

Annex 7. Topic 7: Innovative cross-disciplinary projects focused on involvement of citizen scientists in monitoring biodiversity hotspots

1. Challenges to address by the Proposal

Citizen science (as defined by the [European Citizen Science Association](#) and the '[10 principles of citizen science](#)'¹⁾) is already an established instrument, to contribute to the generation of taxonomic data needed to understand the loss of biodiversity, increase public interest, engagement, behavioural change and ultimately influence policy level decisions and progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals. However, several challenges are associated with citizen science generated data, also in the field of taxonomy. Successful proposals should be citizen science projects generating taxonomic data or providing capacity building near local biodiversity hotspots or protected areas addressing as many of the following challenges as possible:

- Ensure quality and reliability of data collected by citizen scientists by providing appropriate training and instructions to volunteers, and implementing standardised and rigorous protocols for data collection
- Engage and support participants appropriately to raise maximum interest, provide feedback on the results and impact of the citizen science generated data, and foster long-term community engagement
- Address the issues of sampling bias and insufficient or uneven coverage by the appropriate protocols Aim for standardised data collection and integration to ensure interoperability of the data and enhance their scientific value
- Make data and campaign outcomes openly accessible to the citizen scientists themselves, the public, the scientific community as well as policy makers
- Address ethical concerns related to data privacy, informed consent and any potential impacts on the species or ecosystems being studied

All projects should aim to be as inclusive as possible and involve citizens from different backgrounds and age groups, as well as strive for gender balance, unless this is not possible for a specific reason (to be stated in the application).

Proposals can take any form of citizen engagement and involvement (e.g. longer-term campaigns for example throughout the year, bioblitzes, educational campaigns etc). Projects under this topic are not under the obligation to generate taxonomic data for the taxa in the other call topics, but may do so.

2. Practical impact on site

Proposals should clearly demonstrate how they will contribute to biodiversity conservation and/or monitoring efforts in identified hotspots or in protected areas. Proposals can contribute to pre-existing monitoring or conservation efforts, demonstrating a clear new value or need, or be new initiatives. Proposals should also include a description of how they aim to raise citizen awareness, participation and integration into the project. Projects putting the focus on more-in-depth or longer educational campaigns, should describe the capacity building potential. All projects should describe how they will contribute to sustainable community engagement or behaviour change (if applicable).

The proposal should also include a well-defined plan for data collection, analysis, and dissemination of results, as well as a clear description of how the project outcomes will be used to inform decision-making processes.

¹Ten principles of citizen science, ECSA. - <https://www.ecsa.ngo/documents/>

If a project addresses a particular need of a local biodiversity hotspot or protected area, or development or improvement of citizen engagement, this should be stated in the proposal.

3. Collaboration approach (compulsory activities)

To effect impact, citizen science projects require the support of local stakeholders and the local population. Proposals can be community-initiated or led by experts, and should involve a cross-disciplinary team of experts and stakeholders, including, for example, biologists, ecologists, data scientists, citizen scientists, and representatives from relevant policy and management organisations. The proposal should outline a clear framework for stakeholder engagement, including how citizen scientists will be recruited, trained, involved and supported throughout the project. Support by a TETTRIs project consultant with expertise in citizen science will be available for successful proposals to provide advice during the project planning, execution and evaluation if needed. Proposals are also encouraged to link geographical regions, or cross country borders when appropriate for the chosen biodiversity hotspot.

4. Innovation

Proposals can include own creative activities and innovations, such as **(but not limited to)**:

- novel and innovative approaches to biodiversity monitoring and/or conservation, using cutting-edge technologies and/or new methodologies.
- Novel or innovative approaches of citizen education, engagement or involvement in the project, particularly in terms of ensuring sustainability of citizen engagement and fostering a sense of environmental stewardship.
- Proposals should clearly describe the innovative aspects of the project and how they will contribute to advancing the field of biodiversity science.

5. Expected outcomes

- Proposals should raise public awareness and engagement with taxonomic research, biodiversity and conservation, with special focus on local/regional particularities (e.g. a particular species, ecosystem etc.)
- The data generated should directly contribute to local or regional conservation efforts, in terms of societal or policy-level change. The proposal should also demonstrate the effort to generate data able to be integrated into national and European-level taxonomic classification databases and platforms, and data and summarized results should be openly available and accessible.
- Proposals focusing on educational campaigns should clearly demonstrate their value for capacity building in taxonomic research and education, and demonstrate their efforts to be as inclusive as possible.

6. Specific conditions

Proposal leaders/consortia should have proven expertise/skills in citizen science campaigns and citizen engagement in the field of biodiversity, and should be well connected to local stakeholders. As stated above, projects can take a longer-term nature, or be short-term campaigns but should demonstrate significant impact. In case proposals are evaluated equally, co-creation or more in-depth involvement of citizens in the proposal (in addition to data collection), or proposals encouraging collaboration with other projects, institutions, local or other governmental authorities will be given priority.

General Instructions to applicants:

To be considered for funding, proposals should clearly address all three key aspects of the topic, i.e. 1) demonstrating a strong practical impact, 2) implement a collaborative approach, and 3) integrate innovative dimensions to biodiversity identification, monitoring and/or conservation.

Proposals should provide a detailed budget and timeline, as well as clear metrics for measuring project success.

Applicants should also demonstrate relevant experience and expertise in areas such as biodiversity science, citizen science, data analysis, and stakeholder engagement.

See the Call text for further detailed information and instructions on eligibility, budget, content of the proposal and other formal requirements