

The European MASE (Mars Analogues for Space Exploration) Project – Opportunities for collaboration N. Walter¹ and the MASE team: C.S. Cockell, P. Schwendner (UK); P. Rettberg, K. Beblo-Vranesevic, M. Bohmeier, E. Rabbow (D); F. Westall, F. Gaboyer, (F); C. Moissl-Eichinger, A. Perras (A); F. Gomez, R. Amils, L. Garcia (ES); P. Ehrenfreund, E. Monaghan (NL); V. Marteinson, P. Vannier (IS), ¹European Science Foundation, BP 90015, 67080 Strasbourg cedex, France, nwalter@esf.org

Introduction: The MASE (Mars Analogues for Space Exploration) [1] project is a four year collaborative research project supported by the European Commission Seventh Framework Contract (FP7). This project gathers some of the leading European research groups in astrobiology. While currently involving only European scientists, after one year of operation the project is keen on developing collaboration and partnerships in Europe and beyond.

The MASE Project: The main objective of the project is to gain fundamental insights into the limits of anaerobic life on Earth and to use this to assess the habitability of Mars.

The MASE project involves a coherent workprogramme that covers isolation, growth and characterisation of selected anaerobic microorganisms, study their responses to environmental stresses and investigate their potential for fossilisation on Mars and their detectability.

The Project cut across many disciplines as well as science and technology areas. In achieving its workplan the project team wishes to extend its scope through the setting-up of collaboration and partnerships with interested groups and investigators in Europe and beyond.

MASE Associate Investigators: The objectives of the MASE Associate Investigators (AI) collaboration concept is to extend the scope and impact of the MASE project by involving researchers not employed by one of the MASE contractual partner organisations and not involved in the original research plan designed by the project.

While the project will benefit from additional expertise and an extended scope, AIs will benefit from the platform provided by MASE, in particular its momentum, defined protocols, possibly samples and isolates as well as data. AIs would be involved in the ongoing activities, the project implementation and have access to the knowledge produced. AI scheme will also allow privileged access to MASE partners and project management infrastructure.

MASE AI will be individual investigators (possibly representing a team/group) from Europe or beyond whose research activities and interest are relevant and potentially complementary to the MASE research plan.

AIs will collaborate with the MASE project, extending its scope by bringing in complementary activities, knowledge, and/or (in-kind) resources. Besides some integration to the project, AI partnerships will result in actual joint activities and eventually joint publications.

AIs relations with the project will be defined through an agreement that lays down basic collaboration principles, AI will not have any contractual obligation or commitment with the European Commission or any of the MASE partners.

Scientists interested in participating and/or complementing (part) of the project are invited to contact the project scientific coordinator, Prof. Charles Cockell, UK Centre for Astrobiology or the project administrative coordinator, M. Nicolas Walter, European Science Foundation.

References:

[1] www.mase-eu.org

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