



*Minutes of the Mars meeting in Bruges, 17 March 2004*

The participants at the meeting were Fred Buchholz (President), Carlo Heip (Past President), Stephen Hawkins (Vice-President), Herman Hummel (Executive Secretary), and the newly elected members Adrianna Ianora (replacing Giorgio Bernardi) and Mireille Harmelin-Vivien (replacing Jean-Pierre Feral).

The agenda for the meeting in Bruges was to discuss:

- the minutes of the last meeting in Amsterdam where the new Executive Committee (EC) was elected
- new research themes
- problems regarding communications
- global observations
- connections with other associations
- summer schools/student awards
- external organizations (NAML, CoML etc. )
- Conference of Directors, next MARS EC

The minutes in Amsterdam were discussed and it was decided that Herman Hummel should be re-elected as the Executive Secretary of MARS. Treasurer and Secretary should be combined and therefore the main administration of MARS should remain in Holland at Yerseke. This year, the financial aspects of MARS will have to be audited during the coming yearly auditing of the Yerseke Institute.

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With regards to new research themes, the MARS conference in Venice had already emphasized the importance of promoting studies on the physiology of marine organisms, considering this a key theme for the MARS network. The importance of this theme was further stressed at the MARS meeting in Amsterdam where Gilles Boeuff gave an oral presentation on how marine stations can be important sites for studies on cell and molecular biology. In Bruges, it was agreed to continue to support this theme, and try to identify new themes for future studies within the MARS network. It was concluded that research on marine genomics and biodiversity are presently well defined within the MARS network and should continue to be key areas of research also in the future. It was therefore suggested that the co-ordinator of the NoE on Marine Genomics be co-opted as member of the MARS network

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New themes to be defined for the MARS network could also include marine biotechnology with a focus, for example, on how to improve productivity in aquaculture, to identify new compounds for application in medicine and the chemical industry, and to develop bioremediation strategies for applications in Europe's coastal

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oceans. This theme should be covered by a half-page report (position papers / state of the art) to be written for the next MARS Newsletter

Bioindicators were also considered but the EC members decided that the subject has already been covered in the past, and should therefore not be listed as a priority theme for MARS member institutions.

Chemical ecology was also identified as a rapidly emerging new field of research with a strong impact on biodiversity and biotechnology research. It was suggested that Allan Cembella, the newly appointed senior scientist to occupy the position on chemical ecology at AWI, could be approached by Fred to write an article on this subject for the next MARS Newsletter.

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Deep-sea biology was also identified as an important area of research for the future and it was decided that Ricardo Santos should be co-opted as a new member of the EC to cover this area of research and to balance the committee with someone from the Iberian Peninsula.

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Six topics were discussed at the MARS meeting in Amsterdam, being

- Biodiversity, including taxonomy (Heip)
- Marine genomics and molecular biology (Vaulot & Kloareg)
- Marine model organisms and natural products (Boeuf)
- Climate change problems (Hawkins, Buchholz, Dauvin)
- Sustainable ecosystems and human factors (Austin)
- Marine stations as observatories (Hawkins, Buchholz).

For each of these topics a half-page overview could be presented in the coming MARS Newsletter

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With regards to Global Observation, the POGO network comprising about 25 oceanographic institutions, including several MARS members. has recently issued at a meeting in Yokohama a document for the Earth Summit in Tokyo in April 2004. POGO covers the open oceans but there is a gap for coastal observatories. The EC concluded that MARS would be an ideal organization to establish this type of observing activity in Europe. It was suggested that a MARS representative should attend future meetings of this group but this suggestion was not retained. The number of "fixed" research stations in coastal European waters should first be increased. It was also suggested that stations with long-term time series of data would be ideal sites for this type of global observation. The EC therefore decided that it would be best for MARS to become active in the Global Observing System only when the agenda is ready and that we should first establish what MARS can do within this observing system. Fred or Steve could attend a future meeting. Meanwhile, through an action by Pierre Lasserre, MARS was invited to a discussion with UNESCO-IOC on this topic.

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As regards connections with other organizations

- a blueprint has been prepared by Carlo on the activities of MARBEF for DIVERSITAS
- at least three research areas in the Census of Marine Life (mid-Atlantic ridge, hydrothermal vents and abyssal plains) could have interactions with MARBEF.
- there is a need to find funds to re-do the fauna and flora assessments of the past

- MARS should contact the steering committee organizing the Marine Biology Symposium in Austria in 2005 to offer a sponsorship for a keynote lecture or a prize for the best student poster, or both.

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Summer schools and student awards were also discussed in Bruges. It was suggested that MARS could co-sponsor courses such as those of MARBEF so as to increase its visibility. The EC discussed, for example, the possibility of co-sponsoring the course on Hydrozoa being organized by Nando Boero this summer in 2004. MARS would contribute funds for two participants (750 euros/person) to attend this course so as to cover T&S costs for ascending states that are MARS members. Two travel awards of 2000 Euro were offered in the past (last year two of 2000 and two of 1000 Euro), whereas in Amsterdam it was decided to offer three full awards in 2004, one of which should be assigned to member states from Southern and/or Eastern Europe.

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The EC decided that there should no longer be associated members of the MARS network but only full members, as already established in Amsterdam. UNESCO has paid membership fees for 2 countries (Turkey and Croatia) in 2003/2004. The EC accepted the new membership of the Station Marine de l'Ile d'Yeu of the University of Angers and suggested that Malta and Cyprus should be approached for new membership. The possibility of involving marine stations situated in Cork and Belfast was also discussed.

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The EC suggested that the next meeting of the Conference of Directors of MARS could be held in Ischia in 2006 (i.e. every 3 y) and Adrianna will speak with the President of the Stazione Zoologica of Naples, Giorgio Bernardi, about this possibility. It was also decided that the next MARS meeting of the EC should coincide with the next General Assembly meeting of MARBEF early next year. Pierre Lasserre suggested that MARS or MARBEF organize a meeting linking science, protection and the political dimension of biodiversity, and its conservation and role. The EC in Bruges recommended that such issues should be addressed to the MARBEF Steering Committee.

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The EC established that the MARS Newsletter should consistently be blue and not mauve as the latest issue of the Newsletter. It also confirmed that the BIOMARE website should be transferred to MARS. The VLIZ Institute should be able to take care of this. The same institution should also provide the MARBEF website with an e-mail listing of MARS activities.

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Other minor points:

- The possibility of covering T&S costs using MARBEF funds was discussed for possible invitations to UNESCO initiatives
- The EC will ask MARS members to suggest a new Honorary Fellow (re-elected every three years) to succeed to Otto Kinne.
- The template of the MARS Honorary Fellow Plaque will be used to design a similar one as a membership plaque to be made available for all MARS members

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Last but not least, the EC in Bruges acknowledged the support of its former President, Treasurer and General Past Members Bernardi, Bonsdorf, Costello, Eleftheriou, Feral, Skora and Warwick.