

Dear eDNA enthusiasts!

Two weeks ago, the core group met for two days at Naturalis in Leiden to make some headway towards the founding of **eDNA^{Europe}**. A huge **Thank You** goes to the Biodiversity Genomics Europe team (especially Pete Hollingsworth and Kasia Fantoni) for hosting us and ensuring the future alignment between eDNA^{Europe}, BGE, BGE+ and iBOL Europe.

With this newsletter-style communication we want to ensure transparency of our activities and hope for your continued support of this adventure.

1. Definitions and statements

The following statements were agreed upon during the meeting (with an official vote and at least 2/3 majority) by the core group members:

Definition of eDNA^{Europe}

eDNA^{Europe} is a European society advancing Environmental DNA (eDNA) research, fostering knowledge exchange, supporting cooperation and skills development, and acting as a link between science and society.

Missions of eDNA^{Europe}:

- **Build** a European community of eDNA researchers and stakeholders
- **Connect** the European eDNA community with wider national, regional and global initiatives
- **Promote** technological advancement and share research findings and best practices
- **Facilitate** mainstreaming of eDNA methods into policy and practice

Similar statements for the grand **Vision** of eDNA^{Europe} and our **Values** are still in preparation together with some information in a longer text format. At this point, we already wish to state that we define eDNA in a broad sense and welcome individuals working on diverse types of environmental samples, taxa, and with various methods.

2. Organization structure

The organization structure of eDNA^{Europe} and its legal form will depend on the legal seat. Following recommendations by the Southern eDNA Society, we will employ professional support for this process. To facilitate the choice of location, financial structure and legal entity type, the core group has formulated the following wishes for the future administrative structure of eDNA^{Europe} (in no particular order):

- Transparency
- The board should consist of no more than 5-7 members and must include at least one Early Career Researcher

- All board members should be held legally accountable
 - The legal seat should allow for citizens of all European Countries (not limited to EU Member States) to assume legal responsibility.
 - English as an official working language should be allowed or the national language should be necessary only for very basic administrative procedures.
 - The organizational structure should be simple and inclusive, with simplicity as a key factor, especially during the first years
 - If possible, outsource the routine legal and financial tasks, especially during the starting phase
 - Voting:
 - Preferably a mixed model with direct voting by the members for some roles while other roles are indirectly elected by the board
 - Elections should focus on individual candidates and not blocks / parties
 - The entire board should never be up for election at the same time; staggered terms are recommended to ensure continuity
 - Clear rules for dissolving dysfunctional situations and if it ever comes to it, dissolving the society
 - Formulation of compliance criteria / guidelines for conflicts of interest (science, industry, policy)
 - The president / signatory should be based in Europe
 - Membership is open globally (official, unanimous core group vote)
 - In case of an organization structure with chapters or sections for accomplishing specific tasks, the individuals leading these activities must receive full and formal recognition.
 - No national sub-chapters will be created
 - An advisory board, composed of a diverse group of individuals representing different sectors and career stages
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3. Design and online presence

The logo and visual identity will reflect the general wishes of the core group for a simple design with the name eDNA^{Europe} (with *Europe* as a superscript) in the logo, featuring few nature-inspired colors, and potentially an abstract representation of nature or a DNA strand. A professional logo and corporate design contest (up to 60 logos to be expected) is in the process of launching at <https://99designs.com>

The three logo candidates deemed best by the core group will be put up for a community vote.

Members of the core group are currently working on a preliminary online presence to help the community follow the founding process, subscribe to news updates, and express interest in becoming future society members.

At the same time, we will keep the [eDNA^{Europe} Slack channel](#) running and establish a social media presence (focusing on LinkedIn and Instagram) to support rapid and broad information sharing.

4. Finances

We have not yet defined membership fees and the exact costs of establishing the society remain uncertain, as they depend on the choice of legal seat. Our hope is to have tiered membership fees for individuals, aligned with the OECD country classification, and a 50% discount for students. Additionally, we are looking into models that include institutional memberships for academic, governmental, and industrial entities, as well as benefactors.

Possible streams of financial support in the next months are the eDNA4Policy COST Action (pending funding approval), institutional grant-based funding (e.g. Biodiversa+) and initial contributions or donations from community members who wish to support the society during its start-up phase. More detailed information will be shared once we have a clearer understanding of the legal framework and associated financial requirements.

5. Register as a future member and receive updates

We want to create an official and updated list of potential future eDNA^{Europe} members and individuals interested in receiving news and updates about the society's development. This will help to streamline communication during the next months, include people who did not participate in last year's questionnaire, and enable us to contact the eDNA^{Europe} community in accordance with European Privacy Policies.

If you would like to be part of the eDNA^{Europe} community, please review the Privacy Policy Statement and register yourself with your name and email address in [this Google form](#). We are aware that these tools are interim solutions, but we hope they will adequately support our needs during this early phase.

6. Feedback to the core group

At this point of the process, managing the flow of information and coordinating all ongoing activities is proving to be a challenge for us as a group. We are committed to remaining open to receiving your feedback and opinions, and have added an additional field in the [Google form](#) to collect your comments. However, over the next months, we kindly ask that you use this feedback option only for issues you consider crucial to the founding process. This will help us focus on the most critical points while ensuring we continue to move forward efficiently.

With kindest regards,

The members of the eDNA^{Europe} core group: *Florian Altermatt, Karolina Bacela-Spychalska, Pedro Beja, Manuela Coci, Isabelle Domaizon, Marija Gligora Udovič, Pascal Hablützel, Pete Hollingsworth, Belma Kalamujić Stroil, Jasmina Kamberović, Panagiotis Kasapidis, Lori Lawson Handley, Florian Leese, Kristian Meissner, Massimiliano Molari, Fabrice Not, Thorsten Stoeck & Bettina Thalinger*