



## Transition Network suspends its membership of ECOLISE

This statement is an attempt to summarise and clarify Transition Network's current position in relation to [ECOLISE](#). It does not represent 'the truth'. There is much that we have left out; the situation is complex, multi-layered and continues to develop. We offer this perspective in an attempt to support the many people connected with ECOLISE who are doing what they can to bring more health into the organisation and wider network. Before publishing this statement, we shared a draft with some members of the ECOLISE team (Council and staff) and invited their feedback.

As a founder member of ECOLISE, Transition Network continues to see a need, and exciting potential, to connect those working in Europe to support community-led responses to the interconnected crises playing out globally. We have developed relationships with many great people under the ECOLISE umbrella and have experienced how Transition Network and the wider Transition movement can benefit from such collaborations.

However, Transition Network has long held concerns that ECOLISE has been struggling to develop governance structures, processes and an underlying culture aligned with the values that ECOLISE members espouse and the changes we all want to see in the world. Transition Network staff have regularly given feedback and made suggestions hoping to catalyse shifts towards healthier power dynamics, co-responsibility across the different roles in the system and a better balance between outward-facing activity and inward attention on organisational and network development.

We have not been alone in expressing these concerns - our desire for power and resources to be transparently and broadly distributed, for ECOLISE decisions and activities to be shaped by a wider range of life experience and perspectives and for ECOLISE's collaborations to be rooted in mutual respect and trust seems to be shared by most, maybe all, of those involved. But we have consistently seen choices being made that prioritise short-term and less transparent routes to securing funding and building capacity above cultivating healthy, equitable and resilient ways of working and building good collaborative relationships within, and between, the ECOLISE staff team, Council and member organisations. We understand the pressure to bring in resources, surrounded as we all are by unmet needs and huge unrealised potential, but - from our perspective - this has sometimes happened at the expense of ECOLISE's core mission and values.

In the past twelve months our concerns have become much sharper as we have witnessed, and heard about, instances where issues raised by members of the ECOLISE team have been ignored or overridden. We have been particularly worried by what we see as a consistent failure to pay attention when people of colour, women and/or people in roles with less structural power have made clear that the current culture of the organisation is not enabling them to thrive. We are well aware that we do not have a complete and accurate picture of all that has happened, but issues that feel important to us have been left without an adequate response for too long and we have seen relationships deteriorate and tensions increase as a result.

We are pleased that the ECOLISE General Assembly in April 2021 did not shy away from these issues, but at last made them more visible to the wider membership. Transition Network representatives were happy to support proposals from the Council for some form of reconciliation process and what was described as a participatory evaluation process through which members would be given an opportunity to help reshape the organisation.

A new Council was elected in April 2021 and we fully understand that the people who stepped into these challenging roles needed time to form as a group, find out more about the detail of ECOLISE's situation and start to identify next steps. However, the updates provided at the ECOLISE extraordinary General Assembly on 30 June did not yet give us confidence for the future.

Transition Network does not want to add to the pressure that ECOLISE Council members and staff are already experiencing. We're conscious that Transition Network is one of the better resourced and higher profile member organisations within ECOLISE and don't want to misuse that power to make demands about the outcome of processes which need to be shaped by a much broader range of voices. We hope it is helpful, however, for us to point to some of the patterns that cause us concern and to make clear that we cannot continue as active members of a network that is not directly and effectively addressing these issues.

From our perspective, ECOLISE is continuing to attempt to do too much simultaneously. We have no confidence in an organisational transformation process which starts from a place of broken trust, confusion and unclear accountabilities. We are very concerned that members of the ECOLISE staff team have been left disempowered by recent events, continue to have very challenging workloads and are not yet ready, emotionally or practically to contribute to the dismantling of current structures and a transition to something new. We very much hope that it will be possible for the entire ECOLISE team (Council and staff members) to build/repair relationships, find a stronger sense of common purpose and secure resources and capacity to commit to the planned organisational transformation process. We believe this foundational work needs to be done first before any significant further steps are taken towards restructuring the organisation. Without this, we see a risk that attempts to move on with the organisational transformation process will result in yet more conflict, confusion and wasted effort.



There are a number of individuals and organisations within ECOLISE with interesting experience of working with distributed, systemic governance. Transition Network is happy to continue to share what we learnt from our own transition to a [shared governance model](#) and it also feels very important to us that ECOLISE change processes are supported by individuals or organisations who are not directly part of the ECOLISE ecosystem. We are encouraged that there now seems to be recognition that resources will need to be secured to enable this to happen.

For now, we have decided that Transition Network will suspend our membership of ECOLISE. We will not participate in, or publicise, events and activities that are not focused on creating the conditions needed for ECOLISE to transform its governance and culture. We know this may well mean that we miss out on valuable opportunities to learn and collaborate, but it feels important that we do not collude with a system which is not currently modelling what we see as important principles relating to care, justice, inclusion and balance. We will stay in relationship with people who are part of the ECOLISE network, many of whom we count as friends, and we will do what we can, within our capacity, to support the changes they are working to bring about.

September, 2021