

European Red List of Insect Taxonomists

Call for Tenders ENV/2020/OP/0018 of 25-06-20

SERVICE CONTRACT – No. 07.0202/2020/839671/SER/ENV.2. Project Assessment of Taxonomic Expertise in Europe – ‘European Red List’ of Taxonomists, to be developed by a Consortium formed by Pensoft Publishers (group leader), IUCN and CETAF.

Rationale

The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 strengthens the ambition for the conservation of insects through its general objectives on nature protection and restoration, and more specifically through its commitment to reverse the decline of pollinating insects. Already in 2018, the European Commission launched the EU Pollinators Initiative focused on wild pollinators. Recent studies (van Klinck et al. 2020) on insect declines have made it to media front pages across the world.

A second aspect of this problem has been acknowledged in the context of the European Red List as a limiting factor to biodiversity conservation: the ability to study the diversity of insect life due to the loss of specialised taxonomic knowledge. Without taxonomists, it will not be possible to document the populations and trends of species, and thus to assess their conservation status. Our very ability to protect threatened species will be compromised.

In response to the Commission’s recognition of the risk of disappearance of taxonomic expertise expressed in this Call for tender, the consortium formed by Pensoft, IUCN and Pensoft strongly positioned to mobilize the best of both worlds of “classic” and “molecular” taxonomy towards the identification of taxonomic expertise.

Aims and Objectives

The overall objective of this project is an assessment of taxonomic expertise on insects in Europe on pan-European and EU-level (EU27), including national level assessments for some taxa of particular importance as pollinators. To that end, we will develop, test and affirm a novel methodology, based on similar principles as used under the IUCN Red Listing process. The aim of such a methodology is to carry out an assessment of the current expert capacity of insect taxonomists across Europe by taxonomic groups. This assessment will be applied on the data collected and curated during the first ten months of the project. We plan to link various data maintained by the taxonomic experts themselves through their profile (e.g. ORCID), the institutions they are affiliated to, and the research outputs they are producing.

In concrete terms, our service proposal will provide:

- detailed information on the actual number, location and profile of insect taxonomists and will detect the past and future trends of insect taxonomic expertise;
- recommendations for strengthening the taxonomic expertise in Europe;
- communication materials designed to improve the general understanding among policy makers, the interested parties and general public at large, for the need of a strong European taxonomic community in order to tackle the decline of insects and safeguard their essential contribution to healthy ecosystems and human well-being.

Our commitment is to deliver a high-quality product through:

- the use of the state-of-the-art information and expertise, available through expert networks and organisations in this domain; and
- the application of the latest technology and methods for pulling together information and transforming it into a knowledge product, fully compliant with the official EU standards and open data policy.

The principal outcome of the project will be a characterisation of the current landscape of insect taxonomic expertise across Europe, complemented and verified through direct contact with the relevant organisations and individual researchers present in the expansive networks of the tenderers. The compiled dataset will provide a first systematic analysis of the *status quo* of the insect taxonomic expertise and facilitate to identify gaps and trends. The analyses will be presented through a high-level **summary dashboard** which can be used to convey clear messages to support informed decisions on future investments and help raise public awareness about the looming insect taxonomic erosion in Europe. The results will be made available to the public through the EU Pollinators Information Hive.

How the data requested by CETAF will be used

The request of taxonomist emails requested by CETAF will be transferred to a secured database specifically created for this tender that will be developed and maintained by Pensoft. Once the first set of data is collected, a personal invitation will be sent to all the taxonomists identified, asking for them for an expertise self-declaration and to provide further details about their field(s) of work. The data minimisation principle will be applied, i.e. the collection and use of personal and research data will be reduced to the minimum necessary. All data will be collected, processed, stored, and analysed on a secure server, protected from interference and misuse through state-of-the-art security measures. Both, the [CETAF Privacy policy](#) and [the Pensoft GDPR policy](#) will apply to all lists, forms and databases containing personal data.