

A Long-term Biodiversity, Ecosystem and Awareness Research Network
ALTER-Net
Proposal Summary Page

Strategic Objectives Addressed by the Network

This Network of Excellence will create, over a 5-year period, a durable European inter-disciplinary facility for long-term biodiversity and ecosystem research by achieving the following strategic objectives. In order of priority these are:

- I1 The formal integration of research capability currently existing in national centres of research excellence in biodiversity, ecosystem and social science to create a quasi-institute with a unique capacity to undertake the innovative research required to achieve an understanding of the dynamics and evolution of biodiversity on our continent and to support European Union policy assessment and development in the field of biodiversity.
- I2 The formal and substantive integration of environmental and socio-economic approaches to the research required to develop the policies and management tools needed to support the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.
- I3 The development of an integrated and harmonised network of multi-functional long-term ecosystem research platforms (LTER) to support the inter-disciplinary investigation of long-term processes related to biodiversity at relevant spatial and temporal scales.
- I4 The development of an innovative functional partnership between biodiversity research scientists, science communicators and permanent science-based visitor centres for public research and information awareness on biodiversity.
- I5 The integration of the knowledge from research into policy assessment and development processes through research/stakeholder fora, and research/policy platforms, such as the European Platform for Biodiversity Research (EPBRS).
- I6 The development of an agreed framework controlling the future development of a distributed data, information and knowledge management system enabling one-stop access to the information and tools for scientific use and to support public awareness and European policy related to Biodiversity.

Abstract

This Network of Excellence (NoE) will create a European long-term inter-disciplinary research facility for research on the complex relationship between ecosystems, biodiversity and society. It will provide research support for policy assessment and development on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the European Union, and a stable facility for information retrieval and reporting on biodiversity-related issues.

It will achieve this by implementing research, management and cultural changes within and between its component organisations, and through the development of integrated research agendas that will focus the research activities of its members on priority policy issues. The result will be a unique inter-disciplinary network linking a variety of stakeholders including research scientists, science communicators, policy makers and the public. In order to ensure durable integration of 25 partners from 17 countries, this NoE will build on 4 existing co-operative programmes that deal with complementary aspects of biodiversity research. These are PEER/CONNECT, ILTER, ECSITE and ECNC.

A novel approach to integration of ecological and socio-environmental methodologies will be developed, recognising the fact that biodiversity research should be done only in the context of ecosystems and their long-term dynamics. To achieve this, the core research undertaken by the NoE will be structured around a common framework based on the Drivers-Pressures-State-Impact-Response (DPSIR) model. This framework will ensure that research contributes directly to our understanding of the inter-relationship between biodiversity and the services it provides to society, and vice versa. The framework, and the research it supports, will also facilitate the long-term institutional changes that will be necessary to accomplish the ALTER-net objectives for durable integration.