



LIFEPLAN Brings 12.6 Million EUR to Aid BIOSCAN's Progress

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LIFEPLAN, a six-year, 12.6 million EUR project led by the University of Helsinki has joined BIOSCAN, a research program overseen by the International Barcode of Life (iBOL) Consortium. By gathering standardized data for species on a global scale and by mapping patterns of biodiversity using species distribution models, LIFEPLAN will energize BIOSCAN's efforts to advance understanding of the many multicellular species that await discovery.

LIFEPLAN has the overarching goal of collecting biodiversity data and designing statistical methods to assess the effects of climate change and land use on species diversity. Supported by a Synergy grant from the European Research Council, LIFEPLAN will develop transformative statistical methods for analyzing Big Ecological Data with the goal of generating a new understanding of life on Earth.

LIFEPLAN involves a transdisciplinary team of experts in community ecology, statistics, and species recognition methods. Professor Otso Ovaskainen of the Faculty of Biological and Environmental Sciences at the University of Helsinki leads LIFEPLAN. It will sample urban and natural sites at 100 locations from late 2020 to 2027. "We are more than excited to see that 150 teams from all over the globe have registered their interest to join LIFEPLAN. We are seeking co-funding to include as many teams as possible beyond the 100 which will be supported by the Synergy award. Furthermore, while the spatial coverage of the sampling locations is already great, we would welcome teams from areas that are gaps in our current sampling coverage", says Ovaskainen.

LIFEPLAN's work will be advanced in collaboration with the Centre for Biodiversity Genomics (CBG) at the University of Guelph, iBOL's home base. The CBG's Director, Professor Paul Hebert, is leading efforts to collect the pilot data needed to implement LIFEPLAN's massive sampling program. Once the project is in full flight, the CBG will support sequence characterization of the many samples that will be collected using Malaise traps, Cyclone samplers, and by harvesting plant roots and soil. Hebert stated that "the CBG is delighted to aid a project which will make such an important contribution to our understanding of global biodiversity patterns".



The CBG's involvement began as a collaboration focused on the Global Spore Sampling Project (GSSP) which is now a key component of LIFEPLAN. The GSSP involved 50 sampling sites on all continents which employed Cyclone samplers to survey spore diversity on a biweekly basis. A pilot study [<https://doi.org/10.3389/fevo.2019.00511>] examined samples from locations in Australia, Europe, and Greenland. The results showed highly consistent patterns, suggesting that GSSP will aid systematic global fungal monitoring, enabling estimation of their total diversity, the global distribution of different groups, fruiting phenology, and long-distance dispersal. The collaboration with LIFEPLAN will also enable the integration of advanced species identification methods into the BOLD (www.boldsystems.org) informatics platform developed by the CBG.

Source: [International Barcode of Life](https://www.boldsystems.org)

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