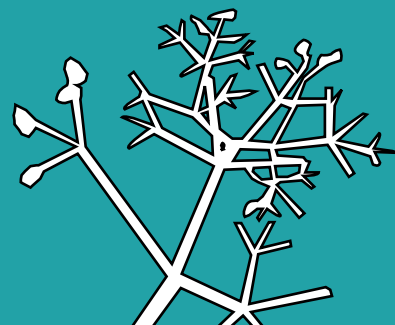
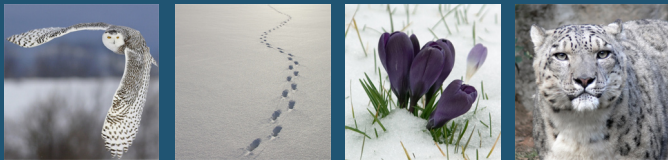
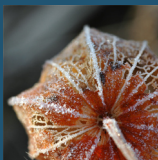
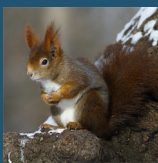


Newsletter #1

January 2007

<http://www.e-taxonomy.eu>



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Toward the second year of EDIT

Ten months into its work plan with two months to go before the end of the first reporting period, EDIT is developing progressively toward its general objective of sustainable integration of taxonomic activities, and the Joint Programme of Activities (JPA) and budget for the next eighteen months have now to be established.

This first period has allowed the establishment of the functional structure. Joint work has progressed without noticeable deviation from the initial programme of activities in most work packages, and the management structure is now operational. In the forthcoming year workshops and meetings will be more open than in the first period, when they have been focused in internal organization, allowing better communication and exchange. Hopefully common field work will start

in the summer 2007, and the first results of the process of elaboration of informatics tools will become apparent. In accordance with the excellent report from our Scientific Advisory Council (SAC), which has been endorsed by the Board of Directors (BoD) of EDIT members institutions, the priority for the second period should be to improve the interactions at all levels, from work package to individual level, to develop internal communication with the objective to increase appropriation of EDIT by researchers and their involvement, and to develop external communication to make the community at large and stakeholders aware of EDIT and of the possibilities for interactions.

The challenge of EDIT is to change how taxonomists and taxonomic institutions see themselves and interact with society. EDIT is the property of all of us, and must become our common tool to improve the quality and impact of our scientific domain.

Pr. Simon Tillier
EDIT project leader



EDIT on the Internet

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The World Wide Web is a powerful tool for dissemination of information and for education.

Since the end of last year, EDIT main website (<http://www.e-taxonomy.eu>) is fully functional.

Daily updated, it is dedicated to provide information about the consortium as well as spreading the latest news about the network. It is the place where EDIT members will find all the network related documents: guidelines, reports, events programmes.

EDIT website is also intended to become a useful cooperative tool. On this account, many of its new features have been implemented recently (e.g. discussion boards, agenda, advanced search engine) and many others will be available soon.

The EDIT website will keep on evolving during the next months and in order to better fit the users' needs, any suggestions that may help to improve it are welcome.

Santo 2006

Last year EDIT participated in "Santo 2006", the largest international scientific expedition ever conducted. From August to December 2006, more than 160 scientists from 25 countries gathered on Espiritu Santo, a rugged island in the South Pacific, in order to document the fauna and flora of this isolated area.

Thousands of species have been collected, and will now be identified, and studied. A large number has been collected and stored with techniques allowing later DNA barcoding.

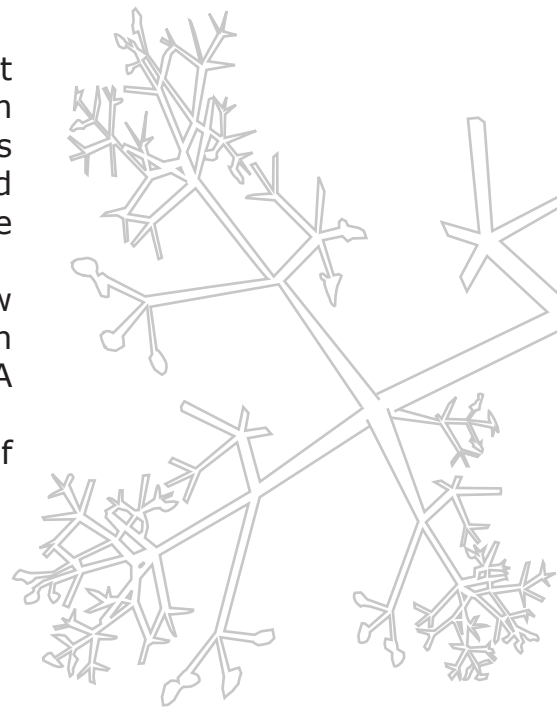
A first official report will be released by the end of January (<http://www.santo2006.org>).

Scientific Advisory Council first meeting

Constituted in July 2006, the network SAC is composed of external scientists, stakeholders and users from European and other key institutions and agencies. It is intended to provide advice to the decision making bodies of the consortium as well as to evaluate the progress made by EDIT.

The first meeting of the SAC was held at the National Museum of Natural History in Paris on the 14th of November.

Its report has been discussed and endorsed by the Board of Directors in view of the Joint Programme of Activities of the second reporting period, starting on the 1st of March 2007.

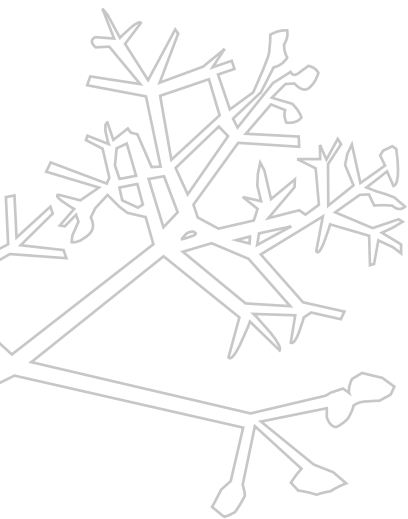


New workpackages' subsites

The purpose of the EDIT main website is to act as an informative tool in order to give an overview of the network's background, aims and organization. Like EDIT itself, the web site is distributed - the server and site managed directly by the Network Office and some work package leaders' institution have set up work package or activity specific websites. These sites are required to use the official EDIT layout, and their URLs must be in the form <http://wpX.e-taxonomy.eu> (*for more informations, please contact cavicchioli@mnhn.fr*)

So far, two workpackages have set up their own subsites: WP5 dedicated to the Internet Platform for Cybertaxonomy (<http://wp5.e-taxonomy.eu>) and WP7 on Inventories as a baseline for conservation (<http://wp5.e-taxonomy.eu>). In addition to advanced information about the Internet Platform for Cybertaxonomy, the WP5 subsite includes a development wiki and blog to ease interactions between developers and EDIT partners.

The WP7 subsite, although being rather basic for the moment, is intended to extend soon and to become a forum with interactive parts, databases, distribution maps etc.



Network Steering Committee second meeting

The Network Steering Committee (NSC) conducts the scientific management and coordination of joint activities along with the Network Office and according to the Board of Directors strategies.

It has met twice during the last ten months - 10th of March and 13th of November 2006. Following this last meeting, discussion has started in view of the elaboration of the first periodic report and of the next 18 months Joint Programme of Activities.

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Dr Patricia Mergen

External Relations

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Evaluating the quality of taxonomy training

The shortage of trained researchers is an important aspect of the "taxonomic impediment". The European taxonomic expertise relies on an aging community. As years goes by, it becomes increasingly essential to interest young students in taxonomy in order to stop the loss of this expertise. The first step of this recruitment policy relies on the ability to provide taxonomy students with quality training courses.

In order to evaluate, and later on improve the current offer both in Europe and worldwide, EDIT WP8 set up a questionnaire (<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=227232965022>). Any scientist working in the field of taxonomy was encouraged to respond. The survey ended on Jan 31st. One-hundred-and-sixty-six questionnaires were collected and will now be analysed. However, if you still like to participate - by sending information on the training courses you provide or on the training courses you have followed - please contact Dr. Patricia Mergen.

Second All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory¹ Workshop (ATBI)

From March 14th to March 16th, EDIT Workpackage 7 will organize its second workshop on ATBI and ATBI+M (All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory plus Monitoring) at the State Museum of Natural History, Stuttgart, Germany.

The first day of this meeting will be dedicated to pursue the discussion about potential extra-European ATBI+M sites. On the second day, the existing sampling and monitoring protocols will be evaluated, and the suggestions for ATBI data processing and publication will be presented.

This workshop will also be an occasion to deepen the cooperation with related Projects (MARBEF, EUMON, LTER, ALTER-Net etc) and liaise with representatives from important conservation agencies. Concerning this particular aspect, all suggestions are welcome.

At last, this meeting will provide a platform to present and plan the next activities at the first selected European ATBI sites, during the field season 2007.

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Web revision workshop

The EDIT Workpackage 6 will hold a workshop in London in February to discuss commonalities in web revisions (date to be confirmed). The objective of this meeting is to discuss the requirements different groups have for web revisions and to agree a set of common features that can facilitate data exchange.

This workshop will be a great opportunity for all researchers who have interest in developing web revisions to share ideas and experience. Please get in touch with Dave Roberts, who will put a timetable together with a formal announcement later.

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Smolenice Castle houses the Congress centre of the Slovak Academy

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Conference «The future of taxonomy - the role of societies and networks»

Organised within the frame of EDIT Workpackage 2, this conference will be the premier forum of 2007 for all leading international networks and societies directly and indirectly supporting the taxonomic research. Their representatives are invited to contribute to this conference.

The meeting will take place in Smolenice Castle, Slovakia, from March 25th to March 28th. The detailed programme of the conference will be available at the beginning of March.

More informations are available at <http://zoology.fns.uniba.sk/edit/>

Abstract submission deadline:

March 1st, 2007

Registration deadline:

February 11th, 2007.



Remedying the gender imbalance in science

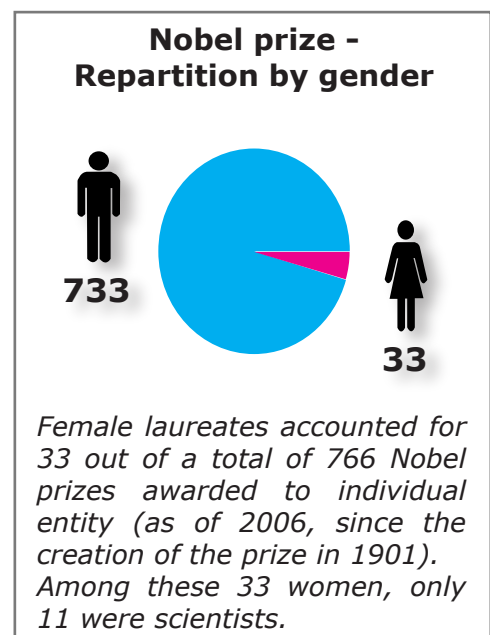
The Gender Action Plan

Science is a man's world. In most countries of the EU, the rates of increase in PhD graduates and researchers are currently higher for women than for men, women remain under-represented in engineering and natural sciences. Taxonomy is not spared by this disparity. To remedy this situation, the partners in EDIT will make specific efforts to address gender issues through the Gender Action Plan.

A severe imbalance

Although women constitute 43% of PhD graduates, only a third of researchers in higher education and government research institutions are women. According to the EU report "She figures 2006"¹, the ratios are even lower for senior academic staff. Only 15% of those at the highest academic grade are women. Men are about three times more likely than women to obtain professorships or their equivalents in Europe. These differences are not restricted to the academic sector. Only 18% of researchers in the business enterprise sector are women. In other words, in most countries of the EU women remain essentially employed as auxiliary staff. This is illustrated by the low level of female participation in scientific boards. Of the 17 Member States that have provided data, there are only two where the proportion of women is over 40% (Finland and Sweden); two in the range of 30-39% (UK and Denmark); and five in the range of 20-29%. All the rest is below

It means that women are contributing less than men to shaping the big scientific questions of the moment, many of which impact directly on the lives of women across Europe. But women do not only encounter difficulties in the employment area. Although this parameter is hard to ascertain (especially because it is dependent upon the culture of awarding funds), as a rule women are in general less successful in obtaining funding.



In a paper published in 1997 in *Nature*¹, two Swedish researchers showed that women had to publish 2.6 times more than men in order to obtain the same quality scores for postdoctoral fellowship applications submitted to the Swedish Medical Council.

Faced with these hurdles women are still paid less than men.

Multifactor causes

Many assumptions have been made to explain the imbalance. Gender-related cultural values, the education provided to young women, the stereotypes conveyed by society all have been cited as reasons.

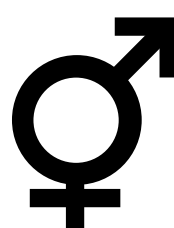
In the majority of EU countries, stable employment in research cannot be obtained before the age of 40. Given that the majority of women raise their children in their 30s, many decide to - or have to - quit their jobs to become mothers and encounter great difficulties to retrieve a position a few years later. Competition in science is fierce and the demands of the professional life are strenuous when combined with family obligations. Some women may then opt for occupations for which they are over-qualified - a trade-off that enables them to juggle their work-life.

A wide impact

The lack of these highly qualified women in the influential positions where strategies are set and policies are developed is agreed to be a waste of talent. By virtue of their different historical, cultural, and social position, and also because of different interests, women often have a different vision of how to put science to use for the benefit of society².

In addition, from a purely pragmatic point of view, the resource implications of these gender imbalances are of major importance for the economy of Europe. In order to increase (or at least sustain) the EU's research capacity, its R&D expenditure is planned to reach 3% GDP by 2010. But achieving this goal will require a further 700,000 researchers, and two-thirds of this increased capacity will need to be found within the business and enterprise sector, the very areas where women are most seriously under-represented. Finally and above all, the main point is that this situation is not acceptable in a democratic society which tries hard to eradicate discrimination at every level.

Promoting equality



Several ways have been explored to remedy this situation. The current mainstreaming policy of the EU consists in incorporating the goal of gender equality into all its systems, structures, institutions, programs, policies and practices. It resulted in particular in the strong integration of the gender factor in the 6th Framework Programme (see boxed article below).

The current mainstreaming should lead to:

- Rebalance the ratio of men and women serving on scientific decision boards,
- The setting-up appropriate working conditions for female researchers,
- Consider the gender factor in all research projects.

¹ C. Wenneras and A. Wold, *Nepotism and sexism in peer review*, *Nature* (1997) 347, p.341

² More informations on the Unesco Eolss website http://www.eolss.net/21st_c.aspx

GENDER ACTION PLAN AND FP6

(extract from Cordis Website <http://cordis.europa.eu/science-society/library.htm>)

General Conditions of FP6 standard contract oblige each contactor to promote equal opportunities between men and women in the implementation of the project. Contractors must show how they have taken into account any gender issues associated with the subject of the proposal. They should outline the equality measures being taken, throughout the project, indicating which national and international regulations are applicable and explaining how they will be respected. Furthermore contractors under Networks of Excellence and Integrated Projects are required to prepare an action plan for the promotion of gender equality within their project and later on report on it.

Besides mainstreaming, former policies like equal treatment or positive discrimination can still be implemented, but they are not sufficient to solve such a complex problem as gender imbalance in science. For example, equal treatment does not take the specific requirements of women into account and positive discrimination may be limited by national legislations.

Education is also an essential point. Young women should be encouraged to turn to scientific fields through specific pedagogical methods. Whatever the measures, a regular evaluation of the results is absolutely essential.

The EDIT network Gender Action Plan

The Gender Action Plan (GAP) is an important point of the Joint Programme of Activity (See annex 1 of the contract, Description of Work, section 6.6).

The Gender Action Plan is implemented through the activity 1.5 of the WP1 but, as many other EDIT activities, its success relies on the participation of all the members of the network.

Through the GAP, EDIT will:

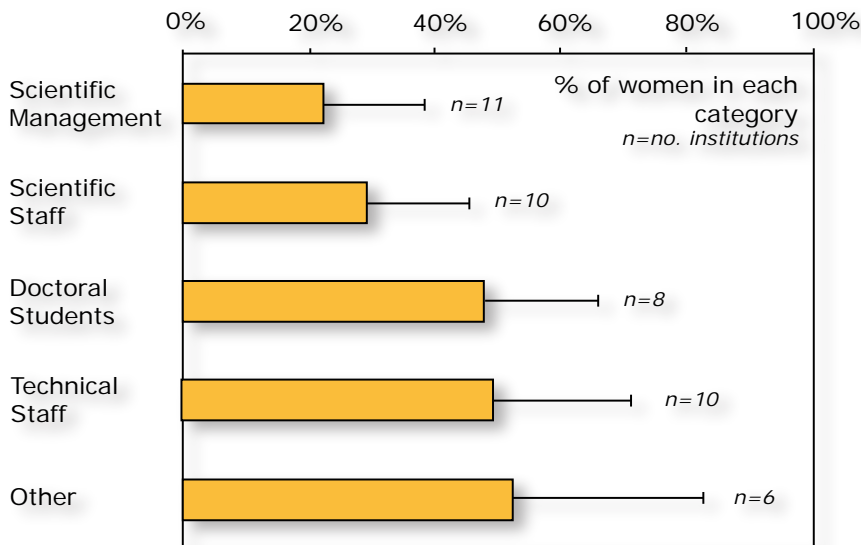
1. Work towards achieving gender balance in all activities;
2. Promote women in science;
3. Consider family-friendly policies.

The recent SAC meeting report stressed the necessity to make a priority of implementing this GAP. In order to achieve this recommendation, a GAP liaison group is being created. Constituted of one member from each EDIT partner institution, it will define and organize the work to be done to reach the GAP goals.

A first set of measures

At the beginning, two measures will be implemented to encourage women scientists.

First, in order to facilitate attendance to EDIT meetings for parents with children, a 'work-life balance' programme will be set-up. Consisting of grants for childcare while the parent is absent, this programme will try to support as many persons as possible, within the limits of the budget and the



Results of a questionnaire circulated among EDIT participants in February 2005. The graph shows the distribution of women in different categories of staff. Eleven institutions answered the questionnaire.

selection criteria.

Secondly, EDIT will provide outstanding young women scientists with short-term fellowships. These fellowships will be offered under certain conditions:

- priority will be given to training, but research related to EDIT activities will also be eligible if justified,
- this training/research activities will take place in an EDIT partner institution outside the applicant's country. Exceptionally, visits to institutions outside the EDIT consortium will be eligible, if they can be justified in the application.

This first set of measure will be complemented with others, in the fields of gender awareness, promotion of women, gender balance etc. From this perspective, the diversity of experience of the EDIT members will be a great asset, as lessons will be learnt from successes and difficulties of previously implemented policies. ♦♦

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To go further...

More informations about gender and science:

European Union's website women and science dedicated section:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/page_en.cfm?id=3197

Women and science in FP6:

<http://www.cordis.lu/rtd2002/science-society/women.htm>

A statistical view of the life of women and men in the European Union:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/PGP_PRD_CAT_PREREL/PGE_CAT_PREREL_YEAR_2006/PGE_CAT_PREREL_YEAR_2006_MONTH_03/3-06032006-EN-BP1.PDF

How prejudiced are you?

Try the gender-science and the gender-career test of the Harvard University Implicit project to check whether your mind is conditioned by cultural prejudices:

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/>

A large-scale European infrastructure for biodiversity research

● LIFEWATCH

To better understand, and therefore better manage and protect our living environment, it becomes increasingly important to develop infrastructures based upon novel scientific approaches. Life Watch is one of these.

This ambitious project aims at linking all kinds of biodiversity data, from monitoring and observation data to collection specimens data, to climatic, environmental and remote sensing data, and provide the tools for improving our understanding of the evolution of biodiversity.

Life Watch was selected by the European Strategic Forum for Research Infrastructures¹ (ESFRI) as the most promising next generation large-scale biodiversity research infrastructure.

The Life Watch plan aims at constructing an e-Sciences and Technology infrastructure that will bring together all relevant data and analytical facilities, in order to address the basic gaps in existing knowledge.

Developed by 8 major EU scientific networks, it will help evaluating the effects of human activities on the alterations of ecosystems by furnishing the long-term data required for monitoring. This integrated approach will allow to:

- better understand and predict biodiversity dynamics
- support scientifically sound ecosystem and nature conservation management policies
- provide knowledge and expertise for the developing and mega-biodiverse countries

The Life Watch infrastructure will constitute a new tool to understand

and sustainably manage the environment so that spatial requirements for human activities are balanced with the need to protect the natural environment.

The action plan to realize the Life Watch infrastructure starts with bringing the project to the level of technical, legal and financial maturity in order to ensure governmental commitment of EU member states to start the construction.

A consortium of public and private partners will present this plan to

Cooperating networks

ALTER-Net (Terrestrial and Freshwater Biodiversity)

EDIT (European Distributed Institute of Taxonomy)

EUR-OCEANS (Ocean Ecosystems Analysis)

MarBEF (Marine Biodiversity and Ecosystem Functioning)

MGE (Marine Genomics Europe)

SYNTHESYS (Infrastructure network of biological collections)

ENBI (European Network for Biodiversity Information)

BioCASE (Biological Collection Access Service for Europe)

the European Commission as a proposal for further collaborative activities within the new 7th Framework Programme. A variety of stakeholders – the scientific networks, national governments, end-users, and industry – is involved in the developmental activities. ◆◆



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IMoSEB

<http://www.imoseb.net/>

Consultative Process Towards an
International Mechanism
of Scientific Expertise
on Biodiversity

On January 2005, the International Conference on Biodiversity was held in Paris. During this Conference, the scientific community reaffirmed that reducing the rate of biodiversity loss was an absolute priority to achieve sustainable development. To reach this goal and in response to the call for action made by President Chirac at this international meeting, the creation of an international expertise mechanism on biodiversity was decided. This mechanism would:

- provide a critical assessment of the scientific information and policy options required for decision-making;
- build on existing bodies, current and recent activities.

In order to define more precisely such a complex mechanism, an international multi-stakeholder consultative process guided

by a balanced multi-stakeholder steering committee was launched. To the end, the objective of this consultation is to lead to the creation of an *International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity* that will be able to provide managers and policy-makers with relevant information about biodiversity stakes, so that they can make appropriate decisions. This IMoSEB will also be able to validate environmental policies, propose solutions and inform public opinion.

Finally, it will allow international scientific expertise to better meet biodiversity protection requirements.

The first International Steering Committee (ISC) of this consultative process gathered February 21st and 22nd, 2006, in Paris at the National Museum of

Natural History.

About 90 participants from all horizons contributed to this meeting: scientists, governments and international institutions representatives, civil society members.

This first ISC meeting drafted an 18-month plan of action. An Executive Committee was appointed to ensure that these recommendations would be followed up and an Executive Secretariat was set up that is responsible for coordination and promotion of the consultative process.

To the end, the objective of this consultation is to lead to the creation of an International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity that will be able to provide managers and policy-makers with relevant information about biodiversity stakes, so that they can make appropriate decisions. This IMoSEB will also be able to validate environmental policies, propose solutions and inform public opinion. It will allow international scientific expertise to better meet biodiversity protection requirements. ◆◆

