



## European Raptor Biomonitoring Facility



### A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND CORE GROUP

This is our first ERBFacility Newsletter and we hope you like it. Many of you will have been with us for our Third General Meeting in Oporto in February, shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated lockdowns across Europe. We hope you are all keeping safe and well. It may be some time before we can safely meet again, so we are pleased to stay in touch with you through this Newsletter.

COST Actions are designed to advance in particular through face-to-face meetings and through individuals carrying out short-term scientific missions. Clearly, such activities are currently very limited. Indeed, following the lockdowns, we had to cancel three meetings scheduled for April – a WG<sub>3</sub> (Collections) meeting in Leiden, a meeting for National Coordinators in Berlin, and a face-to-face Core Group meeting in Brussels.

#### GP4 BUDGET AND PROGRAMME APPROVED

Following the 4th Management Committee meeting in Porto, the Work Programme and Budget for the current Grant Period, GP4 (1 May 2020 to 30 April 2021) was approved in early May. Funding has been made available by the COST Association through our Grant Holder, the University of Murcia.

The Core Group is however working to maintain progress through remote activities. This Newsletter provides an overview of this ongoing work – including appointment of National Coordinators, work on the Proof of Concept, and recent publications.

Meetings and missions are planned for the second half of the current Grant Period (Nov 2020 – April 2021), when we hope travel may be less challenging – please keep an eye on the website for meeting announcements. Meanwhile, we look forward to meeting with many of you through our virtual meetings.

Many of you will be aware of the very sad news that Professor Richard Shore died in July. Richard was a highly valued friend and colleague to all of us on the Core Group and will be sorely missed. We have published [a tribute to Richard](#) on the website.

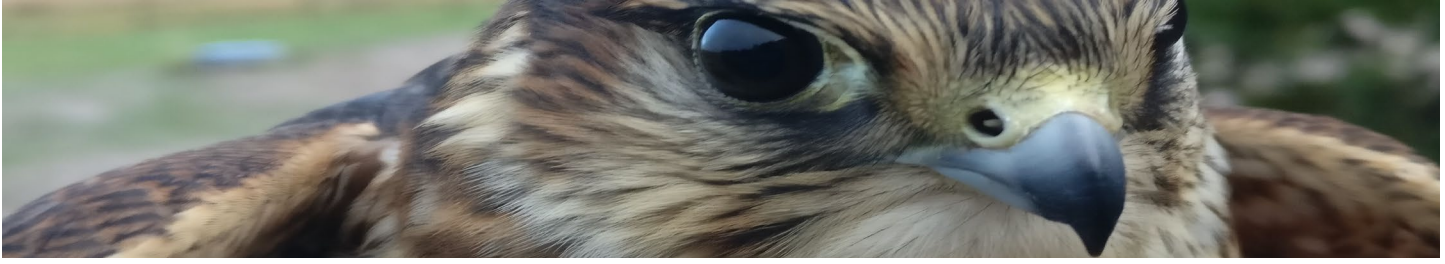
#### PORTO MEETING OUTCOMES

*ERBFacility convened its Third General Meeting together with its Fourth Management Committee Meeting and a Cross-Working Group meeting at the Hall of Biodiversity in the Porto Botanical Garden on 4-6 February 2020.*

The meeting was attended by c. 60 participants from 23 countries. The General Meeting heard progress reports from each Working Group including the work of the various missions that took place in Grant Period 3 ending April 2020 (GP<sub>3</sub>). The meeting also discussed plans for the remaining project period including GP<sub>4</sub> (to 30 April 2021) and GP<sub>5</sub> (the final 6 months to October 2022), including meetings and missions. Break-out sessions worked on the Proof of Concept, capacity-building and communication and dissemination.

The Management Committee Meeting reviewed in more detail the plans and budgets for GP<sub>4</sub> and GP<sub>5</sub> and also reviewed implementation of COST policies. MC encourages engagement from early career investigators and from researchers in [Inclusiveness Target Countries](#). The Cross Working-Group meeting allowed for more detailed discussions on the Proof of Concept and on planning for ERBFacility legacy.

A full report of the Porto meeting will be made available shortly on the website



## PROOF OF CONCEPT STUDY

Work has started on implementation of the ERBFacility Proof of Concept study, coordinated by Rafa Mateo and Rui Lourenco with the support of the Core Group. The study aims to demonstrate the use of raptors for pan-European contaminant monitoring, with a focus on spatial variation in selected contaminants.

A communication has recently been issued, in collaboration with the LIFE APEX project, to collections across Europe (museums, specimen banks and other collections), to gather data on frozen specimens of 4 priority species: Common Buzzard, Tawny Owl, Common Kestrel and Barn Owl (substituted by Long-Eared Owl for Iceland).

This specimen data will later be used to select specimens for analysis as part of the ERBFacility Proof of Concept. It will also be used by LIFE APEX to source samples for non-target screening of 65000+ substances, and wide-scope target analysis of 2400+ substances, as well as target analyses for rodenticides, PCBs/PDBEs and Hg, to deliver data of particular relevance for regulatory applications at EU level.

## APPOINTMENT OF NATIONAL COORDINATORS

The Porto workshop identified individuals willing to act as National Coordinators for ERBFacility. National Coordinators will play an important role in supporting ERBFacility work within their respective countries, including work on the Proof of Concept. Invitations were issued in June and National Coordinators have now been confirmed for most countries across Europe.

## TWO ERBFACILITY PAPERS PUBLISHED

*Two key publications arising from ERBFacility activity have recently been published.:*

A paper by Badry et al. entitled 'Towards harmonisation of chemical monitoring using avian apex predators: Identification of key species for pan-European biomonitoring', published in Science of The Total Environment, identifies Common Buzzard and Tawny Owl as the most suitable species for pan-European biomonitoring of Pb, Hg, rodenticides, pesticides and veterinary medicinal products. This paper is built on the findings of the Thessaloniki meeting in February 2019 and was worked up through a mission hosted by Richard Shore. The paper underpins the species selection for both the ongoing ERBFacility Proof of Concept study and LIFE APEX demonstration activities.

A paper by Espin et al. entitled 'A schematic sampling protocol for contaminant monitoring in raptors' published in Ambio introduces this new protocol, which is published with the paper as Supplementary Material. The protocol will help increase sampling capacity, ensure appropriate quality of samples and facilitate harmonization of procedures to maximize the reliability and comparability of data collected in different countries.

***Due to challenging situation caused by COVID-19, and the restrictions imposed in response to the pandemic, WG<sub>3</sub> meeting in Leiden, WG<sub>4</sub> 'ERBFacility Ambassadors' meeting in Berlin and Core Group meeting in Brussels have been postponed.***

***The fourth General Meeting (GM<sub>4</sub>) and fifth Core Group meeting (MC<sub>5</sub>) are planned to be organized in March 2021 in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain.***

Stay tuned for news about future meetings and events at <https://erbfacility.eu/events> and on ERBFacility Facebook page

Stay safe and healthy,

The ERBFacility Core Group