



News from Countries, Sites and Platforms: March 2024



"News from countries, sites and platforms" highlights the efforts of a great many eLTER colleagues in various roles - scientists, site and platform coordinators, national coordinators, etc. - engaged in a wide variety of fascinating eLTER activities across Europe and beyond. So enjoy!



Some positive news from the Israel LTER network

The [Israel national LTER network](#) is happy to convey that the National Council on Higher Education has earmarked 15 million Euros for biodiversity and climate change research in national LTER sites. According to the call, the Council will support up to four research consortia, each represented by at least three Israeli universities, to establish long-term research that explicitly utilises and enriches existing LTER research infrastructures (not constructing new sites).

The national coordinators of Israel LTER plan to both participate in proposal submissions, but also to encourage leveraging proposals towards supporting necessary equipment and infrastructure for collecting eLTER standard observational data, and to catalyse Israel's participation in the eLTER RI – ESFRI process. They also note and acknowledge the key role played by senior LTER researchers who were key in advancing this initiative.

Israeli network was founded in 1997 and currently includes 14 sites across the country's climate and demographic gradients. The network's foci include: 1) establishment of a common theoretical framework based on web of interactions among ecosystem entities; 2) facilitation of cross-site research based on a unified ecosystem approach; 3) harmonisation of data collection in the sites; and 4) the implementation and operation of new socio-ecological (LTSER) research platforms; 5) high integration with stakeholders and management organisations.

Photo: The buildings of the Israeli [Ramon site](#). Copyright: eLTER



SPF webinar on eLTSER Platforms

In February 2024 we launched a series of activities to present and discuss the developments of LTSER within eLTER and eLTSER platforms hosting place-based socio-ecological research.

eLTSER Platforms are spatially explicit living laboratories for conducting transdisciplinary, long-term, socio-ecological research and for implementing the eLTER RI's Whole Systems research approach.

They are designed and operated with the specific goal of harnessing scientific research on human-environment interactions for addressing environmental challenges and facilitating sustainability transitions. Research is conducted at the landscape scale using diverse disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches in tight coordination with local and regional stakeholders.

Research and policy at platforms are supported by long-term environmental, social and economic data. The determination of platform character, research agenda, and data collection activities must consider two parallel and equally important challenges: 1) addressing RI-wide research and data needs, so as to enable interaction between platforms across the European

continent, and 2) addressing the social and ecological specificities and stakeholder needs at the local and regional scales.

Such webinars are free and you can keep track of both internal and external events on our website calendar.

Event calendar



Photo: Jari Ilmonen/Metsähallitus

Winter is important in Oulanka

[Oulanka research station](#) is in the middle of Oulanka National Park, north-eastern Finland. Due to its northern location, the station offers great opportunities for studying the effects of winter on ecosystems. In addition to high-quality research, the facilities of the station also makes it a great place for organising various workshops, meetings and courses, often around the themes of winter.

Winter-related measurements at Oulanka are developing. A snowpack water-vapour isotope pilot study is currently taking place at our EcoClimate projects fen site. Snow studies in general are taking a leap forward: a snowpack analyser is operating for its first winter at the fen site, as is a snow scale at the pine site. Manual snow surveys with isotope sampling also continue for better comparability for Finnish Meteorological Institute sites.

Events for winter 2024 include a field course “WINTERS UNDER PRESSURE: life in a changing cold environment” in February. A workshop for our flagship EcoClimate research platform will take place before the winter course, gathering key people from different countries – including the teachers of the course - to meet and brainstorm. In March the [CRYO-RI project meeting](#) will take place. The CRYO-RI focuses on monitoring the rapid changes in snow, ice, and frozen ground in Northern Finland with new technology.

Photo: Oulanka research station. Copyright: Jari Ilmonen / Metsähallitus



Ecosystem services provided by streams to adjacent agricultural terrestrial ecosystems (STRANGE project)

For a long time, terrestrial-aquatic interactions focused on the impact of terrestrial ecosystems on aquatic ecosystems. In recent years, more and more studies have highlighted the role of aquatic ecosystems in terrestrial ecosystems. However, few studies have focused on the role of biological factors in the provision of ecosystem services. The aim of this 42-month French national project (November 2023-April 2027, supported by the French National Research Agency) is to evaluate three ecosystem services (fertilisation, crop pest control and pollination) provided by aquatic ecosystems in adjacent agricultural environments along a gradient of agricultural intensification.

The STRANGE project (Ecosystem Services provided by sTReams to AdjaceNt aGricultural tErrestrial ecosystems) will work on the basis of a multidisciplinary scientific consortium (10 French scientific partners and over 20 people), in close collaboration with environmental managers (nature reserve managers, watershed managers) and stakeholders (local authorities, farmers, citizens). Six sites belonging to three 'Zones Atelier' (French LTSER long-term observatories) have been selected.

The main scientific objectives of the project are (1) to quantify the relative contribution of aquatic insects to the three ecosystem services studied; (2) to provide tools for promoting the most environmentally-friendly practices possible, in order (3) to raise awareness among local stakeholders and the public of the little-known roles of aquatic insects.

Photo: Trap for collecting aquatic insects emerging from a stream, part of the project.



New research project at LTER sites Bidighinzu Lake and Cabras Lagoon in Italy, supported by 2022 PRIN call

The Italian Ministry for Universities and Research is funding the project 'FUTURE - A warmer Future world: effects on plankton communities and pathogens in Mediterranean vulnerable Ecosystems' through the 2022 call for 'Research Projects of National Relevance (PRIN)'. Two sites of the Italian LTER network are involved: [Bidighinzu Lake](#) and [Cabras Lagoon](#), both located in Sardinia (West Mediterranean). The project aims to study the effects of the forecasted climatic warming on Mediterranean plankton community biodiversity and food web size-structure, focusing also on pathogenic bacteria and related antibiotic resistance.

Based on collections of natural plankton communities from several trophic levels, from bacteria to mesozooplankton, from these ecosystems, the project goals will be addressed with laboratory experiments and field monitoring, applying different approaches: the traditional optical microscopy and flow cytometry, and the modern molecular techniques (NGS). The activities will be addressed by the synergistic collaboration of two interdisciplinary research groups from the University of Sassari and the Italian National Research Council – CNR (IRSA and IRET).

Data management and dissemination will take advantage of the services and tools offered by the research infrastructure LifeWatch Italy to guarantee the long-term sustainability of the project outputs and foster their access to different national and international stakeholders.

Photo: Bidighinzu Lake.



A-AAGORA conducts participatory workshops in the Centro Region - Portugal

The research group of [LTSER Ria de Aveiro](#) from University of Aveiro is involved in the project [A-AAgora](#) (Atlantic-Arctic-Agora). Within this project, the partners intend to respond to the need for: i) protecting and restoring marine and freshwater ecosystems and biodiversity; ii) protecting valuable ecosystems located in coastal communities that are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts; and iii) mitigating the effects of climate change while promoting societal well-being.

The team responsible for the Portuguese demonstrator of the A-AAGORA project organised a series of participatory workshops. Workshop sessions all had a similar format: an opening plenary to present the project and the workshop's objectives; parallel sessions with small groups to discuss the pressures, activities and factors that impact marine and coastal ecosystems of the region; and presentations of each group's results to all participants. In a second parallel session, each group selected two factors they considered as having the greatest negative impact on the region's marine and coastal ecosystems. Most frequently mentioned were pollution, climate change and coastal erosion.

In total, 55 stakeholders attended the workshop, including representatives from public administration, municipalities and town councils, industry and SMEs, NGOs, maritime authority activists and residents, as well as stakeholders working in sports, tourism, economics, management, engineering, fishing, education and culture.



Workshop on the long-term socio-ecological research at the Institute of Landscape Ecology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (ILE SAS)

The latest in a series of ILE SAS regular research workshops took place at the ILE SAS research station in Východná. The workshop was devoted to the long-term socio-ecological research performed at the institute. ILE SAS researchers Peter Bezák and Magdaléna Bezáková informed colleagues about their visit to the LTSER platforms [Zone Atelier Plaine et Val de Sevre](#) and [Zone Atelier Alpes Lautaret-Oisans](#). They presented information about ongoing local research, available research infrastructure, applied methods, key local socio-ecological issues, and research findings.

In another presentation entitled "Brainstorming regarding the research of (not only) LTSER platforms in Slovakia", Peter Bezák presented key ideas from these visits for consideration for research in Slovakia, especially in the context of submitted ILE SAS project proposals for socio-ecological research in the agricultural landscape and regarding the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy 2023-2027 in Slovakia. In discussion, participants commented on further directions of research in LTSER platforms in Slovakia.

Afterwards, Ľuboš Halada presented the history of LTER research in Slovakia in his presentation "Our LTER - beginnings and continuation", especially research conducted at the [Jalovecká dolina](#) and [Kráľova hoľa](#) LTER sites. Finally, Stanislav David and Juraj Lieskovský gave interesting presentations about the field work of the ILE SAS employees.

Photo: Scientists from LTER-Slovakia taking samples. Copyright: eLTER

eLTER Sites & Platforms videos

Get to know the eLTER Sites and Platforms through some [videos](#)! This issue of the newsletter, we introduce you to the [Ramon site](#) in Israel. Enjoy!



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