

Minutes on the MARS Steering Committee in Amsterdam, 6 June 2005

Participants were Fred Buchholz (FB; President, chair), Ricardo Santos (RS), Pierre Lasserre (PL), Mireille Harmelin (MH), Steve Hawkins (SH), Herman Hummel (HH; minutes), Adrianna Ianora (AI), Carlo Heip (CH), Mike Thorndyke (MT)

Absent with notification: Anna Szaniawska, Evangelos Papathanassiou

Opening by the chair Fred Buchholz

Welcome to new co-opted members: Pierre Lasserre, Ricardo Santos (for Deep Sea research), and Mike Thorndyke (for Marine Genomics). Also reference to Evangelos Papathanassiou being representative for East Mediterranean.

No additions to the agenda

Minutes on the MARS Steering Committee in Brugge, 17 March 2004

Most actions are on the present agenda

Open actions:

- Links with POGO should still be established. MARS can be seen as a Marine Observatories network. Formally an exchange of agendas should be requested, and maybe a mutual exchange of members in the Executive Committees could be established [**Action: FB, CH (CH connect to Jan de Leeuw)**]. This could maybe also be achieved through cross-over of people being member in both networks, as PML (Nick Owen) and Southampton [**Action: SH**].

- Trying to raise a higher membership, with an emphasis on Spain and maybe Albania. In Spain Pep Gasol could be contacted. Contacts should be made on personal basis. [**Action all: send contact addresses to FB; Action FB: send personal letters**]. Make also again clear that there are 3 levels of membership, and/or make an official letter to be send together with the coming MARS Newsletter to potential members [**Action: FB**]

New initiatives

- The European Research Council

PL was in first meeting, RS in second meeting held in Lisboa.

Report on first initiatives/meeting mainly from Max Planck institutes.

Report on second meeting by RS, representing MARS. There were representatives from 36 nations and many organizations. The ERC wants to be a bottom-up organization, and wants to be independent. Proposals from 1 institution are possible. There is common agreement, although there is still some doubt about budgets and resistance from some EC members (Italy, UK). There was no other marine representative than MARS. We should try to be an established member in the (steercom for) further initiatives.

How does this interact with EuroScience. It is a consortium as the AAAS that could become a central foundation for research in Europe. There is a call for proposals at this moment. MARS could consider membership of this organization.

- MAB: Man and Biosphere initiative

Meeting at UNESCO-ROSTE in Venice was well attended, including representatives from GOOS. Links with between MaB, MARS and MarBEF and earlier initiatives on observatories and indicators, as BIOMARE, were discussed. A taskforce will be founded, and funded by UNESCO. The draft report was circulated. Already 200 stations/sites are included in the programme. The issue of nature protection and conservation becomes more important, and the initiative thus is just in time.

EMBS and MARS

There could be a loose link between both organizations, also because else EMBS may lose impact. Erik Bonsdorff and Nando Boero wanted to organize a special MARS/MarBEF workshop at the EMBS. To join EMBS and MARS is already a long history, but was not really successful so far. The ideas given by Erik and Nando are still not crisp and clear – it should be according to them an open discussion – the MARS EC is not in favor of such a loosely defined agenda. We will ask a more concrete programme [**Action FB: ask Erik on behalf of MARS for a concrete programme; CH: ask Erik on behalf of MarBEF**]

SH proposes to start with a MARS sponsored poster session (best poster award) or a MARS invited lecture at the EMBS. MARS will support it with e.g. 500 Euros. To start with the Cork EMBS meeting [**Action SH: send John Davenport a letter**]

Mediterranean Research Stations

Relations with Mediterranean stations should be intensified. This has been promoted by MARBENA with a meeting in Piran, Slovenia. There is a lot of monitoring, even more than BIOMARE had documented.

As in the Baltic the east European colleagues may be more interested in receiving money for local activities, and thereby it could be difficult to attract them to international initiatives as MARS. Make an evaluation on what to do to get them involved in European activities (PL). UNESCO ROSTE might sponsor this. This can be stimulated by visits. A taskforce might work this out [**Action: PL**]

Non European organisations

No strong mutual activities. There is some room for activities with America (CORONA, NAML). We should start with re-establishing the contacts before thinking about a Federation of Marine Stations. First action would be to invite, and subsidize, an American colleague, e.g. the president of NAML [**Action FB; SH could make links in Boston**].

CoML is active, and started European activities as EuroNAGISA. MARS should stress that they want (to cooperate in) a EuroNAGISA network [**Action: FB**]

An article on NAGISA could be published in the MARS Newsletter (**Action: FB ask Lisandro Benedetti-Cecchi**)

GEOS (Global Earth Observation System) is a GO system trying to coordinate all observatory systems. MARS could introduce, connect with, the European sites [**Action: CH**].

Membership of MARS in the main NoE's

An overview of MARS members involved in Marine Genomics, EuroOcean and MarBEF would be helpful [**Action: CH ask Pim van Avesaath**].

Transnational Access Marine Stations (by MT)

Background is in Marine Genomics (Biological Resource Centres) based on the major marine stations developing model organisms, keep culture collections, and supplying these organisms. It is now a SSA (Research Infrastructures) proposal within the 6th FW programme. Proposal is focusing on coastal and shelf zone, and will be carried out by 8 major institutes with a tradition on model organism supply and having ships. A budget is foreseen for visiting researchers from other marine institutes. In the 7th FW there might be an opportunity for other MARS institutes to be included.

For sale: The 116 year old Station Marine d'Endoume at Marseille

The marine station in Marseille is planned to be sold. A petition to save this historical station is offered to MARS to be published at its website [**Action: HH**]. Advice was given to emphasize in the petition the cultural heritage, international position, large size, and importance of the institute more strongly. Send petitions also directly to local administrators, as the lord Mayor. Also MARS can send a support letter [**Action: FB**], and the Marine Biological Association of the UK will do the same [**Action: SH**].

Conference of Directors

Ischia (AI) confirmed to be willing to organize the Directors meeting on 2+3 November 2006. Different hotels are available. Yet, for practical reasons the conference could be better organized at the Stazione Zoologica in Naples. It is decided to organize the Directors meeting in Naples. Immediately before this a Marine Genomics meeting is organized in Sorrento. A fund could be requested by MARS from UNESCO-ROSTE to invite East European colleagues [**Action: FB**].

MARS Newsletter

Will be kept separate from the MarBEF Newsletter.

Contents include:

- FB makes an editorial [**Action: FB**].
- Position papers will be made on new research themes [**Action: CH, SH, FB**]. Some authors should still be contacted [**Action: CH, FB**].
- Links with the major NoE's can be explained: MarBEF [**Action: CH**], EurOceans [**Action: CH contact Caroline Gernez**], Marine Genomics [**Action: CH contact Catherine Boyen**].
- Articles by Allen Cembella and Jane Robertson [**Action: FB**].
- list of summer schools [**Action: FB, HH**]
- reports of travel grantees [**Action: HH**]
- Minutes of meetings [**Action: HH**]
- Financial report [**Action: HH**]
- Presentation of marine stations – Station Marine d'Endoume [**Action: MH**]

Prizes, Awards

- MARS Honorary Fellow prize. Nominations will be requested from the members [**Action: PL, CH**]
- Student Award: this year 2 students awarded. Remarkable was the dominance of Italian and Polish applications.
- A MARS plaque will be sent to the MARS members [**Action: HH**]

Finances and membership

There is a positive balance (40 kEuro). Costs of the secretariat still have to be booked. A reserve can be put at a higher interest account [**Action: HH**]

This year the contribution has been paid already by 37 members, 6 are awaited. A letter should be send to the UNESCO awardees of 2003 (that got 2 years membership for free) [**Action: HH**].

New research themes

Trends and processes and modeling are new themes to be discussed within FW7. We should try to push integrative biology.

CH will make a first set-up for an overview of new research themes and a research strategy for MARS [**Action: CH**].