



Research for the understanding of European & Overseas Biodiversity

BiodivERsA Newsletter May 2011



BiodivERsA is supported by the European Commission within the 7th Framework Programme

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After the success of BiodivERsA's first phase, time has come to take a closer look at the 2010 to 2014 period, and even beyond. Indeed, funded by the FP7 and coordinated by the French foundation for biodiversity research - FRB. The second phase of BiodivERsA has started since November 2010 and intends to build on 5 years of cooperation to reach even more ambitious goals, which include amongst others building a shared research agenda, launching annual calls and moving the present EU-funded network towards an independent and sustained funding platform for biodiversity research in Europe. Throughout these newsletters, you will gain a privileged insight into how BiodivERsA intends to continue providing the European scientific communities with a strategic funding opportunity for transnational research projects of excellent scientific quality and responding to pressing policy-relevant questions on biodiversity.

In this edition, you will get a summary of discussions held in Lisbon on the 2nd February 2011 for the Kick-off meeting of BiodivERsA2, in case you missed this exciting event. You will also find some of the new partner's profiles, which joined BiodivERsA for its second phase: the Research Council of Lithuania (RCL, Lithuania), the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC, UK) and the German Research Foundation (DFG, Germany). The remaining new partner's profiles will be part of our next edition. You will also find an article showcasing BiodivERsA's intention to build a shared research agenda, giving a route-map for the next joint calls to be launched, and a spotlight on the "BiodivERsA 360°" movie, which presents the network and its added value as seen by some of the project leaders funded by BiodivERsA's 2008 call. Last but not least, the list of forthcoming meetings of the consortium is also available in this newsletter.

We wish you all a pleasant reading,

The BiodivERsA Consortium

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After more than 5 years of support to the European biodiversity research, BiodivERsA is starting a new phase aiming to transform the present network into a sustained and recurrent funding scheme for transnational biodiversity research projects in Europe. Last February, representatives of the 21 funding agencies members of BiodivERsA and guests invited for the occasion met in Lisbon, welcomed by the Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (FCT), for the Kick-off of the project's second phase. Among the participants, international experts in the field of biodiversity research, stakeholders and science-policy interface representatives were invited to celebrate the event and contribute to the discussions and debates.

The opportunity has been taken to assess the progress achieved during the first phase of BiodivERsA (2005-2010) and to present the project's new objectives, with the support and recommendations of the invited experts. Besides, some of the leaders of projects funded under BiodivERsA2008 joint call were here to share their experience with the assembly and to discuss the advantages of BiodivERsA's pan-European funding. Taking into account the EU strategies in terms of scientific research on biodiversity, representatives from the European Commission's DG Environment and DG Research contributed to the debates by sharing their opinion about BiodivERsA's added value in the European Research Area, and taking part into discussions about the relevance of a transnational

approach to research projects funding in the field of biodiversity. In addition, two roundtables brought together various international experts invited to discuss and debate about the existing and future interfaces aiming to bridge the gap between science and policy and between science and society.

New challenges for BiodivERsA's second phase have been highlighted throughout the day, notably the need to strengthen the interactions between stakeholders, policy-makers and scientists, with the development of mutual agendas at stake.

Keynote speakers discussed about the necessity to promote research on biodiversity, especially at the transnational level, for instance with European programs such as BiodivERsA. X. Le Roux (FRB), coordinator of BiodivERsA, presented an overview of BiodivERsA's achievements and renewed ambitions. The discussions insisted particularly on the development of a more structured and participative way to involve stakeholders in research projects. The necessity to enhance the cooperation between policy makers, business stakeholders, NGOs and scientists was pointed out with suggestions addressed by the speakers to encourage and create relevant channels to inform and advise policy decision-making. All of the interactions described represent crucial means to address the current societal challenges linked to biodiversity, supporting a greater cohesion between scientific

and policy agendas as well as in the implementation of trans-national strategies for biodiversity research. Following these comments, two roundtables lead by top-level experts of the field took place involving the representatives of major interfaces between science and policy, and between science and society, despite the fact these communities don't systematically share the same interests. Several exemplary projects were invited to present, demonstrating that the scientific community is able to cooperate with the various stakeholders of their research from policy level to the wider society. The discussions also lead to identifying ways to promote the capacity to build trusting relations or achieve an efficient and relevant stakeholder integration in research projects. In addition, experts invited and participants encouraged on several occasions the transdisciplinarity within scientific teams of biodiversity research projects. For example, some of the speakers remarked that researchers must pay attention to the socio-economic aspects and implications of biodiversity scenarios. It was recognised that encouraging a dialogue and a contribution of social and economic sciences is crucial for biodiversity research.

Finally, the Kick-off was an opportunity to reinforce the BiodivERsA consortium, enlarged to 21 member agencies, and it also determined which priorities are at stake for improving the project's progress towards becoming a sustained

platform and recurrent source of funding for transnational research in the field of biodiversity.

See the presentations given at BiodivERsA's kick off meeting [here](#).



BiodivERsA partners in Lisbon, 1st February 2011



Research Council of Lithuania

The Research Council of Lithuania (RCL), established in 1991, is a state budget institution that acts as an expert on science policy and as an advisory body to the Parliament of Lithuania (Seimas) and the Government on strategic issues of research and higher education.

The Research Council of Lithuania is directly responsible to the Parliament of Lithuania and the Government and financed from the budget of the Republic of Lithuania.

Our goals and objectives are to contribute to the science policy formation. We are involved in legislative issues of the Lithuanian science and studies system as well as in restructuring research governance and funding mechanisms in Lithuania.

The RCL is modelling the research system so that it efficiently contributes to the country's socio-economic development, benefits higher education, and enhances international co-operation. More than 30 calls for research proposals have been announced in 2010 in agreement with national and international research and exchange programmes. Lithuania is allocating its resources in order to make effective use of its funds and infrastructure. However, researchers are the core element

in the research and development system. Hence, a considerable attention has been given to the programmes that stimulate researchers' training, mobility and career development.

In addition to research expertise activity and the role of legislative regulation advisory, the RCL supervises a big part of programme funding. In average, the RCL launches more than 30 calls yearly to submit proposals for various research programmes in Lithuania.

RCL & BiodivERsA

As partner of the consortium, we will be able to share information on the existing national programmes and projects related to biodiversity. This in turn will help to pull the human, financial and infrastructural resources and launch joint calls for relevant trans-national research proposals. BiodivERsA is a real opportunity for implementing true trans-national

research projects of multidisciplinary nature and achieving synergetic effects as well as avoiding fragmentation and over financing. The agenda-setting mechanism, based on the continuously developed strategy that was discussed during the first BiodivERsA2 General Assembly seems to be a step towards linking existing international agendas with national and institutional priorities. We also hope for a fruitful cooperation among the partners by sharing the management practices. If to conclude, we have expectations for excellence in research as well as in research management.



The Research Council of Lithuania, Vilnius

Research Council of Lithuania

Lithuania & BiodivERsA

One of the Lithuanian research policy goals is to foster national and international cooperation among research institutions and catching up with established EU member states in terms of both the level and scope of research area.

A consortium like BiodivERsA is a great opportunity for Lithuanian scientific community to establish strong ties among researchers from different parts of Europe and even beyond Europe.

The research projects financed through BiodivERsA are of a manageable size allowing true interdisciplinary collaboration among researchers of various ways of thinking and with different expertises. For example, Lithuanian biodiversity researchers shall benefit from joining the international researchers groups with social scientists from other European countries.

This could become a fruitful cooperation, opening new perspectives for research results to be used as a basis for national and EU biodiversity policies. We hope that during coming calls, many Lithuanian scientists will find foreign partners and will submit interesting high quality projects to be funded.

By Asta Aleksandraviciene & Brigita Serafinaviciute



Asta Aleksandraviciene



Brigita Serafinaviciute

RCL is partner in Task 1.2 that consists in strengthening the network beyond BiodivERsA membership: integration of new member agencies.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee



JNCC is the public body that advises the UK Government and devolved administrations on UK-wide and international nature conservation.

Our work helps maintain and enrich biological diversity and conserve geological features. It also helps sustain natural systems, which provide the core "services" we all depend on like food, fresh water and clean air. In this way they contribute to economic growth and social well-being and are integral to sustainable development

Good policy-making, planning, development and risk management all depend on reliable, up-to-date information about biodiversity status and trends. Our role is to provide evidence, information and advice so decisions can be made that protect our natural resources and systems.

JNCC itself is a forum that brings together the UK's four country conservation bodies. We advise Government and a wide range of bodies to help join up policy and to deliver a strong and cost-effective evidence base by helping to see that the best possible return is achieved from investment in research and surveillance in the UK and internationally.

Our specific role is to work on nature conservation issues that affect the UK as a whole and internationally:

- As UK Government's nature conservation advisor in European and global fora we take forward issues from the four countries in the UK to inform policy development. We then provide support to ensure that European and international requirements are understood and implemented through national policies and actions within a devolved UK. We provide objective advice on the priorities for creating a cost-effective evidence-base for use across the UK and the investment required to make it happen. We devise strategies for collecting and using data and provide tools and mechanisms to enable others to make their data freely available.

- We play a key role in the UK's offshore marine nature conservation. That includes identifying, monitoring and advising on how protected areas are run and providing advice on the impacts of offshore industries.

JNCC & BiodivERsA

During the first round of BiodivERsA we were advisers to Defra. This is how we started to be involved in BiodivERsA. Today, by being part of the consortium, we are hoping to have an opportunity to shape the research agenda and meet the nature conservation priorities that have been identified for the UK.

We are keen to participate in the delivery of top quality science and to develop multidisciplinary consortia delivering high quality research.

BiodivERsA is also the opportunity to work in partnership and with a large number of projects in Europe at a large scale. The British scientific community will also benefit from exchange of knowledge and expertise.

By Elizabeth Moore & Helen Baker



Helen Baker

Elizabeth Moore



JNCC is the Task Leader of Task 2.1: Develop guidelines to support research project teams in stakeholder engagement. JNCC also is partner in the Task 1.2 and 5.1

www.jncc.gov.uk

German Research Foundation



The DFG is the self-governing organisation for science and research in Germany. It serves all branches of science and the humanities.

In organisational terms, the DFG is an association under private law. Its membership consists of German research universities, non-university research institutions, scientific associations and the Academies of Science and the Humanities.

We receive the large majority of our funds from the states and the Federal Government, which are represented in all Grants Committees. At the same time, the voting system and procedural regulations guarantee science-driven decisions.

In an international context, we are member of several scientific and science policy associations, thus contributing to international dialogue, cooperation among researchers, and to the formation of a European Research Area. The DFG supports projects from all scientific subject areas and especially promotes interdisciplinary cooperation between researchers. Our funding enables cooperation between researchers from all branches of the science system as well as the formation of internationally conspicuous priorities at universities and non-university research institutions.

We actively encourage international research cooperation: all of our programmes promote cooperation between scientists and academics in Germany and their colleagues abroad. It places special emphasis on collaboration in the scientific community in the European Research Area.

The DFG funds knowledge-oriented research, and it welcomes and supports the cooperation of science with those who apply science in all areas of social life. This includes the interaction of scientific findings with industry and institutions like museums, academies of music, hospitals, and in public-private partnerships.

DFG & BiodivERsA

DFG was approached by German scientists to participate in BiodivERsA. DFG then became a member of BiodivERsA and will actually participate in the new call. DFG participation in BiodivERsA will allow German scientists international cooperation in the field of biodiversity research in the framework of small projects, as opposed to the very large EU projects.

By Gaby Rerig & Wolfgang Weisser

DFG is partner in Task 1.2 that consists in strengthening the network beyond BiodivERsA membership: integration of new member agencies.

Wolfgang Weisser



Gaby Rerig

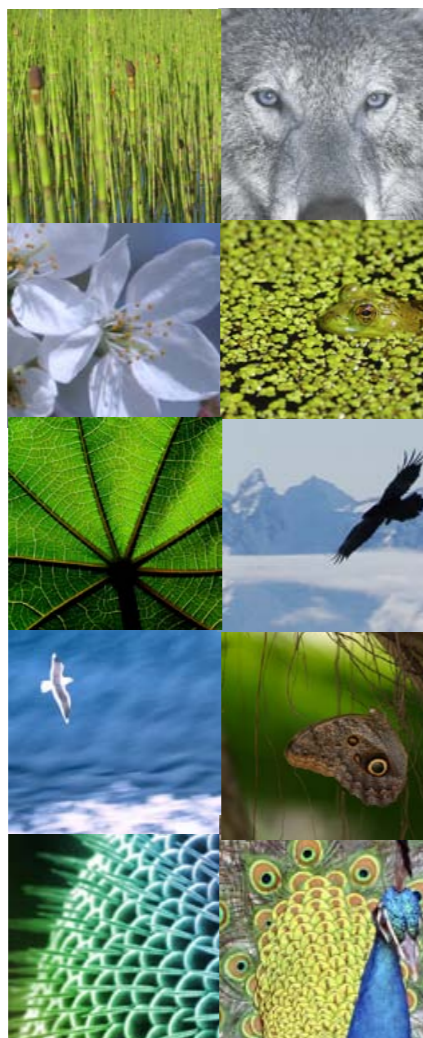
www.dfg.de

Focus on WP3 - a rolling agenda for annual joint calls

Strong of its past successes, the BiodivERsA consortium has prepared an ambitious work plan for its second phase, and the 2010-2014 period will be as decisive for the future of the network as it will be intense in collaboration. Amongst others, the third work package of the project deals with tasks that are at the core of this second phase, notably the development of a rolling agenda of common priorities for BiodivERsA partners and the development and implementation of joint calls for research projects on an annual basis.

In the past months, our German partner PT-DLR has worked with the consortium on a mechanism for the identification of common priorities, which enables the constitution of a shared BiodivERsA agenda for biodiversity research.

The first version of this agenda will be discussed in June 2011, leading to its online publication. The topics on this agenda will have been fed by each partner's priorities and the analysis of opportunities and shortcomings of the European biodiversity research landscape, enabling BiodivERsA to respond through its annual joint calls to pressing issues within the frame of current national and international policies and strategies. Furthermore, the agenda will be reviewed each year to guarantee its consistency with a very dynamic and changing research landscape and ensure it is most up-to-date in the light of recent knowledge and emerging questions.



Another major ambition in the second phase of BiodivERsA is to become a recurrent source of funding for biodiversity research, an objective that will be achieved through the annual launch of BiodivERsA joint calls.

Given the strength and quality of the European scientific community's response to its first joint call in 2008, which allowed the funding of 12

excellent transnational research projects for a total budget of over 14 million Euros, the BiodivERsA consortium has understood the need and relevance of a recurrent European-scale funding platform for biodiversity research. Proving its strong commitment to this ambition, the BiodivERsA consortium has already launched a new joint call in the earliest days of the second phase, with a thematic focus on biodiversity and ecosystem services, and for a total reserved budget of 11 million Euros. A total of 53 projects, representing 329 partners from 8 different countries, were submitted in April 2011. The evaluation procedure will be completed will be delivered in mid-2011. Clearly, the ambition of BiodivERsA here is not only to fund transnational research but also position itself as a sustained platform for a recurrent and strategic funding of biodiversity research at a European level.

BiodivERsA 360° is a video that promotes the BiodivERsA network, particularly through its major beneficiaries, the projects funded under the 2008 call. The relevance of the network is clearly highlighted in this short movie that offers a "hands-on" presentation of the key criteria of BiodivERsA calls, such as the added value of European scale research projects and the balance between scientific excellence and policy relevance.

The film features Birgit de Boissezon (DG Research, European Commission) discussing the EC view of an ERA-net for biodiversity research and Xavier Le Roux introduction, BiodivERsA coordinator. The contents then move towards concrete sequences of four funded projects presentations: RACE, Linktree, Ecocycles and BioMarKs. This includes filming the research in action (fieldwork, laboratory work, consortium discussions) and interviews with project coordinators.

RACE



The movie features the ins and outs of the RACE project: Risk Assessment of *Chytridiomycosis* to European Amphibian Biodiversity. The aim of RACE is to assess the impacts of an emerging fungal disease on some populations of amphibians in Europe, but also on the "wider" biodiversity. By monitoring, sampling, analyzing and assessing, scientists of the RACE project work all over Europe to understand the situation and develop a European-scale mitigation plan.

LinkTree

Linktree carries out its work in several



European forests where similar problems of dying trees because of climate change have been observed. Scientists study the potential for local adaptation (trees are dying but also regenerating at the same time), from the genes to the ecosystems. The observations concluded that under climate change, trees have two options: either adapt or migrate. The project's teams also study how genes react in nature, allowing them to eventually draw conclusions to better address the questions asked by policy makers or manager on the sustainability of European forests and the threat caused by climate change. LinkTree gives useful tools and a better understanding on how to manage forests in Europe under climate change.

Ecocycles



Ecocycles is a European collaborative research project that links science with policy to improve ecosystem conservation. The project is based on the analysis of the fluctuation of small herbivores populations, and their impact on their predator's populations, which are often endangered and protected species. The cross-border observation of these rodents and their predators leads to

several ground-breaking conclusions on their role in ecosystems and the impact of climate change in such a context. Ecocycles will contribute to high quality knowledge on Ecosystem functioning and provide robust scientific grounds for forest and species management across Europe.

BioMarKs



BioMarKs is a pioneering marine biodiversity project on protists. Protists are the ancestors of plants and animals and are different from bacteria and virus. They are very poorly known at the moment so BioMarKs is a real opportunity to better know their diversity and understand their role in the environment. The BioMarKs team carries out sampling in various areas in Europe (Norway, France, Spain, Italy), which offer very different environmental conditions in term of water acidity or pollution. The aim of the project is to better document the diversity of protists, for which very little is currently known despite their major role in global ecology. Indeed they are very complex organisms, with a great diversity of species, genes and metabolisms, and they are responsible for reallocating massive quantities of the planet's elements as oxygen and carbon. Their abundance and diversity is deemed of great importance to the pharmaceutical domain but also to get a better understanding of the Earth system as a whole.

UPCOMING...

MAY

WP3: Evaluation Committee

WP3: Steering Committee

Executive Board meeting, Paris

JUNE

WP1: Workshop on common agreement for database user feedback questionnaire

WP5: Workshop on BiodivERsA database

General Assembly, Paris

JULY

Pre-announcement of the 3rd BiodivERsA joint call



Thanks to:

Xavier Leroux, Frédéric Lemaître & Claire Fréour
Angélique Berhault
Asta Aleksandraviciene & Brigita Serafinaviciute
Helen Baker & Elizabeth Moore
Gaby Rerig & Wolfgang Weisser
for their active participation

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