

**The European Long-term Ecosystem Research Network
LTER-Europe
Policy, Constitution and By-Laws**

*Version I3035v10_LTER_Bylaws.doc
Proposed to the LTER-Europe CC at the 6th LTER Europe NNRC, 4th December
2008, Palma de Majorca, Spain*

Remarks:

- *Sections discussed and changed in relation to the version circulated before the 6th LTER Europe NNRC (I3035v09_LTER_Bylaws.doc) are color marked.*

1. NAME AND IDENTITY

1.1 The European Long-term Ecosystem Research Network (LTER-Europe) is a collaborative network of scientists and their stakeholders engaged in long-term, site-based ecological, social and economic research.

1.2 The vision of LTER-Europe is to improve the quality of life of all citizens through the application of long-term, large-scale research to the preservation and sustainable use of ecosystems.

1.3 LTER-Europe is a regional network of the International Long Term Ecological Research Network (ILTER).

2. LTER-EUROPE MISSION and GOALS

2.1 The mission of LTER-Europe is to deliver to the scientific community, policy makers, and society in general, sound scientific information and predictive understanding of ecological and socio-economic processes and to inform solutions to current and future environmental problems at local, national, European and global scales.

2.2 The goals of LTER-Europe are:

- to foster collaboration and coordination among long-term ecosystem researchers and research networks at local, regional, continental and global scales;
- to improve comparability of long-term ecological, social and economic data from sites around the world, and facilitate exchange and preservation of these data;
- to deliver scientific information to scientists, policymakers and the public to meet the needs of decision makers at multiple scales.
- to facilitate education of the next generation of long-term scientists.

2.3 LTER-Europe has the following structures:

- national LTER-Europe member networks (members);
- the LTER-Europe Co-ordinating Committee;
- the LTER-Europe Executive Committee.
- the LTER-Europe Expert Panels

3. RULES FOR LTER-EUROPE MEMBER NETWORKS

3.1 An LTER-Europe member is defined as a national network of institutions and scientists collectively engaged to conduct scientific research according to the LTER-Europe vision, mission and goals.

3.2 LTER-Europe distinguishes between different levels of membership representing a range of commitments.

3.2.1. National networks adopted by the global LTER network ILTER automatically become **level 1** members (L-1) of LTER-Europe unless explicitly excluded under the terms of clause 3.6.

3.2.2. In order to meet the objectives of LTER-Europe as a major element of the European research infrastructure, LTER-Europe developed and agreed on specific criteria. The criteria for **level 2** LTER-Europe member networks (L-2) are:

1. Participation in the annual LTER-Europe Coordinating Committee meeting
2. Information on national network structure
3. Communication and responsiveness (less than 15 days response time to questions and requests communicated by email to the contact persons nominated according to item 5.
4. Regular update of information on national LTER facilities (sites, platforms) in the LTER InfoBase (metadata)
5. Nomination of contact persons: One representative and up to two deputies
6. Organisation of annual national LTER meetings
7. Annual status / progress report of national network to LTER-Europe
8. A data management and accessibility policy including a commitment to begin the process of sharing and exchanging data and knowledge with other members of LTER-Europe

3.2.2. Other levels of criteria such as minimum standard measurements, IT- and data quality standards may be developed in the future. Compliance with these standards would, upon decision of the LTER-Europe Co-ordinating Committee, establish additional categories of membership to LTER-Europe.

3.3 Applications should be supported by a national public institution (e.g., a National Academy of Sciences, national funding agency such as a National Research Council, or government institution such as a Ministry of Environment). A letter requesting admission from the national public institution should address the criteria mentioned below and must be sent to the Chair of LTER-Europe:

- Recognition by a government body or other institutional entity acting at the national level.
- Existence of a national committee or other management structure.
- A set of sites or proposed sites with criteria for selection of new sites.
- A statement of collective purpose that might include defined research or monitoring themes.
- A data management and accessibility policy including a commitment to share and exchange data and knowledge with other members of LTER-Europe;
- Assurance relating to the long-term nature of the national network;

- A commitment to supply information about its sites and procedures as may be reasonably requested by the LTER-Europe Committee or its officers;
- A commitment to meet eventual LTER-Europe network criteria as defined by the LTER-Europe Co-ordinating Committee (s. clause 3.2).

3.4 Application for country membership will be accepted through a majority vote of the LTER-Europe Co-ordinating Committee.

3.5 Each elected member of the LTER-Europe Network shall nominate a representative who shall have primary responsibility for liaison with LTER-Europe and act as the representative on the LTER-Europe Co-ordinating Committee. A deputy representative shall be nominated to stand in for the representative if he/she is prevented for any reason.

3.6 The LTER-Europe CC can vote with a 2/3 majority to propose a European member network to the ILTER CC for removal from ILTER.

3.7 Each accredited member network shall have only one designated voting representative in the Co-ordinating Committee. The voting representatives may be accompanied at meetings by non-voting representatives and advisers.

3.8 Representatives from member countries should have obtained the full competence and mandate to officially represent their country networks and should keep effective liaison with them. Members have the responsibility to give feedback to the countries they represent.

3.9 It shall remain the prerogative of the country network to replace the nominated member if so required.

3.10 Status of national networks

3.10.1 The status of national networks varies between the stage of initiation to the stage of a fully operative network in compliance with all criteria. Networks may as well become inactive or consolidate after inactive phases. To allow for better monitoring of the status of LTER-Europe each national network shall be assigned to a category reflecting a) the status of implementation and b) the activity status.

3.10.2 The categories for the status of implementation reflect the slow nature of the process of establishing formal LTER networks:

- I-1: Established national contact
- I-2: Initial phase of discussion on the national level
- I-3: First concepts for a national network
- I-4: In the process of implementation
- I-5: Formal LTER network adopted by ILTER

3.10.3 The categories for the **activity** status are:

- A-1: Inactive: Networks with more than 2 years of no response to LTER-Europe activities and no attendance in the LTER-Europe Co-ordinating Committee.

A-2: Consolidating: Networks, with an established program and a reasonable research capacity, but with limited resources or other constraints limiting their capability to respond to LTER-Europe activities and comply with mandatory criteria.

A-3: Fully active

3.10.4 The status of the national LTER networks shall be reported by the chair of LTER-Europe to the CC and be adopted by the CC on an annual basis. If possible this report should also contain an overview of the status of emerging national LTER networks as reported by the respective contact points at the annual LTER-Europe National Network Representatives Conference.

3.11. The LTER-Europe CC can – upon application – decide on associated memberships of institutions and networks to LTER-Europe.

4. THE LTER-EUROPE CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE AND THE NATIONAL NETWORK REPRESENTATIVES CONFERENCE

4.1 The LTER-Europe Co-ordinating Committee is the group composed of one official representative of each LTER-Europe member country. If necessary the official deputy will stand in for the representative. The National Network Representatives Conference comprises the LTER-Europe Co-ordinating Committee and all national LTER contacts in charge of initiating national networks or representing emerging national networks which are not formally members of LTER-Europe. This bigger consortium reflects the fact that the potential of LTER-Europe is based not only on the formal member networks. Representatives of emerging national networks have an observer status.

4.2 The Co-ordinating Committee may seek the advice of experts as may be required on an ad hoc basis. Such experts may submit documents and participate in discussions but will not vote.

4.3 The management of the LTER-Europe Network is vested in the Co-ordinating Committee. The Committee shall have power to authorise actions on behalf of LTER-Europe, make such rules or regulations for its management, create additional offices or special committees and select, employ or remove such of its officers or agents as it shall deem required to conduct its legitimate business. Given the agreement of the new holders of offices and their employees the Committee shall have the power to fill vacancies (inter alia listed in 4.4 and 4.5) in, and change the membership of, such duly constituted committees.

4.4 Co-ordinating Committee Officers must include:

- A chairperson
- A vice chairperson

4.5 The following positions, and any others deemed necessary by the Committee to undertake its business, may also be filled in order for LTER-Europe to conduct its business. Terms of reference of these posts will be agreed by the Co-ordinating Committee.

- A secretary

- A treasurer
- A co-ordinator
- Regional representatives to the ILTER Executive Committee as required in addition to the Chair
- A web-master
- A publicity or communications officer

4.6 The Co-ordinating Committee shall have the responsibility for:

- electing and appointing office holders;
- serving as a platform for the exchange of information and for discussion of topical issues in LTER-Europe;
- receiving and commenting on reports from chairpersons of working groups and standing committees;
- receiving and commenting on report-backs of the activities and initiatives of the Executive Committee;
- initiating and advising on new directions in LTER-Europe,;
- developing and updating plans to achieve the mission and goals of LTER-Europe;
- making inputs to the development of future LTER-Europe and ILTER strategies.

Voting procedures

4.7 Voting requires a quorum. A simple majority (greater than 50%) of the Member Representatives of the Co-ordinating Committee shall constitute a quorum, except as may be otherwise expressly required by these Bylaws. In the absence of a quorum the LTER-Europe Chair may poll the absent members for vote to achieve a quorum. Each Member Representative of the Co-ordinating Committee attending the meeting shall be entitled to one vote. A member Network may transfer in writing, a vote by proxy to another Member Network representative with a condition of only one proxy per attending member. Non-member Network representatives have only observer status in the Co-ordinating Committee, but form part of the National Networks Representatives Conference (NNRC) The Chairperson shall put to Members of the Co-ordinating Committee, with voting rights, questions and proposals requiring decisions. Decisions shall be taken according to the following provisions:

- (i) All matters shall be decided by a majority vote (>50%) of Co-ordinating Committee members participating at the meeting, except as otherwise expressly required by these Bylaws.
- (ii) All votes will be taken by a show of hands unless a request is made by two members (a proposer and a seconder) for the vote to be undertaken by secret ballot.
- (iii) Tied votes in such elections will be resolved by a method agreed upon by the Co-ordinating Committee.

4.8 Chairperson election: The Chair of the Co-ordinating Committee (ILTER Chair) shall be elected by the Co-ordinating Committee from within the community of the LTER-Europe Network. Nominations for the incoming Chair will be accepted from Member Networks by the acting LTER-Europe Chair. LTER-Europe will distribute

resumes of each nominee to the Co-ordinating Committee at least seven (7) days prior to the election. The candidate receiving the most votes will become the elected Chair. The election will be held at a Co-ordinating Committee meeting prior to the expiration of the current Chair's term.

4.9 Vice-chairperson (the Vice-chair) election. In order to ensure a regional balance, ideally the Chair and Vice-chair should come from the two major regions of Europe ("Western Europe" and "Central and Eastern Europe"). After selection of the Chair from one of these regions, nominations will be accepted for the post of Vice-chair from the other. If at this stage no nominations are made then there will be an open call for nominations.

4.10 Terms of office of the Chair and Vice-chair will be 2-years.

4.11 The Chair or Vice-chair may resign by giving written notice to the Co-ordinating Committee. Such resignation shall take effect at the time of receipt of the notice, or at any later time specified therein. The Chair or Vice-chair can also be removed by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Co-ordinating Committee. In the event of a vacancy in the positions of Chair or Vice-chair, the Executive Committee shall elect an interim replacement until a permanent replacement can be elected at the next Co-ordinating Committee meeting.

4.12 Role of the Chairperson. Unless otherwise delegated to elected officers by a decision of the Co-ordinating Committee, the Chairperson shall have the following powers and responsibilities to:

- convene, open, preside at, and close each meeting of the Co-ordinating Committee and the Executive Committee. At least 12-weeks notice must be given of the date and venue for Co-ordinating Committee meetings;
- make rulings on points of order raised at meetings of the Co-ordinating Committee and Executive Committee;
- put questions to meetings and notify the Co-ordinating Committee and Executive Committee by record of decisions reached and the results of votes,
- propose provisional agendas for the Coordinating Committee and Executive Committee meetings;
- approve and archive, on behalf of the Co-ordinating Committee and the Executive Committee, the reports of each meeting as official documents of the proceedings;
- provide an annual summary of LTER-Europe activities and finances;
- exercise other powers and responsibilities as provided in these rules and make such decisions as will ensure that the business of LTER-Europe is carried out effectively and in accordance with its committee's decisions.
- manage the routine functioning of LTER-Europe, which includes chairing meetings, press statements, liaison other regional networks and other appropriate networks
- representation of LTER-Europe in the ILTER Executive Committee.

4.13 It is the responsibility of the Chair to ensure that all important issues are communicated to the LTER-Europe Community. On issues requiring decisions outside of a formal Co-ordinating Committee meeting, the following procedure should be followed:

- The Chair informs all members of LTER-Europe Co-ordinating Committee and their deputies (if appointed) on the issue by sending out an appropriate notice;
- Each member shall respond or comment on the issue at stake within one week of receiving the notice and forward such comments to the Chair via e-mail;
- The Chair shall formulate the final decision / recommendation and return it via e-mail to the members. All correspondence on the issue should be available to the national members on request.

4.14 The Vice Chair shall act as Chair in the absence of the Chair. Should the position of Chair become vacant then the Vice-chair will automatically become Chair until elections can be held at a full Co-ordinating Committee meeting.

5. CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Co-ordinating Committee of the LTER-Europe Network will hold an annual business meeting. The LTER-Europe Chair shall prepare a provisional agenda for each meeting of the Co-ordinating Committee. The provisional agenda shall include:

- (i) all items which the Co-ordinating Committee has previously decided to include in the provisional agenda;
- (ii) all items the inclusion of which has been requested by any Member of the Coordinating Committee up to 14 days in advance of the meeting.

5.2 The LTER-Europe Chair shall send a provisional agenda to all Members of the Co-ordinating Committee, at least ten (10) days in advance of a Co-ordinating Committee meeting.

5.3 The Chair of the Coordinating Committee shall have the authority to call special meetings of the Co-ordinating Committee to address urgent governance issues.

5.4 Except where otherwise formally indicated by these By-laws, the preferred means of reaching a decision is by consensus. After due discussion of any issue voting may be done as follows:

- (i) a motion can be proposed by any member of the Committee;
- (ii) if the motion is seconded then a vote is taken;
- (iii) voting shall be by a show of hands unless a secret ballot is requested by at least two members;
- (iv) each member shall have only one (1) vote;
- (v) in the case of a tie, the chair shall have the deciding vote.

6 THE LTER-EUROPE NETWORK EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND EXPERT PANELS

6.1 The Executive Committee represents the interests of the Co-ordinating Committee and undertakes regular business as mandated by the Co-ordinating Committee.

6.2 The Executive Committee of the LTER-Europe Network will comprise the elected Chair of the Co-ordinating Committee (serving as Chair of the Executive Committee), the Vice-chair of the coordinating committee, the leads of the LTER-Europe Expert Panels as permanent members and between one and four additional members. The

Executive Committee may appoint any ILTER staff as non voting, ex-officio members.

6.3 Elections: The elections for the **non permanent members of the** Executive Committee shall take place at a meeting of the LTER-Europe Coordinating Committee. Candidates can be nominated by any member of the LTER-Europe Network, but only those candidates who agree to serve will be eligible for election.

6.4 Elected members of the Executive Committee shall have terms of two (2) years. If possible, terms of the members will be staggered and new members will be elected to replace those whose terms are expiring. There is no limit to the number of terms that a member may serve. Current and past Executive Committee members can serve additional terms if duly elected by the Co-ordinating Committee.

6.5 The Executive Committee implements decisions made by the Co-ordinating Committee, and shall have the powers determined by the Co-ordinating Committee. The Executive Committee shall represent the Co-ordinating Committee in its actions and serve as the interface with funding agencies. The role and functions of the Executive Committee are to:

- ensure that the goals of LTER-Europe are met;
- exchange information on national, regional, and international developments in international long-term ecological research;
- the development and implementation of data management and data sharing policies for LTER-Europe;
- confer with the Co-ordinating Committee as appropriate;
- provide continuity, direction and leadership;
- assess and review LTER-Europe activities;
- assist in procuring resources necessary to carry out LTER-Europe activities
- consult, inform, lobby and liaise with decision-makers, funding agencies and relevant international programs;
- organise LTER-Europe Science meetings to facilitate synthesis activities and collaborative research efforts;
- ensure that environmental and gender issues are taken into account in the day-to-day activities of LTER-Europe;
- ensure that good internal and external communication systems are maintained, for example by controlling the content and development of the LTER-Europe web-site.

6.6 Voting in the Executive Committee require a quorum of 3. All matters shall be decided by a simple majority (greater than 50%) of the Executive Committee members present; except as otherwise expressly required by these Bylaws. Each Member Representative of the Executive Committee shall be entitled to one vote.

6.7 The Executive Committee should meet at least two times per year on dates designated by the LTER-Europe Chair. Meetings may be in person or through video or telephone conferences. Decisions of Executive Committee meetings must be recorded by the LTER-Europe Chair and transmitted to the LTER-Europe Co-ordinating Committee.

6.8 The Expert Panels of LTER-Europe are permanent peer groups in charge of specific objectives and issues, which are important for the internal functioning and external performance of LTER-Europe. The following Expert Panels are formally established:

- LTSER and IDR (interdisciplinary research)
- Standardisation and Harmonisation
- Technology
- Communication
- Management of Sites and Platforms
- Science Strategy
- Information Management

6.9 Each Expert Panel shall have at least one expert from each member country, which is responsible to contribute national expertise and communicate recommendations to his/her country. The members of the each Expert Panel decide on a lead and deputy lead of their Expert Panel. The lead and deputy lead are the technical key accounts of LTER-Europe for the respective field of expertise and represent their Expert Panel in the Executive Committee.

6.10 The functions of the LTER-Europe Expert panels are *inter alia*:

- Identification and proposal of necessary activities in their field of responsibility to the NNRC and CC
- Overview of information, tools and expertise in their field of responsibility accessible within LTER-Europe
- Launching and facilitation of required conceptual, technological and strategic developments
- Communication (e.g. technical discussion fora on the LTER-Europe WEB site)
- Lobbying, networking and fund raising in the respective area
- Technical negotiations and streamlining with related networks

7. TEMPORARY STRUCTURES

7.1 The LTER-Europe Committee or its Executive Committee may from time to time establish standing committees or working groups to address specific environment or governance related issues. The Terms of Reference shall be determined by the Committee.

8. FINANCIAL ISSUES

8.1 Any central financial resources obtained by the LTER-Europe shall be managed by the Chair in accordance with general accounting and audit practice adopted by the Co-ordinating Committee and shall be subject to an annual audit at the discretion of the Co-ordinating Committee.

8.2 Each Member of the Co-ordinating Committee shall normally meet its own expenses arising from LTER-Europe business.

9. LEGAL STATUS, ETHOS and MANDATE:

9.1 LTER-Europe is not a legal entity. LTER-Europe shall act in an advisory and coordinating capacity to its members and to ILTER on issues relating to long-term environmental research and monitoring in Europe.

9.2 Participation in LTER-Europe and its events is entirely voluntary and at own risk. On the basis of these By-laws no liability for direct or indirect damages shall arise to the institutions

9.3 Intellectual property rights on information and data remains with the authors or institutions of origin as applicable. LTER-Europe may manage and use these with consent of the owners.

9.4 Countries should participate in a non-competitive and collaborative spirit that serves the mutual interest of all members.

9.5 LTER-Europe will adopt an equal opportunities policy with special regard to gender, race and age.

10. LANGUAGE POLICY:

10.1 LTER-Europe recognises the multitude of languages in Europe. For purposes of official documentation and communication English shall be used.

11. AMENDMENTS

11.1 All policies and rules of operation of the LTER-Europe Network contained in these By-laws shall be subject to amendment, addition, or repeal and may be adopted by two-thirds vote (2/3) majority of a quorate meeting of the LTER-Europe Co-ordinating Committee. A notice that specifying the proposed amendment, addition or repeal must be circulated to the Co-ordinating Committee at least 30 days before the vote.

12. BY-LAW ADOPTION *

12.1 These bylaws shall take force upon the affirmative two-thirds (2/3) vote of the entire membership of the LTER-Europe Co-ordinating Committee.

12.2 *The interim LTER-Europe By-laws were adopted by a simple majority vote of the 3rd LTER-Europe Co-ordinating Committee at the LTER-Europe meeting in Balatonfured, Hungary on 14th June 2007. Several points were left open for further clarification and adoption at the following 4th LTER-Europe conference in Sevilla, Spain, on 21st January 2008, where the by-laws were unanimously adopted and passed to experts at SYKE and UBA experienced in international law for a legal check. After minor changes according to their recommendations the by-laws were finally adopted at the LTER-Europe regional group meeting (5th LTER-Europe CC and NNRC) held back to back with the ILTER confernece in Stara Lesna, Slovakia, on 18th August 2008. Final amendments were made at the 6th LTER-Europe conference in Palme de

Majorca, Spain, on 4th December 2008, in order to incorporate the LTER-Europe Expert Panels