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C8.1.1 Report on existing training resources for taxonomy in Europe

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Dissemination Level		
PU	Public	X
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	

The report is a **listing of the existing training resources for taxonomy** collected by the European Distributed Institute of Taxonomy (EDIT, Workpackage 8 - Training and Public Awareness).

European science is facing a tremendous loss of taxonomic expertise. Despite the availability of a well developed taxonomic infrastructure, European taxonomic research, including its collection management aspects, increasingly relies on an aging taxonomic community, with permanent staff often over 50 years old and with a significant input by retired researchers and skilled amateurs who frequently have to self-fund their research.

Efforts to find enthusiastic young people with an interest in becoming qualified taxonomists are thwarted by insufficient training opportunities and a lack of long-term professional prospects. To address this problem, education is an essential component of EDIT. The main challenge is to stop the loss of taxonomic expertise, and have this negative trend reversed in 5-10 years from now. EDIT will strive to achieve this by increasing the transfer of knowledge and by establishing an integrated European training programme for taxonomy. In parallel, public education will increase the awareness of the vital contribution that taxonomy can make to biodiversity and ecosystem research, and consistent lobbying will contribute to enhance interest of decision makers and funding agencies.

A first step towards the integration of the training programmes in taxonomy for Europe is to know what is the current offer in training. The report is an effort to fulfill this need.

Data sources

The listing of existing training resources for taxonomy in Europe is based on the answers to the questionnaire “**Assessment on training resources for taxonomy**”, on additional information from interviews (face to face, by e-mailing and telephone calls), on existing websites and reports. The survey was carried out between 15 December 2006 and 30 September 2007.

EDIT is a European project focusing on the training organised by European institutions. However, the survey was open to a broad audience with an interest in taxonomy and as a consequence, information on trainings organised outside Europe was gathered too. These responses will also be included in the present report.

The online survey “Assessment on training resources for taxonomy” was designed to collect information on:

- (1) the identity of the respondents and training organisers,
- (2) the accessibility to the training,
- (3) the training content,
- (4) the training material and teaching aid.

This survey was made available online from December 2006 onwards. A call to fill in the questionnaire was launched via the EDIT network and other channels, such as TAXACOM (a mailing list on biological systematics), the European Research on Biodiversity discussion group (EUROBI), DIVERSITAS, Desert*Net, BioNET-INTERNATIONAL, the Global Biodiversity Information Network (GBIF), the Taxonomic Database Working Group (TDWG) and the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI) National Focal Points. Moreover, the request was sent to

museums, universities, botanical gardens, herbaria, councils, societies and other institutions from about 80 countries.

Additional information on training was gathered from interviews. The information received on the courses covered the same main issues as the online survey but was generally less detailed.

The information was filtered to keep only trainings whose main focus is taxonomy. Consequently, this step excluded the bachelor's lectures with programmes only addressing what taxonomy is and all the inconsistent entries. Finally, a total of 203 complete sets of information on training in taxonomy were gathered (147 from online survey and 56 from interviews). Furthermore, 62 contacts with people involved in taxonomical training were made. Since these contacts did not produce any formal information on training, they were not integrated in this report but will be used in the future to complete our expert database.

EDIT is a European project focusing on the training courses organised by European institutions. However, the survey was open to a broad audience with an interest in taxonomy and consequently we received also information on training organised outside Europe. Forty-five (45) sets of information on training in taxonomy were collected and 27 additional contacts were made. This information will be presented separately from the European results and can be consulted here.

Despite the large effort invested to reach the people involved in taxonomic training, gaps in the results from the survey and interviews still exist. A few countries (Belgium, Slovakia, UK, Netherlands and Denmark) contributed largely to the effort while the gathered information on other countries ranges from incomplete to lacking. Therefore a continuing effort to address the gaps will be performed.

Listing of training resources for taxonomy

A complete listing of the inventoried trainings can be found at the EDIT website:

<http://www.e-taxonomy.eu/trainingresources/>