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SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

# newsletter, july 2012

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## Pre-Announcement of the 2012–2013 call for proposals

## 2011–2012 call for proposals results

## Updated strategic agenda

# From the Coordinator

First of all, congratulations! Congratulations to the nine teams that are embarking on their BiodivERsA projects, which are funded in response to the **2011–2012 call for proposals on "Biodiversity Dynamics: Developing Scenarios, Identifying Tipping Points, and Improving Resilience"** (page 4). It is an exciting time for these researchers who are tackling such important issues and will further contribute to biodiversity knowledge. Congratulations to the consortium's partners and evaluation committee members: 41 full proposals were reviewed through an independant and high quality evaluation process. The submitted projects covered a wide range of topics, and the nine top projects will be funded, for close to 8.5 M€. Congratulations to BiodivERsA that now launches annual calls for proposals based on a common, strategic agenda (page 5), and thus efficiently integrates biodiversty research at the European scale.

In this context, BiodivERsA's partners are pleased to pre-announce their **2012–2013 call for proposals on «Invasive species and biological invasions,»** with a particular focus on alien invasive species (page 3). This call reflects the high priority of this topic for the partners along its importance identified in many international research strategies and policies. Indeed, invasive species are rapidly spreading in time of globalisation practices as well as of climate and environmental changes. The impact of these species' spread is still poorly understood. We need more information on their current and future statuses, associated mechanims and drivers, and their impacts over the short and long-terms. Addressing this issue should mobilise a large range of natural sciences as well as social sciences. Indeed, collaboration within cross-disciplinary teams is often needed to properly understand and ultimately propose guidelines to respond to the adverse effects of biological invasions on ecosystems and socio-ecosystems. We expect the results of such research to be of high relevance for policy makers who need to address the issues associated with invasive species.

As the results of the first projects funded by BiodivErsA start to be available, sometimes published in top-ranking journals (pages 8–9), it is now important to further elaborate and implement our **strategy for the dissemination of these results** (page 6). BiodivERsA's mission is not only to support and integrate the field of biodiversity research in Europe but also to make the new knowlegde understood by policy-makers and other stakeholders who can then make decisions based on state-of-the-art science. The consortium is setting its efforts toward this goal, and will for instance develop policy briefs targeting decision-makers, government officers, politicians, and media (page 6).

**Over the 2010–2014 period, BiodivERsA's goal is to support European biodiversity research for ca. 35M€, which represents at least one quarter of the funding devoted to biodiversity through the 'Environment' theme of the EC Framework Programme over the same period.** BiodivERsA therefore constitutes a solid network that allows national agencies to collectively fund and integrate biodiversity research on a pan-European scale. We have much to look forward to as we start having the scientific results from all these efforts showing the importance of biodiversity in itself and in our lives.

Xavier Le Roux, BiodivERsA's Coordinator

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# Pre-Announcement of the 2012–2013 Call for Proposals:
## Topic, Timing and Possible Participating Countries

Forthcoming BiodivERsA Pan-European call for research proposals on:

**«Invasive Species and biological invasions»**

Following the yearly update of their common agenda to support European biodiversity research (see BiodivERsA website and related article in this newsletter), the BiodivERsA partners have decided to launch their fourth joint call for research proposals on **Invasive species and biological invasions** with a focus on alien invasive species, planned to be **launched in early November 2012, with a pre-submission date of December 2012, and a full proposal submission date in mid-February 2013.**

Scientific teams will be invited to form transnational research consortia with teams from at least two other countries also participating in the call.

The research proposals will be evaluated across **criteria of scientific excellence and policy relevance.** It is also expected that the **pan-European dimension** of the projects will provide added value to the research carried out.

Countries that expressed a preliminary interest in participating in the call (i.e. with funding available) are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and Turkey.

This pre-announcement will be updated regularly on the BiodivERsA web site (www.biodiversa.org) until the publication date of the call to inform potential applicants on the scientific themes of the call and to confirm the participation of countries.

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# Results from the 3rd BiodivERsA call (2011-2012)

## "Biodiversity Dynamics: Developing Scenarios, Identifying Tipping Points, and Improving Resilience"

With the goal of launching annual calls for research proposals to support biodiversity research and policy at the European level, BiodivERsA launched in November 2011 its third joint call on "Biodiversity dynamics: developing scenarios, identifying tipping points and improving resilience of ecosystems". This call addressed a topic at the forefront of the biodiversity field, and was organised around the three following themes:

- Developing integrated biodiversity scenarios
- Understanding and predicting biodiversity resilience and tipping points
- Decision support for biodiversity policy and management

41 full proposals were evaluated, and partners proposed to fund the top nine research projects, all excellent in terms of science quality and policy relevance. The total funding amount will be close to 8.5 M€. The nine selected projects are:

- **BUFFER:** Partially protected areas as buffers to increase the linked social-ecological resilience in coastal ecosystems. Participating countries: FR (coordinator), NO, PT, SE

- **CoForTips:** Congo basin forests: tipping points for biodiversity conservation and resilience of forested social and ecological systems. Participating countries: FR (coordinator), AT, BE.

- **EC21C:** European Conservation for the 21st Century. Participating countries: PT (coordinator), FR, DE, SE.

- **FISHCON:** Biodiversity scenarios for fragmented landscapes; freshwater connectivity and the future of fish diversity. Participating countries: NO (coordinator), DE, SE

- **LIMNOTIP:** Biodiversity dynamics and tipping points in our future freshwater ecosystems. Participating countries: SE (coordinator), NO, AT, DE

- **REGARDS:** Resilience of marginal grasslands and biodiversity management decision support.Participating countries: FR (coordinator), DE, AT, BE, NO

- **SIGNAL:** European gradients of resilience in the face of climate extremes.Participating countries: DE (coordinator), BE, BG, FR

- **TIPPINGPOND:** Tipping points, biodiversity, resilience and ecosystem services: Ponds as model systems. Participating countries: BE (coordinator), DE, FR, SE

- **TipTree:** Scenarios for forest biodiversity dynamics under global change in Europe: Identifying micro-evolutionary scale tipping points. Participating countries: FR (coordinator), DE, SE

These pan-European projects aim at developing biodiversity scenarios and identifying resilience capacity and tipping points across a variety of environments, including forests, grasslands and freshwater ecosystems. Projects' outputs will be useful to policy makers and other stakeholders to improve or maintain the resilience of these ecosystems. **Further information, including abstracts and participating countries, can be found on the BiodivERsA's website (www.biodiversa.org).**

# BiodivERsA strategic agenda to support European biodiversity research: the 2012 update

Since 2010, the BiodivERsA network has been developing a strategic vision to better identify the pressing issues in the field of biodiversity research. In 2011, this resulted in the development of BiodivERsA's "common rolling agenda" which is now updated every year. This agenda keeps BiodivERsA's partners abreast of the biodiversity research that is needed to respond to the major societal challenges relating to biodiversity and ecosystem services. The 2012 update of the agenda is built upon research and biodiversity strategies and priorities that exist at agency, national and international levels, allowing the identification of common thematic priorities among BiodivERsA partners. These thematic priorities have been divided in three groups, of which the first two are described below :

## > Priority:

- > Biodiversity and ecosystem services, and their valuation (addressed in the 2010-2011 call)
- > Biodiversity and policy: how to improve development and implementation of European biodiversity protection
- > Biodiversity dynamics: developing scenarios, identifying tipping points, and improving resilience (addressed in the 2011–2012 call)
- > Invasive species and biological invasions, with a particular focus on alien invasive species (forthcoming 2012–2013 call)
- > Novel approaches to better understand the role of biodiversity in ecosystem functioning

## > High interest:

- > Biodiversity and climate change
- > Conserving traditionally managed European habitats and landscapes
- > From soil biodiversity to soil functioning and services in a global change context
- > Improvement of habitats connectivity, functioning green infrastructure, diversifying landscapes

## Three BiodivERsA reports to come

Apart from developing annual joint calls, BiodivERsA partners pursue a set of other activities which include mapping and horizon scanning activities and the development of best practices and guidelines to promote and enhance the profile of pan-European biodiversity research. In this context, three BiodivERsA reports are currently being developed, two of which will become available on the BiodivERsA website over the summer (www.biodiversa.org):

- The **"Synthesis of the national and national funding agencies' strategies and priorities for biodiversity research within Europe"** and the **"BiodivERsA report on international strategies for biodiversity research"** will offer a horizon scan of the European-wide and international landscape in which BiodivERsA evolves.

- The report **"Stakeholder engagement in biodiversity research projects: current state-of-the-art and guidelines"** analyses the way stakeholders are engaged in biodiversity research projects and also provides guidance for research teams responding to BiodivERsA calls on how to involve stakeholders in their research projects.

## Dissemination mechanisms for BiodivERsA projects results

As the results of the first funded projects become available, it is part of BiodivERsA's mission to have an effective dissemination strategy. The goal is that these results get well-known to scientists as well as to e.g., government officers and policy-makers, biodiversity managers, business, farmers organizations, and local authorities. Four important aspects have been identified to disseminate the new knowledge emanating from the research projects, including their implications:

- Obviously, papers written by the scientists for publication in peer-reviewed international scientific journals.

- Publications by the scientists (perhaps with co-authoring writers/journalists) in a popularized form, primarily in the languages of the countries or regions where the project has been carried out. The targeted audiences include laymen, media, politicians, and managers.

- Production by BiodivERsA of summarized information in the format of "policy briefs." This BiodivERsA initiative will be carried out thanks to professional writers and knowledge brokerers who are experienced in dissemination and synthesis of research findings to decision- and policy-makers. These writers will work in cooperation with the scientists. The target audience of the policy-briefs includes decision-makers at high and low levels, government officers, politicians, a range of stakeholders and the media. BiodivERsA has just selected three funded projects that reach an end in late 2012 and early 2013 that are particularly adequate to develop policy briefs.

# Kick-off meeting for the 2010-2011 projects
## Stockholm, Sweden, May 31-June 1, 2012

BiodivERsA's second joint call (2010-2012) on **"Biodiversity and ecosystem services and their valuation"** funded **seven research projects for a total of €9.5 millions.** Detailed information on this call, its implementation and first results are presented in the brochure "BiodivERsA 2010-2011 call for proposals: Biodiversity and ecosystem services, their valuation," which can be downloaded from the BiodivERsA website.

During the kick-off meeting in Sweden (May 31 and June 1, 2012, in Stockholm, Sweden), three keynote speakers provided comprehensive views on hot issues linked to the topic of this BiodivERsA call:

- ***Ecosystem service assessment is reaching businesses and policy, so where are the next challenges for science?*** by Wolfgang Cramer (Senior Scientist, Mediterranean Institute for Biodiversity and Ecology IMBE, Aix-en-Provence, France). Following main scientific contributions in modelling forest dynamics under climate change, Wolfgang Cramer now seeks a comprehensive understanding of biosphere dynamics at the global and continental scale. This accounts for natural and human disturbances. He is a contributor in many roles to the IPCC and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. He was also member of the scientific evaluation committee in the selection procedure of the 2010–2011 BiodivERsA Call.

- ***The economics of natural resource management and environmental policies*** by Carl Folke (Science director of the Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stokholm, Sweden). Carl Folke has extensive experience in cross-disciplinary collaborations between natural and social scientists. He has worked with ecosystem dynamics and services as well as with the social and economic dimensions of ecosystem management. He explores proactive measures to manage resilience.

- ***Strengthening the global science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services: lessons from the establishment of IPBES*** by Lars Berg (Swedish Ministry of Environment, Sweden). Lars Berg has been the Secretary of the Swedish National Scientific Council on Biological Diversity from 2002 to 2007. He has been participating in the National Focal Point for the Convention on Biological Diversity (Ministry of Environment) since 2007, and was the Head of the Swedish delegation to IPBES consultation meetings (2008–2012).

**All presentations can be downloaded from the BiodivERsA site.**

Each of the project coordinators was then given the opportunity to present their project, followed by a brief discussion. These include:

- **APPEAL -** Assessment and valuation of pest suppression potential through biological control in European agricultural landscapes. Presented by **Mattias Jonsson,** project PI (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, SLU, SE)

- **CONNECT -** Linking biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services: Advancing insights in tradeoffs and synergies between biodiversity, ecosystem functioning and ecosystem service values for improved integrated biodiversity policy. Presented by **Peter Verburg** (Institute for Environmental Studies, VU University of Amsterdam, NL)

- **FarmLand –** European network on farmland heterogeneity, biodiversity and ecosystem services. Presented by **Jean-Louis Martin,** project PI (CNRS-CEFE, Montpellier, FR)

- **INVALUABLE –** Integrating valuations, markets and policies for biodiversity and ecosystem services. Presented by **Romain Pirard**, project PI (IDDRI, FR)

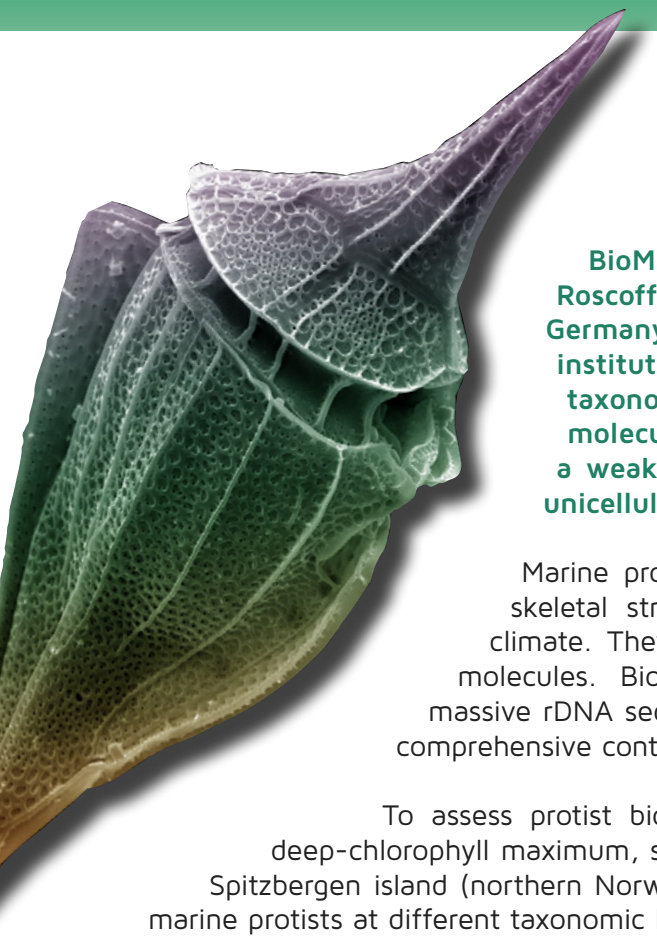
- **SmallFOREST –** Biodiversity and ecosystem services of small forest fragments in European landscapes. Presented by **Guillaume Decocq,** project PI (Jules Verne University of Picardie, Amiens, FR)

- **Soil Crust InterNational (SCIN) –** Understanding and valuing biological soil protection of disturbed and open land surfaces. Presented by **Allan Green,** project participant (Complutense University Madrid, ES)

- **URBES –** Urban biodiversity and ecosystem services. Presented by **Thomas Elmquist,** project PI (Stockholm Resilience Centre, SE)

*Network partners, May 2012, Stockholm, Sweden*

# Results from two 2008 BiodivERsA projects published in ***Nature***



## The BioMarKs project: Biodiversity of marine Eukaryotes

**BioMarKs (www.biomarks.eu) is lead by C. de Vargas (CNRS, Roscoff, France) and integrates 7 EU research institutes from France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom as well as a research institution from Norway and 30 EU experts in eukaryotic microbial taxonomy and evolution, marine biology and ecology, genomics and molecular biology, as well as marine economy and policy. It assesses a weakly explored biodiversity compartment in the biosphere: the unicellular eukaryotes.**

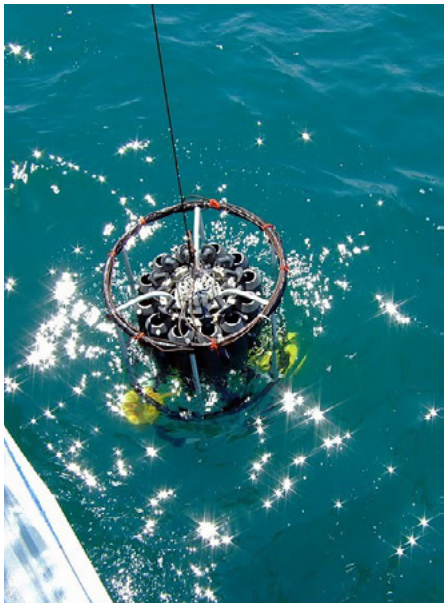
Marine protists live in huge populations with rapid turnover. They build skeletal structures which profoundly impact biogeochemical cycles and climate. They have complex genomes with thousands of genes producing molecules. BioMarKs reassessed coastal marine protist biodiversity using massive rDNA sequencing integrated into a network of taxonomic expertise and comprehensive contextual phenotypic and environmental metadata.

To assess protist biodiversity, BioMarks scientists sampled 3 depths (subsurface, deep-chlorophyll maximum, surface sediment) in 9 European Union coastal water sites from Spitzbergen island (northern Norway) to the Black Sea. Both diversity and abundance/activity of marine protists at different taxonomic levels were analysed.

A suite of physical, chemical, and biological metadata from the same samples allowed statistical analyses of the ecological forces shaping marine protist biodiversity. Microscopy analyses allowed anchoring of the genetic data into high quality phenotypic, phylogenetic, and ecological quantative frameworks.

The analyses revealed that differentially calcified species and morphotypes are distributed in the ocean according to carbonate chemistry. A substantial impact on the marine carbon cycle might be expected upon extrapolation of this correlation to predicted ocean acidification in the future. However, the discovery of a heavily calcified Emiliania huxleyi morphotype in modern waters with low pH highlights the complexity of assemblage-level responses to environmental forcing factors.

BioMarks participants estimated the global ocean eukaryotic genomic diversity, and laid the foundation for taxonomically controlled eukaryotic metagenomics. The database created during the project is to become a reference for scientists and end-users for years. In addition, the immense and unexplored repertoire of protist genes will be potentially an outstanding source of innovation for green energies, pharmaceutics, cosmetics, and nanotechnology for the next years. Ultimately, the BioMarKs database and associated tools will be of direct relevance in several EU legislative framework, including: marine transport regulation, coastal management and tourism, and sea food safety.



**Reference:** L. Beaufort, I. Probert, T. de Garidel-Thoron, E. M. Bendif, D. Ruiz-Pino, N. Metzl, C. Goyet, N. Buchet, P. Coupel, M. Grelaud, B. Rost, R. E. M. Rickaby & C. de Vargas in *Nature*, 83, Vol. 476, August 2011
**To view the entire article:** http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v476/n7358/fig_tab/nature10295_F1.html

**While most of the 12 projects funded thanks to the 2008 BiodivERsA call will reach an end in late 2012 or early 2013, they are now providing and disseminating key results and important new knowledge. Below, we focus on two scientific articles produced by two of these projects, which were published in the journal *Nature* during the last twelve months.**


# The RACE project: How emerging pathogens threaten natural ecosystems and food security

**RACE (www.bd-maps.eu/index.php) is lead by M. Fisher (Imperial College, London, UK) and integrates 6 EU research institutes (France, Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom) with a research institution from Switzerland. They include some 30 EU experts in amphibian disease, amphibian population, and epidemiology research.**

RACE studies how an emerging infectious disease (the fungus Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis (Bd)) is widely destructive to global amphibian biodiversity, and assesses the risk that Bd poses to European amphibians. The project is developing tools and protocols to enable surveillance of Bd across Europe. RACE further studies situations where in situ mitigation and captive-breeding conservation efforts are most necessary to reduce the effects of chytridiomycosis, to halt the further spread of the pathogen and to preserve European amphibian biodiversity. These findings will be formalised into a European Threat Abatement Plan (ETAP).

Meta-analysis and modelling by RACE has shown that, in the past two decades an increasing number of virulent infectious diseases in natural populations and managed landscapes has occurred. In both animals and plants, an unprecedented number of fungal and fungal-like (oomycete) diseases are causing some of the most severe die-offs and extinctions ever witnessed in wild species, and are jeopardizing food security. In their paper recently published in the journal Nature, the participants of the BiodiovERsA RACE project argue that new fungal infections will cause increasing attrition of biodiversity, with wider implications for human and ecosystem health, unless steps are taken to tighten biosecurity worldwide. The monitoring of fungal inocula in wild populations should be the utmost priority and tighter control of international trade in biological material must be imposed, and with considerable haste. Inadequate biosecurity will mean that new fungal emerging infectious diseases and virulent races will emerge at an increasingly destructive rate. In addition to better global monitoring and control, attention must also be turned to increasing our understanding of the interactions between hosts, pathogens and the environment, across regional and global scales. Integrated approaches encompassing theoretical and practical epidemiology, climate forecasting, genomic surveillance and monitoring molecular evolution are needed. These should be facilitated by scientists from currently disparate research fields entering into regular global discussions to develop clear and urgent strategies for working towards the elusive magic bullet for emerging fungal diseases: effective prevention and timely control.

**Reference:** Fisher M.C. (project PI), D.A. Henk, C. J. Briggs, J. S. Brownstein, L. C. Madoff, S. L. McCraw & S. J. Gurr Emerging fungal threats to animal, plant and ecosystem health, *Nature* 484, 186–194 (12 April 2012)
**To view the entire article:** http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v484/n7393/full/nature10947.html


# A BiodivERsA Staff Exchange in Paris: Identify and use best practices to support pan-European biodiversity research

## (March 14–15, 2012)

Staff exchanges represent very efficient tools for completing one of the project objectives that aims at **promoting networking within the consortium,** especially by integrating new funding agencies into the BiodivERsA network. During the first phase of BiodivERsA (2005–2010), nine staff exchanges were held, all contributing to a stronger network, better cooperation spirit, and insight on the functioning of other BiodivERsA partner organisations. Given integration of six new organisations into the BiodivERsA consortium, there was a clear need for new staff exchanges.

During one and a half day in mid-March 2012, the French Foundation for Research on Biodiversity (**FRB**) hosted a staff exchange with support from the Bulgarian National Science Fund (**BNSF**). Indeed, BNSF is responsible for organising three to four staff exchanges among partners of the network. In addition to BNSF and FRB staff, representatives of five other BiodivERsA partner organisations participated to this staff exchange: the Estonian Research Council (**ETAG**), the Deutsch Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), the Research Council of Lithuania (**RCL**), the French National Agency for Research (**ANR**) and the French Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development, Transport and Housing (**MEDDTL**).

During the meeting, each partner got the opportunity to present its organisation, with particular focus on how they approach the science-society interface. This also offered insights into the different contexts that surround their institutions' work and into their respective goals and strategies to further promote and develop the biodiversity field. In addition, FRB organised talks about its stakeholders advisory council (COS) and flagship programmes (which strongly embed the science-society cooperation in research projects), and their approach to effectively interface both worlds. The participants were also offered a curated tour of the collections of the **Cité de la Musique,** a national museum dedicated to instruments and musicology, with which the FRB participated in a project on biodiversity and the making of musical instruments. These music instruments are good examples of the interactions between cultural practices and biodiversity resources.

This meeting provided also a great opportunity for some informal activities and discussions, and for partners to know each other better. Other staff exchanges are being planned in the forthcoming months to continue this networking activity, and to further support biodiversity collaborations and research funding in an even more efficient way.

# French National Research Agency (ANR)

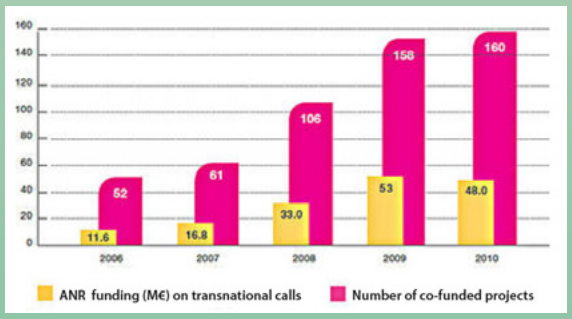
The ANR (French National Research Agency) is the main research funding organisation in France. The Agency was established by the French government in 2005 to fund research projects, based on competitive schemes. It gives researchers the best opportunities to realise their projects and pave the way for groundbreaking new knowledge. The role of the Agency is to bring more flexibility to the French research system, foster new dynamics and devise cutting edge-strategies for acquiring new knowledge. By identifying priority areas and fostering public-private collaborations, the ANR also aims at enhancing the general level of competitiveness of both the French research system and the French economy. Since its creation, the Agency's budget has been growing, stabilising at around €854 M in 2010. 6390 applications were received and evaluated in 2010, and 1373 of them were funded.

ANR funds are available in all scientific fields, for both fundamental and industrial research and for public research organisations as well as private companies (through public/private partnerships). With a peer review process matching the highest international standards, ANR's general goal is to fund excellent research, while also facilitating innovation and interdisciplinary work and developing European and international collaborations.

The ANR is constantly attentive to the scientific community. Indeed, consulting the scientific community each year on the future needs in both fundamental and applied research is one of the agency's priorities. The ANR's goal is to identify themes which can respond not only to societal, environmental and economic needs, but also to technological and scientific challenges, through a broad consultation process.

In order to enrich its portfolio of thematic programmes with the most strategic considerations, the Agency therefore implements a continuous foresight and programme planning process in which it consults the widest possible range of national and international stakeholders.
ANR's programmes are organised in 6 thematic priorities:

- Environment and Biological Resources
- Engineering, Processes and Security
- Health and Biology
- Information and Communication Sciences and Technologies
- Sustainable Energy
- Social Sciences and Humanities




Developing European and international collaboration is one of the ANR's priorities. By accelerating and deepening the collaborations initiated by French scientists and research organisations where high-level communities exist, ANR's international policy aims at supporting French research teams to optimise their position in the worldwide competition. Through its policy of European cooperation, the ANR contributes actively to the construction of the European Research Area. Furthermore, the agency intends to develop strategic partnerships with emerging countries in the global scene.

ANR has a key role in BiodivERsA, since it is the leader of the workpackage "Joint funding activities in support of an ERA on biodiversity." The ANR also implemented the BiodivERsA 2010–2011 joint call. ANR has spent over €4 millions to support French research teams participating in the pan-European projects selected in the context of the last two BiodivERsA calls.

**www.agence-nationale-recherche.fr/**

# Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT)

The Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) is Portugal's main funding agency for research, presently under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and Science (MEC). Created in 1997, its mission is to promote the advancement of scientific and technological knowledge in Portugal as a means to improve overall education, health, environment and quality of life.

FCT's funding is structured around the following schemes:

- Promotion of training and career development - fellowships and scholarships (mainly for PhD, Post-doctoral researchers and PhD in industry)
- Support of research centers (institutional funding)
- Support of infrastructures
- Promotion and development of scientific activity (research projects)
- Diffusion of scientific culture

The FCT fulfills its mission by evaluating and funding research proposals in the domains of Life and Health Sciences, Exact Sciences and Engineering, Natural and Environmental Sciences, and Social Sciences and Humanities. Every year, competitive proposals presented by educational institutions, companies, research teams or individuals receive funding on the basis of independent evaluations of merit. The FCT funds over 3,000 projects in different scientific domains and more than 4,000 research fellowships for Masters, PhD and Post-doctoral studies.

Cooperation is also a vital aspect of the FCT's activities, namely the development of partnerships with universities and other public and private institutions, both at national and international level. As an example, since 2004 the FCT has been participating in 50 ERA NET initiatives in different thematic areas.

In the last 5 years, over 100 research projects in biodiversity received funding from the FCT, awarding a total of around €15 millions to biodiversity research. In this particular field, funding is also attributed through co-operation agreements and other forms of partnerships with universities as well as other public and private research institutions, totally or partially dedicated to biodiversity research.

One of the most relevant aspects of the participation of FCT in BiodivERsA is the close participation and co-ownership of biodiversity research promoting initiatives between several international funding organizations. Each national agency is given the opportunity to promote topics of national relevance within its own biodiversity research agenda, therefore enabling to jointly cross national boundaries. The importance of the FCT involvement in BiodivERsA was reflected in the popularity of the ERA-NET recent call, with 13 eligible projects with Portuguese participation among 41 submitted proposals. The FCT is the leader of the work package "Strengthening and Expanding the Network: Integrating New partners and Improving Processes" of BiodivERsA.

FCT

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www.fct.pt/

# The Hungarian Ministry Of Rural Development (Vidékfejlesztési Minisztérium – VM)

The Ministry of Rural Development of Hungary (VM), currently lead by Dr. Sándor Fazekas, is responsible for a range of specialised areas. The Ministry's main goals are the sustainability and management of natural resources, the diversity of rural land use, and rural development.

Improving quality of life for rural communities and increasing the competitiveness of the agricultural, food production and rural economies are basic preconditions for improving the competitiveness of the Hungarian economy as a whole. This goal requires a reinforcement of the rural and local economies and communities, as well as the expansion of job opportunities and income generation.

Recent natural disasters are also of great concern for the Ministry and it has become vital to develop the central coordination of programmes, systems and institutions aimed at flood damage prevention and water/drainage management. The environmental protection and the preservation of our natural assets are also key priorities.

The Ministry also formulates government measures that relate to rural development, and supervises food retail chains, environmental protection, and agricultural economy. It creates the conditions for the safe and high-quality production and distribution of food products.

All these objectives can only be realised if the expertise and research areas of each field are further developed. This includes research and innovation to form the intellectual infrastructure, as well as the creation and direction of conditions for research experts and adult education. Another requirement is the promotion of the relations between various specialist areas. Another goal of VM is the exchange of experience, and – in parallel with these – the broadening of dialogue within society.

In 2005, the Hungarian Ministry of Rural Development joined BiodivERsA's consortium to broaden its research activity at the European level and to foster transborder collaborations that are highly relevant to the above endeavors. In particular, VM leads the Task 1.1: Collection of Information and Improvement of the Database of the BiodivERsA Project.

**www.vm.gov.hu/main.php?folderID=945**

# BiodivERsA's Partners

- Fondation pour la Recherche sur la Biodiversité, FRANCE, *Coordinator*
- Fonds zur Forderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung, AUSTRIA
- Belgian Federal Science Policy Office, BELGIUM
- Bulgarian National Science Fund, BULGARIA
- Estonian Research Council, ESTONIA
- Agence Nationale de la Recherche, FRANCE
- Ministère de l'écologie, du développement durable et de l'énergie, FRANCE
- Projektträger im Deutschen Zentrum für Luft-und Raumfahrt e. V., GERMANY
- Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, GERMANY
- Ministry of Rural Development (Videkfejleszetesi Minisztérium), HUNGARY
- Research Council of Lithuania, LITHUANIA
- Nederlandse organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek, THE NETHERLANDS
- Research Council of Norway, NORWAY
- Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, PORTUGAL
- Ministerio de Economia y Competitividad, SPAIN
- Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning, SWEDEN
- Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, SWEDEN
- Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock, TURKEY
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, UNITED KINGDOM
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee, UNITED KINGDOM
- Natural Environment Research Council, UNITED KINGDOM

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