Minutes of the **WP2 Core Group Meeting** (year 3)

May 26-27 2011

Held at Het Pand, Ghent University, Ghent – Belgium

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**Project Acronym:** Aqua-tnet

**Project title:** Aquaculture, Fisheries & Aquatic Resource Management TN

**Contract number:** 2008 – 3209 / 001 – 001

**Project number:** 142245 – LLP -1 – 2008 – 1- BE – ERASMUS - ENW
Agenda

Thursday

1. presentation on the outstanding deliverables
2. dividing up the work for writing deliverables
3. checking the portal and recommendations if there are any
4. writing deliverables
5. feedback moment

Friday

6. writing deliverables
7. feedback moment
8. planning of the annual event

List of Attendees:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Institution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter Bossier</td>
<td>Ghent University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caroline Van Geeteruyen</td>
<td>Ghent University</td>
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<td>Marco Saroglia</td>
<td>University of Insubria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leo Nagelkerke</td>
<td>Wageningen University</td>
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<td>Teresa Fernandes</td>
<td>Napier University – Herriot Watt University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Axel Miller</td>
<td>The Scottish Association for Marine Science</td>
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Peter Bossier opened the meeting and welcomed everybody.

First to be discussed were the outstanding deliverables that still have to be written:

- 2.4 - Report on required new components of PhD courses
- 2.7 - Comparative quality of PhD courses and need for standardisation
- 2.9 - Update on outcome of generic PhD projects
- 2.11 - Possibilities for Integration of Research Results

There was a backlog in the deliverables mainly due to the long time it took for the changes to be made to the portal. Once those were made the uploading could start and information could be gathered.

The portal was reviewed and comments were raised to make searching and using the portals in general more user-friendly.

- A lot of the information provided on the portals can again be found on the website of the courses, programmes or department. These links are not user-friendly as copy-paste is required. Hyperlinks need to be available to all links where the new website opens in a separate screen.
- When using the search facilities on the portal, you need to know the name of the institute or the specific course or programme you are looking at. A search on city should be made available where a city is entered and institutes should appear in the list.
- We are also not able to search on keywords when looking for a course. You need to know exact courses. E.g. when searching on ‘salt’ you do not get a hit on the fish salting course provided.
- The drop down box found in PhD courses needs to be updated where we want to drop ‘PhD students’. Generally this will not be used and is therefore unnecessary.

Marieke will be informed about the comments and they will be passed on to the programmer. This should preferably happen before the annual event in September.

2.4 Report on required new components of PhD courses

Description of the deliverable:

PhD supervisors witness on a daily basis the difficulties PhD students are facing during their studies. In AQUA-TNET2005-08, this WP identified the perceived training need of students during their PhD studies. This WP will further survey on training requirements and identify where there is a new scope for courses/module development in the network. It will also pay special attention to the supervisor role in the process of the taught phase, trying to identify if there is a need for “Training
So far PhD courses were uploaded from Wageningen University (Netherlands), Norwegian University of Science and Technology (Norway), NIU Galway (Ireland), University of Naples Frederico II – CRIAcq Research Centre (Italy) and University of Insubria (Italy).

The general idea for having a PhD portal was to increase the mobility of the PhD courses. The problem that we could be facing with a low input of courses on the portal is that those courses are maybe not open to everybody.

At Wageningen University PhD courses are announced and get quickly filled up with students and staff attending the course. They are open to foreign students but when they are so popular within the University the places become very limited.

It all depends on the type of the course. Generic course appeal to a wider public which means the popularity of the course doesn’t allow students from outside the university to participate.

In the United Kingdom the courses are there but they are not open to everyone. The main reason being funding: PhD courses can be very expensive and the costs and fees are high. Anybody willing to pay the fee can attend the course.

In Italy a grant can be obtained by the student to follow a PhD courses as universities themselves in general do no longer have grants available to support students. In some case there are exceptions but mostly universities cannot admit students due to a funding problem.

This causes a general mobility problem.

Following these remarks, all the possible headings for this deliverable were discussed like training of trainers, looking at gaps with the available courses on the portal, what is a course, how to categorize courses, etc.

1. There could be specific courses for trainers but they are probably very diverse that it could be difficult to put in a report. The main issue is time, do the trainers have the time to follow these training courses and do they see the need to follow the courses.

2. The main question remains: does a trainer need to be trained to follow the training of the PhD? Looking around the table not everybody has followed specific courses. The consensus was that trainers should be more trained in the supervising role and the taught phase. And advanced technical training is also needed.

In the United Kingdom it is more common to train the trainers to supervise the students. The same can be said for the Netherlands where the training of the trainers also happens: to follow the students during their PhD. In short it does exist.

3. New scope for courses development in the network: Referring to the website to look at the amount of courses that are available and then the visitor needs to get an overview of the available courses
4. A general remark was made: what is considered a course: there is a big diversity in the sort of courses and also in the way the courses are taught. A technical course is shorter than the generic ones. Overview of structure of the courses, analysis on how courses are offered the duration of the course: content is important for students that want to be trained quickly.

5. An overview of missing areas in the courses: like a specific course for handling fish. It usually is dedicated to animals in general. Recommendation on improvement of gathering information: there are general reservations whether we have covered the whole field. What domains do we see fit for students to receive training in? So we need to look at the domains that are not covered now within the project and make an overview. What could cause the low response: lack of interest? There isn’t probably a lack of urgency: there is always somebody who can teach to course that is outside the knowledge field. In general there will be looking towards the knowledge of others. In the United Kingdom for example: more specific courses will be organised within the institute and there will not be a search for outside the field of institute – colleagues. What are the opportunities of Aqua-tinet: maybe there are more possibilities over the border: are there other courses or do we have to stimulate the joint PhD courses: taught and research phase.

6. Interdisciplinary courses on the boundary of aquaculture with social economics. (Something similar is present in the MsC courses)

This deliverable will be written by Teresa and Marco based on the following overview:

**Overview of the content for deliverable 2.4**

- What do we mean by PhD courses
- The scope:
  - it is focussed towards mobility
  - the structure of the PhD portal
- the diversity of the courses in content and structure
  - examples from the portal or
  - others (knowledge of the attendants)
  - overview of the portal: uploaded info by the universities
    - amount
    - etc
- categorize the courses:
  - content
    - generic courses
    - specific courses
      - list the domains that are covered
      - domains that are not covered
2.7 Comparative quality of PhD courses and need for standardisation

Description of the deliverable:

In the AQUA-TNET domains, PhD students are often facing similar problems such as statistical handling of data, but also handling of experimental animals. This task will compare the content of courses covering such scientific skills courses and formulate recommendations for best practice across the AQUA-TNET domain.

The discussion concentrated on the handling of experimental animals. There is a limitation to mobility in the Netherlands: one is not allowed to do animal handling unless a particular MSc course was followed. In the United Kingdom a license is needed as well. A PhD student that wants to handle animals is required by law to get a license.

The general question asked here is: What is the European situation? It was decided that we will look at the courses themselves and not at the statistics.

Leo will write this deliverable.

2.9 Update on outcome of generic PhD projects

Description of the deliverable:

The EUA is running generic projects on PHD curriculum development. Their results will be monitored and communicated to the network on a regular basis.

Refer to the EAU publications http://www.eua.be/cde/publications.aspx

Peter will write this deliverable.
In aquaculture and aquatic research, there are two main types of institutes which harbour and nurture major expertise in research, namely universities and research institutes. Apart from the expertise, they often have an impressive infrastructure. Sometimes the research performed has different end goals. This task will identify to what degree collaboration is being organised between these types of institute in the different countries and how this kind of collaboration can be stimulated to the benefit of both parties involved with regards to doctorate researchers.

An overview of the situation of every country present will be drafted in the deliverable so an overview can be formulated. Further information will also be included like e.g. on a new project like AquaExcell.

Axel Miller will write this deliverable.

Much of the afternoon was spend with the actual writing of the deliverables. Feedback moments were introduced where the information gathered and the draft version of the deliverable was presented. Feedback was given and more info in general will be collected to finalise the delivery.
Most of the morning was again spent on the actual writing of the deliverables, interspersed with moments of feedback, using the knowledge of the participants.

Peter presented the domains in which the courses on the portal can be placed at this moment (deliverable 2.4):

Categorise the PhD courses available on the portal:

Afterwards some brainstorming by the other participations was delivered

- Agree on categories made?
- Are some fields not covered?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aquaculture</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisheries</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Processing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immunology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths, statist and bioinformatics</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro biology</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molecular and Omics</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Not or poorly covered:

- disease,
- immunology,
- socio economics (not covered),
- management of aquaculture (not covered)

The courses that are poorly or not covered at all do exist in Europe, but the feedback was not received on the portal. So the decision was made to work with the available data.

Do we launch another appeal to gather more info? Maybe, but the data won’t change much. The feedback received is very low.

We need to anticipate what students will find more important in the future. So discussing this should be limited to general aspects that are missing. We could have a lengthy discussion if we go in depth in looking at missing categories.
What extra categories can be added that are still missing:
- GIS Geographic information system
- Human health in relation to sea food

**Deadlines and actions**

The data are not complete and the categories are very broad but we are only working with the data that are available.

The deadline for the deliverables would be the end of June. A general e-mail will be sent to the consortium for uploading more information on the website. The written deliverables will not be changed when more information becomes available, but addenda will be added with details if the general outcome of the deliverable has changed or not.

Peter will write the details for the e-mail on the specific courses the portal and the WP are aiming at.

- The call will be launched to the consortium on Monday May 30 by Caroline
- Peter will provide specific details for the mail.
- Deadline would be mid June.

The deliverables that have been finished by end of June with an update of the extra information, if there is any, from the portal.

- **Deadline for the deliverables 2.4 – 2.7 – 2.9 – 2.11: end of June**

**Annual Event at Algarve in September**

A presentation will be needed to present the work of the work package:

- Collecting data was the most difficult in the entire job
- Keeping website going
- Frequency of students collecting data on the portal
- Make an overview of deliverables with a key message on each

  ✓ We will focus on the recommendations and a summary for this presentation

There will be a negative message portrayed relating to the website but we will end on a positive note that Aqua-tnet 3 when approved will be used to look at new and better ways to make the portal more popular.

**Recommendation to increase visibility:**

Broaden the domain so the liability of the portal is bigger and therefore will be used more and better.