

Minutes

INTERACT Daily Management Group Meeting

26 - 29 April 2022

Venue: Rokua, Finland

Participants: Kirsi Latola, Terry Callaghan, Margareta Johansson, Luisella Bianco, Morten Rasch, Hannele Savela, Elmer Topp-Jørgensen, and Katharina Beckmann

1. Consequences of Russian invasion and ways forward

On INTERACT 2

The final report is ready to be submitted. However, due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the following embargos from the EU, the final report cannot be submitted yet as we are waiting for further guidelines from the EU. As the project ended before the war the only problem INTERACT II may encounter is that Lund University has paid money to Russian institutions that wasn't spent because of covid and it might be difficult to return money as bank transfers between Russia and Europe are very difficult. In addition, it might be a problem to transfer money that should be paid to Russian partners. As soon as further guidelines from the EU has been received we will submit the final report.

- Margareta will send an email to all partners in INTERACT 2 and inform about the delay.

On INTERACT 3

On the 9th of April, EU sent a letter of termination to the Russian partners with 30 days to respond.

Money has already been paid to Russian partners as prepayment and it might be difficult to get it back as bank transfers between Russia and several European countries are difficult. Further guidelines how to proceed will follow from the EU as soon as they have any information.

It was concluded from the discussions with our Project Officer that no Russian stations can be visible on the website and on other online systems, not even as observer stations. We won't delete anything but hide them for now as we hope to resume the collaboration as soon as the war end.

INTERACT does not have to make a special amendment for the termination of the Russian Stations, but EU will organize the exclusion. All Russian partners except one (NESS) will be excluded as NESS is privately owned and therefore there is no legal reason to exclude them. But the most logical reason is to exclude them as we cannot organize TA towards NESS and pay money to them. Because of the war, NESS won't be able to fulfill the requirements, hence we will have to make a termination of NESS contract in the Participant portal.

We need to make the amendment of a one-year prolongation and justify why we don't want a budget cut as we have fewer partners. However, we need to stress that we can continue the work promised at other research stations and stress that the work and the quality will be maintained (but in a different

way) and that is why we still need the same money but now allocated to the other stations. Hence, we need to prepare for a new budget.

After 9th May the Russian partners need to make a final financial report. After that we will know how much the Russian stations have spent, and we will then be able to make a new budget. The TA pool needs to be included. We also need to create a new call (for scientists to apply for the one-year extension). We have promised to provide TA and that is why we need to justify keeping the money inside the project and re-allocate the money to other research stations that are able to host additional scientists.

As INTERACT has partners from various countries and all countries have different national guidelines that need to be followed, respectively, we need to discuss further cooperation with Russia. One question is whether we should keep our lines of communication open or closed (for writing joint papers, participating in meetings etc.).

Many questions arise around what will happen to the Arctic Council and its working groups and at the moment we will simply have to follow the discussions and be aware of any new guidelines.

- Katharina will hide the Russian stations on the INTERACT web site (however not before 9th May when their contracts are officially terminated).

A new budget for INTERACT 3 divided on fewer partners were discussed. It was concluded that there is still money left in WP 2 and 3. We will know how big that budget is after the financial reports from Russian partners have been submitted. The following were decided:

- Budget from INTERACT 3 from the Russian partners will be reallocated within the current work packages (WP 2 and WP 3)
- There have been suggestions within WP2 and 3 how to reallocate that money: Within WP2 to transfer money to the synthesis work on environmental networks and environmental envelopes. Within WP3, transfer TA from Russian stations to other regions, have targeted TA calls, including pan-Arctic networks if possible. VA for example for pan-Arctic remote sensing products
- WP leaders for WP2 and WP 3 will suggest reallocation of budget from Russian stations and get back to the DMG.

As we still have no exact numbers for how much money is remaining in the budget and we will only know this after we have got the final financial statements from our Russian partners, we will revisit this discussion again as soon as we have these numbers. A new meeting will be arranged when we know how much money there is for a new budget.

On INPA

INPA was an idea from INTERACT 2, and therefore presented as a deliverable in INTERACT 2. Even though it is an independent organization, it originated within an EU project. We have consulted the EU regarding if there are any regulations against any indirect support to Russian partners as INPA is closely related to the INTERACT EU projects. An EU legal team is looking at this right now. INPA was formed to be independent of any geopolitical issues as the long-term goal is a Pan-Arctic network, the current situation is hence not easy to handle. INPA condemns Russia's war against Ukraine, but seeks

solutions on how to continue the important pan-arctic collaboration that has been developed during the last 20 years. Ideas that were discussed included to form a Russian branch of INPA or if the Russian stations could be “friends of INPA” instead of full members?

Currently the membership of the Russian stations that were approved before the war are on hold until we have received further guidance both from the EU but also from the INPA members in general.

- The Russian stations needs to be contacted and informed about that currently their membership is on pause until further notice according to the 4th bullet point of the member requirements in the statutes (as they are not qualified under current conditions).

2. INPA

Upcoming General Assembly

The budget for INPA needs to be legally approved before the end of June and therefore the upcoming general assembly for INPA will be held 23-24 May in a castle in Denmark. An agenda for INPA General Assembly will be created and circulated before the meeting including:

- Internal policy will be discussed and approved
- Action plan will be discussed and approved
- Budget will be discussed and approved
- 2021 bookkeeping will be presented and approved
- Discuss membership fee, is 200€ still valid?
- INPA web site
- External funded projects
- Selection procedure, what stations should participate in what external project: How do we act upon an offer?
- Election of board members

Association members can, 30 days prior to and until the GA, nominate candidates for the Board of Directors after ensuring nominees' acceptance. An e-mail should be sent to the Chair of the current board of directors, including name and organization of eligible nominee(s). The Chair will provide an acceptance form to be filled out by the nominee prior to the election. At the General Assembly, each member representative can vote for up to nine candidates at the GA.

- Margareta will send email to the board to ask if they are willing to candidate for the Board also the coming year.
- Margareta will send email to all Members to encourage them and inform them about the possibility to nominate board members.

Employing Caroline Coch

INPA will hire a person to work at the INPA Secretariat. Caroline Coch is a polar specialist at WWF in the UK. She has been working with fundraising and is used to run projects. She will mainly be working with Arctic PASSION and eRImote. She starts on the 24th June so that she can attend the Arctic

Passion's General Assembly held the following week. As she lives in the UK there are some technical and administrative hurdles before a contract can be signed, but hopefully, it can be signed soon.

- Margareta will work on the administrative hurdles to employment and keep the group informed.

Arctic PASSION

Three new stations need to join now that we cannot cooperate with Russia anymore. Based on data availability and environmental conditions, the following three stations were suggested to replace the current Russian stations; NIBIO Svanhovd in Norway, Rif in Iceland and Churchill in Canada. A General Assembly will be held in Denmark last week of June and INPA will be represented by Maggan, Luisella and Caro.

- Margareta will contact the three new stations

eRImote

The final administrative tasks are on its way. The Grant Agreement needs to be signed and the project will officially start in June. There will be a kick-off meeting in Hamburg the 29th June and INPA will be represented by Hannele Savela.

Website

At the moment the administration for the INPA website is at Tomsk State University who has kindly produced the web site for INPA. The administration needs to be transferred to INPA Secretariat to be able to update the web site, ensure news items are posted etc.

- Luisella will send info to Terry who will contact Tomsk

Licenses

We have been kindly provided with instructions on which licenses that need to be purchased (in order to keep the e-book etc.)

- Katharina will investigate this and acquire the licenses needed

3. INTERACT 3

Upcoming General Assembly Iceland

The meeting will be held at a venue in Keflavik 26-30 September. We will visit a station (most likely Sudurnes, which is the closest, or Laugarvatn). Roughly the schedule will be 1,5 days (Tuesday and half of Wednesday) for Station Managers' Forum, excursion half Wednesday and 1 day (Thursday) for General Assembly. Monday and Friday will be travel days.

- Katharina and Margareta will draft a programme for the General Assembly day
- Morten and Elmer will draft a programme for the Station Managers' Forum

- Katharina sends out registration form ASAP
- Morten sends Katharina suggestion for conference dinner
- Katharina will find a local DJ

Overview of progress and ways forward

Milestones and deliverables are on time (apart from one deliverable that is delayed – BBC movie. However, this was a planned delay that has been reported on in our first periodic report and will be included in the amendment).

It was suggested to have an online WP leader meeting together with the DMG some time during May (not 12th and 31st as those are the dates for Data forum workshops).

Transnational Access preparation is ongoing for the upcoming field season. As many as possible of the postponed projects from 2020 and 2021 should take place in 2022. Almost 70 projects will be in the field 2022 (only 3 have asked to be postponed to 2023).

Future external meetings

Arctic Net

Last time this meeting was held in Halifax, with a good turnout. It would be a good idea to go again. This year it will be held in Toronto 5-8 December.

- Katharina checks if we can have a booth there.

Arctic Circle

Will there be people at the Arctic Circle? We should still try to have a booth. The meeting will be held 13-16 October. In addition to the Arctic Circle General Assembly at Iceland, they will also hold a forum in Nuuk in connection to when EU opens an office in Nuuk.

- Katharina will book a booth

4. Future strategy for INTERACT and INPA

Joint policy meeting with ARICE/EPB/FARO

The original idea was to have a follow up from ASSW last year. This year we decided not to do it at ASSW, but instead to create a policy document. In autumn 2022 there will be a joint policy meeting with ARICE, EPB and FARO. Here we have an excellent opportunity to make good connections with EU. We have a chance to show what we are capable of. We will suggest a preliminary agenda and continue to work with the collaborators on this.

- Margareta, Elmer, Morten and Hannele will be the main contact persons to take this further and will report back to the DMG.

How can we lobby for INTERACT in the future?

To lobby towards the EU, INTERACT members need to contact their national contact points. INTERACT members also play an important role in the EU Polar Cluster which also can contribute with input to future directions of Polar research in the EU.

Some points to keep in mind when lobbying for INTERACT in the future:

- INTERACT can provide a flexible, sustainable, infrastructure to support solving future challenges. The world is constantly changing, and we are yet to face problems never encountered before, but INTERACT has proven to be flexible: Old stations have faced so many challenges, and the stations remain while the challenges change while population increases.
- The SMF can focus on linking stations and scientists as a future networking activity
- It is important to promote the scientific outcomes of the project, for example by promoting keywords connected to TA publications and highlight research results.
- The INTERACT data systems need to be further integrated with other systems. The research stations would benefit from more technical recommendations.
- Focus should be put on the different knowledge systems and any applications should be co-developed including the local and indigenous peoples, station managers and scientists.
- Along with cooperating with the marine community it could also be fruitful to cooperate with the third pole, and perhaps the Antarctic community.