

MINUTES OF HYBRID & FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS: COST ACTION CA20102 MAF-WORLD

Meeting 1: First Hybrid Meeting

Dates: 7th – 9th July 2022

Venue: Bremen-ZMT (Hybrid)



Summary of Discussions:

- **Introduction & Objectives:** The Chair, Sergio Rossi, opened the meeting, highlighting the goal to engage 150+ participants and use the MAF-WORLD website as the central repository for all outputs.
- **Working Group (WG) Updates:** Leaders from WG2 to WG8 presented their roadmaps:
 - **WG2 (Mapping & Biogeography):** Focused on creating a virtual MAF map, defining MAF criteria, and planning workshops on taxonomy and habitat mapping protocols.
 - **WG3 (Threats):** Discussed linking private expeditions (e.g., Under the Pole) with the COST Action and proposed opinion papers on environmental impacts.
 - **WG4 (Historical Ecology):** Aimed to understand long-term changes in MAF systems through reviews, workshops, and data collection from historical sources.
 - **WG5 (Trophic Ecology):** Scheduled a virtual workshop on heterotrophy and planned future training schools on benthic-pelagic coupling and climate change sensitivity.
 - **WG6 (Natural Capital):** Outlined approaches to quantify ecosystem services by taxon group, reef structure, and through food web analyses.

- **WG7 (Conservation & Restoration):** Proposed a training school on restoration techniques and several review papers on conservation methodologies.
- **WG8 (Dissemination):** Presented the website and communication strategy, including plans for a training school on science communication in Barcelona.
- **COST Rules & Budget:** A COST representative reviewed reimbursement rules, eligibility, and budget status, noting an underspend that needed to be addressed.
- **Cross-Cutting Initiatives:** Discussions covered planning for joint workshops (e.g., WG2&5, WG3&7, WG4&6), a future Master's program, a "Coffee Table Book," and policy engagement through a MAF manifesto.

Decisions & Action Items:

- A volunteer (Cova Orejas) was tasked with creating a table of proposed Training School/Workshop venues, topics, and dates by the end of July 2022.
- WG leaders were urged to be more proactive in engaging members and submitting content to the website.
- A working group was to be formed to develop the Master's program proposal.

Meeting 2: 2nd Hybrid MC & CG Meeting

Dates: 11th – 12th July 2023

Venue: Ancona, DiSVA (Hybrid)



Summary of Discussions:

- **Achievements Review:** The Chair presented an overview of achievements, including successful workshops, training schools, and the selection of MAF-WORLD for presentation at a UN Summit.
- **WG Progress Reports:** WG leaders reported on completed and upcoming activities, such as the "Cold-water corals in aquaria" workshop (WG2&5), the "Octocoral taxonomy" training school (WG2), and the "Assessing heterotrophy" online workshop (WG5).
- **STSM Update:** Enrique Isla reported 12 completed STSMs and emphasized the need for better advertisement of future calls.
- **Future Planning:** A broad list of potential future workshops and training schools was proposed, including topics like species distribution modeling, blue carbon, and deep-sea mining impacts.
- **Major Projects:** Updates were provided on the Master's program, the Springer-Nature Toolbox book, and the Coffee Table Book. Volunteers were sought to lead the Toolbox chapters.

Decisions & Action Items:

- The budget plan for the 2023-2024 grant period was to be put to a vote in October 2023.
- All WG leaders were to submit PDF presentations for upload to the website.
- A face-to-face MC meeting was proposed for Barcelona.

Meeting 3: MC & CG Meeting

Dates: 10th – 11th June 2024

Venue: Sopot, IOPAN (Hybrid)



Summary of Discussions:

- **Future of the Network:** Discussions focused on sustaining the MAF-WORLD network after the COST Action ends, with ideas including a new legal entity, an Erasmus Mundus Master's, and links to other programs.
- **WG Achievements:** All WGs presented their key outputs, including published papers, successful training schools (e.g., Habitat Mapping in Faro, Historical Ecology in Crete), and ongoing manuscript preparations.
- **Dissemination:** WG8 emphasized the need for all members to use the communication kit and acknowledge MAF-World. A rule was proposed to make the creation of dissemination material mandatory for STSM grantees.
- **Major Projects:**
 - **Coffee Table Book:** Piotr Kuklinski reported on progress and challenges, including sourcing high-quality images.
 - **Toolbox Book:** Sergio Rossi reminded authors of the 22 planned chapters and deadlines.
 - **Master's Program:** A meeting in Barcelona had advanced the curriculum development, with a focus on creating a unique and practical program.

Decisions & Action Items:

- The final face-to-face MC & CG meeting was scheduled for June/July 2025 in Portugal.
- STSM applicants would be required to prepare public-facing output for the website as a condition of their grant.

Meeting 4: Final Hybrid MC & CG Meeting

Dates: 30th September – 1st October 2025

Venue: Faro, CCMAR (Hybrid)



Summary of Discussions:

- **Final Review:** The Chair presented a comprehensive review of MAF-WORLD's 4-year tenure, highlighting gender balance, wide geographical coverage, and successful spending of the majority of the budget.
- **WG Final Reports:** Each WG presented a summary of their achievements, including numerous workshops, training schools, publications, and STSMs.
- **Key Outputs Status:**
 - **Toolbox Book:** 10 chapters were already submitted to Open Research Europe, with a deadline extension to the end of 2025.
 - **Coffee Table Book:** Facing challenges with image quality and sourcing a publisher. An appeal was made for more contributions.
 - **MAF-WORLD Manifesto:** Finalized and scheduled for an online launch on 21st October 2025. All participants were urged to act as ambassadors and promote it via their institutions.

- **Master's Program:** A curriculum was developed, but logistical and administrative hurdles remain. The search for funding and institutional partners will continue.
- **Future Collaboration:** A brainstorming session using MIRO identified potential topics for a new COST Action in 2026, with restoration and connectivity as leading themes.

Decisions & Action Items:

1. **Utilize remaining Open Access publication budget.**
2. **Submit all remaining chapters for the Toolbox Book.**
3. **Contribute high-quality images and text for the Coffee Table Book.**
4. **Finalize and launch the MAF-WORLD Manifesto** (S. Rossi, L. Allcock, P. Ziveri).
5. **Create a one-page policy brief version of the Manifesto** (Dissemination Team).
6. **Promote the Manifesto on institutional websites** (All Participants).
7. **Define the core topic for a new COST Action proposal** (All MC Members).