

The European Tracking Network: Connecting biotelemetry users in Europe

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Aquatic biotelemetry techniques have proven to be valuable tools to generate knowledge on species behaviour, gather oceanographic data and help in assessing effects from anthropogenic disturbances. These observations support international policies and directives, needed for species and habitat conservation. As aquatic systems are highly interconnected and cross administrative borders, optimal data collection and integration should be organized on a large scale. This need, triggered the development of regional, national and international aquatic animal tracking network initiatives around the globe.

Despite the large and growing number of researchers using biotelemetry in Europe, no formal collaborative network structure existed. To meet the demand for a Pan-European aquatic telemetry network, the European Tracking Network (ETN) was launched in 2017 in the framework of the European projects AtlantOS (<https://www.atlantos-h2020.eu/>) and LifeWatch (<http://www.lifewatch.be/etn>) (Abecasis et al. under review).

The overarching objective of ETN is to ensure a transition from a loosely-coordinated set of existing regional telemetry initiatives to a sustainable, efficient and integrated Pan-European biotelemetry network embedded in the related European and global initiatives. This will be achieved through: 1) the implementation of a centralised European database, with requirements and policy mapped to the data standards of existing international biotelemetry data systems, 2) improving the usefulness and inter-applicability of currently available technology and foster technological advancements, 3) promoting the establishment of key telemetry infrastructure and research on key species and 4) providing technical training and disseminate knowledge to (early career) researchers.

With ETN, Europe will be positioned in the global arena of aquatic telemetry network initiatives.

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