will be 14th April which will leave enough time for choosing the winner and present the logo at the First General Assembly. The prize will be free attendance at the General Assembly 2020.

There has been interest by 2 institutions outside Europe (Council of Europe definition). The Board has to find a policy for those application and a way to define if they qualify to have the same status regarding membership fees as the Less Represented Member States.

12. Next telecon

There will be at least another telecon of the Interim Board before the General Assembly in May.