



freedom of information 信息自由 libertad de información حرية المعلومات liberté de l'information доступ к информации

## Minutes of Steering Committee Meeting Monday 13<sup>th</sup> September

Meeting by Skype call 15.30 Madrid time.

Attendees: Andrea Figari, Eduardo Bertoni, Toby Mendel, Gergana Jouleva, Emilene Martinez-Morales and Lydia Medland (Coordinator)

### 1) Welcomes

→ It was agreed that Lydia take minutes of the meeting.

### 2) FOIANet steering committee (SC) chair.

The chair of the steering committee is presumptively the person who receives most votes in the elections, this is then agreed by the SC. In this case Toby and Eduardo had received an equal amount of votes.

Eduardo and Toby reported to the committee that they had been in contact and proposed that Toby should begin as chair but that Eduardo may later take over the post if they should decide to swap roles. The rest of the SC agreed to this proposal.

→ Toby was appointed as chair and took over running the meeting.

### 3) Summary of status of FOIANet at present and roles of SC. Lydia summarised the status of the FOIANet and the main roles of the Steering Committee to date:

Membership: Lydia explained that those who want to be individual members write to her as coordinator stating their interest in the network and are then processed directly unless there is any doubt (Individual members join the discussion list but do not appear on the website). In the case of doubt she consults the SC by e-mail before approving membership.

Those who apply to join the network as member organizations send in a membership form which she then sends to the for approval. The current practice is that if the steering committee does not respond within one week of application being circulated by Lydia, the application is deemed approved. Lydia explained the practice of not allowing government employees to be members of the list yet allowing Information Commissioners and IGO staff be on the mailing list as individual members.

Lydia explained that she was responsible for updating the website and that she would like to know how the SC see the news, events and front pages being best used.

Lydia explained that the Ning was a social network created to allow members to see more information about each other than information that could be put on the network website. She raised the question of whether the Ning was meeting this need.

Through questions from Toby and Eduardo Lydia clarified that there are currently 186 member organizations and around 500 individual members. She also clarified that she was the FOIANet coordinator and that 25% of her time was dedicated to the FOIANet.

A discussion at this point also clarified that there were a number of other meeting minutes and other documents of the Network that could be shared.

- ➔ Andrea, Emilene and Lydia would form a small communications group to discuss social networks and website content.
- ➔ Gergana agreed to circulate official SC documents from earlier years, and Lydia agreed to find out what else was available.

4) Aspirations for the FOIANet and Discussion on the Role of the Steering Committee. Toby asked all members present to comment on this point and share their ideas.

Gergana: Gergana commented that she would be interested to see another face to face meeting of the FOIANet SC which has not happened since the founding meeting of the network. She also felt the SC should think clearly about fundraising. Finally, she identified news- and information-sharing as network strengths, which we should think more about.

Emilene: Emilene suggested that FOIANet could try and build stronger relationships with journalists as a group who are often active users of freedom of information. Emilene also suggested that FOIANet could make more use of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter.

Eduardo: Eduardo expressed a concern that FOIANet be regionally balanced and that the FOIANet should find ways to work with more material in multiple languages, perhaps by working through some of the regional FOI networks that exist.

Andrea: Andrea said that she felt that FOIANet should continue to concentrate on its current strengths.

Toby: Toby also felt that the FOIANet should focus on its strength of information-sharing. He also said that he would like to formalise the policy base of the network and formalize documents and policies to clarify procedures and situations that could occur in the future.

In the discussion concern was raised that we do not want to turn FOIANet into an organization, but within that there was support for clearer rules (e.g. on members and meetings). Similarly, there was a discussion about languages and resources. The idea of trying first to get regional networks to support other languages was welcomed.

## 5) Right to Know Day

Lydia told the SC about updating of the website for right to know day, and about the support on this from an experienced volunteer, Debra Gersh Hernandez.

## 6) Current Status of Funding

Lydia told the SC that the basic maintenance of the FOIANet is currently funded by OSI until July 2011.

She told the FOIANet of a funding proposal plan that had been discussed informally by several members of the FOIANet from various regions of the world and with the outgoing chair of the FOIANet, Helen Darbishire.

The project would build a mechanism for information exchange between FOIANet and other regional networks working on freedom of information, in particular through a

quarterly newsletter which would summarise news from regional networks, to be disseminated in different languages.

This project has so far not been developed as a formal proposal.

- ➔ Toby, Andrea and Lydia would look into fundraising for the network. Lydia would share recent communications on this.

#### 7) Next Meeting

- ➔ The next meeting will be organised to take place in two months time. Lydia will find out availability of SC members and propose a date for this meeting via a "Doodle" survey.

Due to the poor quality of the Skype call in which we lost contact many times with Andrea and Eduardo, it was decided that alternative technologies should be found for the following call.

- ➔ Toby and Andrea said they would look for alternative technologies for the conference call meeting.