





Dear readers.

CETAF unites Europe's natural history institutes, museums, and botanical gardens, which hold approximately 1.5 billion specimens (representing approximately 80% of global biodiversity) and employ over 5,000 researchers. This is a very valuable asset. As a vital interface between science and policy, CETAF engages with the public in biodiversity issues, reaching tens of millions of visitors annually. Our members excel in EU research programs, and CETAF leads DiSSCo, a key European research infrastructure that digitises collections to support both science and policy.

The unprecedented need for scaled up action on biodiversity, the development of the CSRD, and the endorsement of the Global Biodiversity Framework objectives by all EU Member States create a dynamic path for our members to follow. By leveraging our community as a nexus, we can harness knowledge, technology, and expertise to deliver scientific insights and cutting-edge technologies. All this is vital at a time when biodiversity is disappearing on an unprecedented scale.

These insights have been fundamental in drafting the new strategy for CETAF. At CETAF55 in Oslo, we started the writing process with our members. In the following months, the ideas took their definitive shape. The final result was presented at CETAF56, where the directors of our institutions endorsed the plan unanimously.

At CETAF55 we also initiated the process to refine the operation of our Working Groups. This involved identifying critical needs, addressing structural weaknesses, and leveraging our collective strengths to achieve our goals.

These milestones come at a critical moment, while the launch of the Cali Biodiversity Fund at COP16 offers renewed hope. At the same time, geopolitical developments remind us just how fragile progress can be. These contrasting signals underscore the urgency of our mission and the importance of remaining united in our purpose.

On behalf of the CETAF Executive Committee, we are grateful for your unwavering commitment and collaboration. Together, we are building a stronger, more responsive consortium - one that is equipped to meet the challenges of our time and lead with integrity and vision.

Foreword

Edwin Van Huis President of CETAF



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Who we are

The Consortium of European Taxonomic Facilities (CETAF) is a European network of Natural Science and History Museums, Botanical Gardens and Biodiversity Research Centres. It is a unique network - unparalleled in Europe and beyond, that brings together 81 institutions across 27 European countries, represented by 46 CETAF members, including the continent's foremost natural history museums, botanic gardens, and biodiversity research centres. Collectively, they curate and manage an extraordinary 1.5 billion biological and geological specimens - representing nearly 80% of all species described to date.

These institutions, and the researchers within them, serve as custodians of an irreplaceable natural heritage. Their collections underpin essential research in geodiversity and biodiversity, especially in taxonomy and systematics, and drive groundbreaking discoveries across numerous scientific disciplines.

Our objectives are to promote **scientific research** and access to **European collections**, to foster European cooperation and partnerships, and to be a voice for taxonomy and systematic biology in Europe.



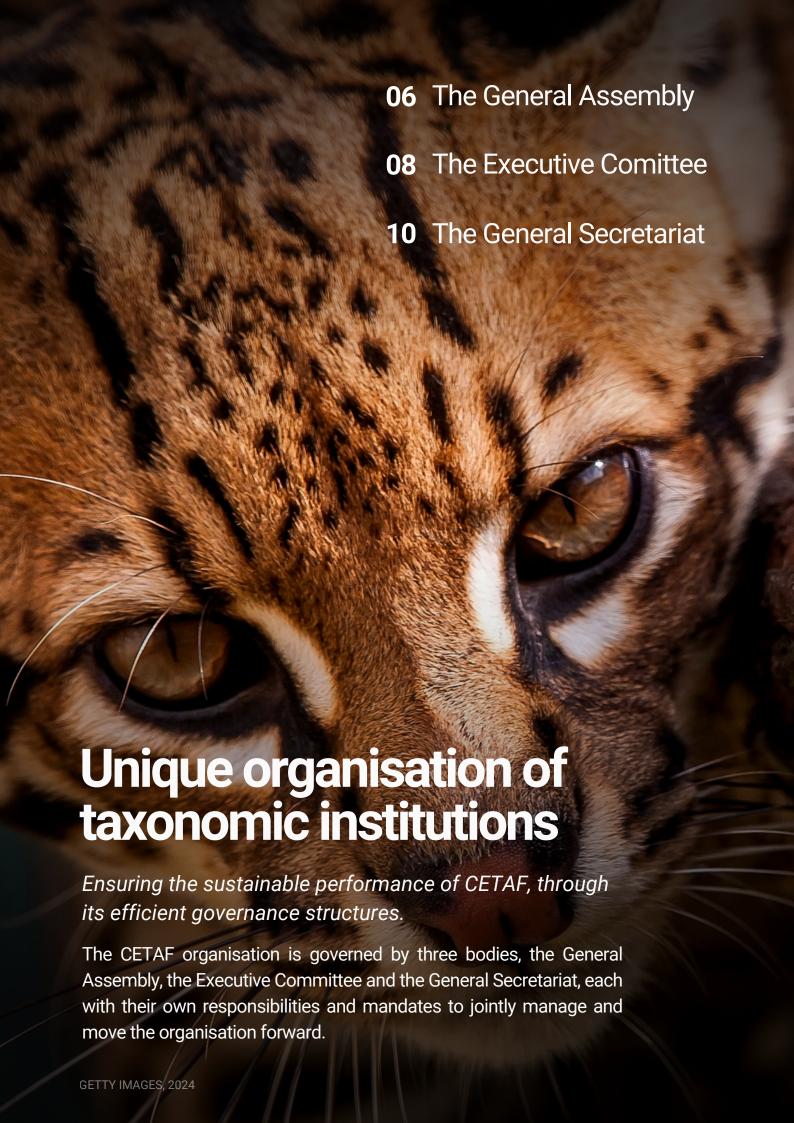
81
Institutions

27
Countries

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1.1 The General Assembly

The **General Assembly** is the primary governing body of CETAF, comprising representatives from its member institutions, that meets **twice a year** to set strategic direction and ensure alignment with its mission and long-term vision, approve budgets and accounts, and make major decisions for the future of CETAF. Moreover, these meetings aim to gather representatives of the scientific community to discuss relevant topics in the field and jointly address common issues.

In 2024, two General Assemblies were organised. The **55**th **General Assembly** (CETAF55) took place in Oslo, Norway (9-10 May), hosted by the Natural History Museum of the Norwegian capital. Later in the year, the **56**th **General Assembly** (CETAF56) constituted an absolute premiere for the Consortium. The meeting, held in Madrid on the 11th and 12th of November, represented the First Directors' Summit.

Over the course of CETAF55, the member representatives exchanged insights, discussed results and accomplishments, and outlined future plans related to operational matters. The Executive Board started on internal feedback to elaborate the **strategy for 2025-2030** and the structure of the Working Groups. The importance of integrative taxonomic research and data collection as a basis for natural sciences and appropriate policy formulation was also emphasized.

Another important outcome of CETAF55 was the expansion of the CETAF community. Delegates warmly welcomed four new institutions from two countries: **Lithuania's Nature Research Center** in Vilnius, along with **Portugal's Natural Science Museums** from the Universities of Coimbra, Porto, and Lisbon.

The main theme of CETAF56 was the urgency to act and to address the alarming rates of biodiversity decline and geodiversity degradation, which threatens life-supporting ecosystems. Moreover, CETAF56 served as a vital platform to discuss CETAF's new 5-year strategic plan (2025–2030) and define a shared vision.



CETAF56 General Assembly, Madrid, Spain, November 2024

1.2 The Executive Committee

The Executive Committee serves as CETAF's central decision-making body, providing strategic leadership, oversight, and ensuring that the organisation's goals and objectives are achieved. It is responsible for governance, resource management, and supporting the Secretariat in implementing the decisions of the General Assembly. Working in close collaboration with the **Executive Director** and **Secretariat**, the Committee aligns CETAF's vision and actions, identifies challenges, and develops initiatives to strengthen taxonomy and the taxonomic community.

Elected in November 2023, the current Executive Committee will lead CETAF from **2024 to 2027**. One of its first actions was to introduce a new **Strategy for 2025–2030**, replacing the previous 2015–2025 framework. This updated plan responds to current global biodiversity challenges and aligns CETAF's priorities with the European Green Deal and the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030.

The Committee also considers **Working Groups** as essential instruments to advance taxonomic research, reinforce cohesion within CETAF, and improve the performance of the community. At CETAF55, the "World Café" provided a space for dialogue between Working Group leaders and participants to explore how to improve efficiency and strategic impact. This review process, launched in 2024, will continue and is set to be finalised at CETAF57 in 2025.



CETAF Executive Comittee 2024-2027



Edwin Van Huis President Naturalis, Leiden, NL





François Dusoulier Treasurer MNHN, Paris, FR

Eva Häffner Secretary BGBM, Berlin, DE



Ordinary Members



Stefan Örgård NHM, Gothenburg, SE

Carole Paleco RBINS, Brussels, BE





Gergely Baboczsay HNHN, Budapest, HU

Gila Kahila Bar-Gal NNHC, Jerusalem, IL



1.3 The General Secretariat

The CETAF General Secretariat, based in **Brussels**, drives the organisation's daily operations and strategic positioning under the General Assembly and Executive Committee. It represents CETAF at European and international levels, advocating for taxonomy's role in global sustainability and promoting the value of natural science collections.

Through partnerships, EU-funded projects, and community initiatives, the Secretariat strengthens taxonomic expertise, advances the digital transformation of collections, and amplifies CETAF's global impact. Its staff supports **advocacy**, **project coordination**, **communication**, and **administration**, with new additions in 2024 enhancing capacity. Working closely with the Executive Committee, the Secretariat also supports **governance**, **resource management**, and the review of Working Groups, which will conclude at CETAF57 in 2025.

During 2024 the team was reinforced with a new **Operations Officer** and a **Full Stack Developer**.



Ana Casino Executive Director

Laura Tilley Project Coordinator





Marko Lovric Advocacy and Engagement Officer

Marta León TETTRIs Project Manager





Anosone Sygnavong Operations Officer

Alessandro Marchi Communications Officer





Alessio Glorioso Full stack developer

1.4 Making bigger the CETAF community

One of the key highlights of the 55th CETAF General Assembly was the expansion of its network with the addition of four new member institutions, bringing the total to 81 institutions across 27 countries. Among the new members are the **Nature Research Centre** (NRC) in Lithuania and a national consortium of **Portuguese universities**: Coimbra, Lisbon, and Porto.

The **University of Coimbra**, founded in **1290**, is the oldest university in Portugal and a **UNESCO** World Heritage Site. It plays a leading role in national scientific infrastructures such as PRISC and PORBIOTA and houses significant biological collections. Its herbarium holds around **800,000 specimens**, including African and Iberian flora, historical collections like the Moritz Willkomm Herbarium, and many type specimens. The university's Science Museum preserves more than 500,000 zoological specimens, including approximately 300,000 insects, reflecting a rich scientific tradition in the Portuguese-speaking world.





Meanwhile, the **University of Porto** contributes through its **Natural History and Science Museum**, which serves both as a traditional museum and a modern science center. It maintains extensive collections in zoology, botany, paleontology, geology, and anthropology, and places strong emphasis on research, education, and public engagement.





The **University of Lisbon** is represented in CETAF by MUHNAC – the National Museum of Natural History and Science, part of the Museums of the University of Lisbon. MUHNAC aims to foster curiosity and public understanding of science and nature, bringing the university closer to society. This mission is achieved through the care and promotion of its collections, university heritage, and a wide range of research, exhibitions, conferences, and cultural, educational, and leisure activities.





On the other hand, the **Nature Research Centre** (NRC) of Lithuania, with academic roots dating back to the 19th century, is a major scientific institution comprising **22 research laboratories**. These labs focus on biodiversity studies, ecosystem dynamics, environmental risk assessments, and bioremediation. NRC hosts some of the most important scientific collections in the Baltic region, including:

- An entomological collection with over 100,000 specimens and more than 100 type specimens.
- A herbarium (BILAS) with over 150,000 specimens, some dating back to the 18th century.
- The largest collection of **bird blood** parasites in Europe (over 35,000 specimens).
- A paleontological collection with more than **50,000 scientifically** valuable fossils.





By joining CETAF, these institutions not only strengthen international collaboration but also reaffirm their commitment to advancing biodiversity science and conservation in Europe and beyond. The NRC, in particular, seeks to bridge knowledge gaps between Central and Northern Europe and looks forward to benefiting from and contributing to the collective voice, expertise, and shared resources of the CETAF community.



GETTY IMAGES, 2024

2.1 The First Directors' Summit main outcome

On **November 18–19**, over **50 directors** from Europe's leading Natural History Museums and Botanical Gardens gathered in Madrid for a landmark moment in CETAF's journey. This in-person summit marked the conclusion of an extensive collaborative process and saw the unanimous endorsement of the **CETAF Strategy 2025–2030**.

This forward-looking plan responds to a changing world —where biodiversity and geodiversity are under mounting pressure, and science must adapt swiftly. The newly adopted strategy outlines four strategic objectives, each rooted in CETAF's core vision: a world where natural science collections and biodiversity knowledge shape a sustainable future.

CETAF's mission remains to champion taxonomy and systematics research by connecting experts, advancing collection-based science, and expanding access to knowledge. These goals are underpinned by shared values: openness, diversity, collaboration, public engagement, and responsible innovation.

Objective I: CETAF as the Voice of Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Advocating for the central role of biodiversity expertise, CETAF will elevate the visibility of collection-based science to inform decision-making.

Objective III: CETAF as Driver of Cross-Sector Collaboration

The plan strengthens ties with public and private actors, developing shared tools and involving citizen scientists in biodiversity action.

Objective II: CETAF as Catalyst for Taxonomic Research

With initiatives like CETAF-DEST, the strategy prioritises knowledge exchange, advanced training, and support for the next generation of taxonomists.

Objective IV: CETAF as Data Space Enabler

By supporting digitisation, integration, and global data partnerships, CETAF aims to position DiSSCo and its members at the forefront of biodiversity research infrastructure.

Progress will be tracked through KPIs and annual action plans. With this renewed direction, CETAF affirms its leadership and unity in shaping a sustainable, knowledge-driven future for biodiversity and geodiversity.



3.1 Collaborative work of the community

The community experts are gathered around Working Groups (WG) that tackle specific areas of interest, promote instrumental pathways and drive progress to address challenges encountered in the field of taxonomy. The working groups operate independently, though strongly linked in crosscutting issues, and adapt their work programme to their needs and goals. They present their work to the General Assembly on an annual basis, while the working group leaders meet several times a year to exchange experiences and discuss topics of common interest.

Earth Sciences Working Group

Coordinator: Laura Tilley (CETAF GS, Brussels, BE)

Under the Coordination of Laura Tilley (CETAF), the ESG had a productive year. They clinched the opportunity to participate in the **Past to Future Project** (P2F) as mentioned in the paragraph on the incoming initiatives. The ESG presented a talk (virtually) at the **Italian Geological Congress** (September 2025) titled: Unveiling Earths Archives: Harnessing Earth Science Collections to Navigate Modern Challenges.

The group also revived and expanded the **Field Collection Regulations** survey/database which provides information on EU countries regulations relevant to collecting geological samples in the fields. The next step is to transfer this information to airtable and make this data publicly available.

In the meantime, the Working Group is also elaborating some developments to further improve **GeoCASe 2.0**. One idea is to streamline and make the data flow easier and more centralised for institutions. The technicalities are still under review.

The WG received a proposal from the Natural Science Museum of Barcelona to engage into an initiative to strongly push and improve and

Standardise Earth Science Data standards and vocabularies. In response to this, the ESG has started the development of a publication on **enhancing geological specimen data**, which is proposed to provide a desk study of how to enhance the quality, discoverability, and usability of Earth Science collection data by aligning them with FAIR principles and addressing challenges in data interoperability.

The aim is to use this publication's findings to help enhance the GeoCASe 2.0 portal and make it a unique hub for geological standardized data. Additionally to improve providing quality Earth Science data to DiSSCo.

Legislation and Regulations Group

Coordinator: Dirk Neumann (LIB, Hamburg, DE)

The Legislation and Regulations Group gathers information on regulations and legislation potentially affecting CETAF members research activities or operations and represents CETAF as relevant stakeholder at the science-policy interface. This WG was initiated in 2012 and was one of the earliest CETAF Working Groups. Its main objective is the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol

and the transport of preserved natural history specimens over international borders. The group has continued during 2024, providing advice and training to members but also to partners in projects such as Biodiversity Genomics Europe (BGE). Apart from that, Regulations Legislation and participates in regular meetings of the CETAF General Assembly or prepares information for such meetings, as required. It also engages and exchanges directly with similar working groups, for example the Legislation and Regulations Committee of the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC), or the Alliance of University and Biodiversity Research Non-University Germany and the Leibniz **Biodiversity** Research Alliance.

European Projects Advisory Group

Coordinator: Ana Casino and Marko Lovric (CETAF GS, Brussels, BE)

Coordinated by the **CETAF** General Secretariat (Ana Casino and Marko Lovric), the European Projects Advisory Group (EPAG) exists to serve as a central information and advisory hub on European opportunities for the funding CETAF community. It aims to simplify streamline access to EU funding, especially in biodiversity and taxonomic research. EPAG addresses the fragmented and complex funding landscape by helping institutions navigate opportunities, build partnerships and strengthen collaboration among CETAF institutions. 2024 was а particularly productive where the Group year, conceptualised a brand new way of stimulating inter-member collaboration in EU funding programmes, to be rolled out in early 2025. Apart from designing the mock-up version of the so-called EPAG-CETAF

Database, EPAG also produced its Strategy and organised a webinar for CETAF-related researchers interested in collaborating more closely with the working group. At the webinar, the coordinators proposed to establish a network of EPAG 'Contact Points', responsible for engaging directly with the Group and providing links with the home institutions when it comes to discussions on various funding opportunities.



Digitisation WG

Coordinator: Heimo Rainer (NHM, Vienna, AT)

To increase the capacity of the community to digitise collections, including specimens, libraries and archives, and develop standards for this digitisation is the main goal of the Digitisation WG. This group works closely with the community's Research Infrastructure DiSSCo (Distributed System of Scientific Collections), which is currently in its transition phase towards constituting the

legal entity, an ERIC, that will operate and manage the infrastructure (foreseen for 2026). During 2024, chairship of the group changed and under the **new guidance** led by Heimo Rainer (Natural History Museum of Vienna) the basics were initiated with the distribution experiences of foster synergies in digitising natural history collections and towards the building of a common knowledge base for digitisation activities.



Training and e-Learning in Taxonomy Group

Coordinator: lasmi Stathi and Katerina Voreadou (NHM UoC, GR)

The CETAF Training and e-Learning in Taxonomy Group works to develop a vision for e-learning within CETAF and to provide a **Virtual Learning Environment** around the discipline of Taxonomy, towards fostering capacity building for online education on

taxonomy. It does this through exchanging experiences and good practices in internetbased education and investigating the possibilities for developing a system of training certificates and recognition at EU level for the educational activities of CETAF members. The group coordinator (lasmi Stathi, from Natural History Museum of the University of Crete) stands also as leader of Distributed European School Taxonomy (CETAF-DEST). During 2024, the group intensified the work to build the new DEST Business Plan, to be presented in 2025.

> Collections Group

Coordinator: Luc Willemse (Naturalis, NL)

CETAF Collections Group (CCG) continued to strengthen its role as a collaborative platform for curators and collection managers across European natural history institutions, with a strong emphasis on collections management. Its overarching goal is the development of a sustainable network that advances interoperability and harmonisation, while also providing training, promoting efficiency, enhancing accessibility, and supporting longterm preservation. The group maintains active collaboration with key international initiatives and organisations, including the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC), the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), the International Council of Museums (ICOM), as well as major Research Infrastructures such as DiSSCo and ELIXIR. Among its practical activities, the CCG has continued work on blueprints for Collection Space and Collection Move, conceived as pilot frameworks that could be adapted to other areas of common interest. In September 2024, the group's long-standing leader, Luc Willemse, retired, and by the end of the year a successor had not yet been appointed.

Information Science& TechnologyCommission

Coordinator: Anton Güntsch (BGBM, Berlin, DE)

The Information Science & Technology Commission (ISTC) facilitates dialogue and collaboration between the **IT departments** of CETAF member and **non-member institutions** to ensure implementation of technical services for interoperability through the development of common infrastructures and standards.

Led by **Anton Güntsch** (Botanic Garden Botanic Museum, University of Berlin), the group works towards compatibility of components for digital information exchange and sharing, through procedural changes and adaptations to IT systems. Current topics of the ISTC include the development of a **global registration system** for type specimens, **Collection Management Systems** (CMS), collaboration between citizen science platforms as well as AI, robotics, and digital collections.

Biodiversity Monitoring Working Group

Coordinator: David Ott (LIB, Bonn, DE)

The CETAF Biodiversity Monitoring Working Group (BiodivMG) focuses on **channeling CETAF expertise** towards documenting biodiversity change, identifying drivers of population decline, and developing solutions that address biodiversity loss across Europe. Its mission also extends to advancing ecological applications of high societal relevance. By employing cutting-edge technologies, the group aims to compile comprehensive inventories of European

biodiversity at the species level and to design monitoring programmes that are both largescale and finely resolved.

Throughout 2024, the BiodivMG entered a phase of **redefinition**, during which much of its effort was focused on reassessing its scope and refining its future directions. This period of reflection and strategic adjustment aimed to ensure that the group's activities remain aligned with **pressing biodiversity challenges** and with CETAF's broader mission.



e-Publishing Working Group

Coordinator: Laurence Benichou (MNHM Paris, FR) and Isabelle Gerard (Africamuseum, Tervuren, BE)

The e-Publishing Working Group addresses the need to support scientific online publishing and encourage FAIR access. The group is jointly run by Isabelle Gérard (Royal Museum of Central Africa, Tervuren) and Laurence Benichou (National Museum of

Natural History in Paris) operates as a driving force in scientific publishing, particularly academic publishing on biodiversity and addresses all questions on Fair access to publication, Al access, Copyright, data mining, data reuse etc. The group's activity in general is closely linked to the European Journal of Taxonomy (EJT) which serves as a laboratory for the implementation of new technologies and best practices promoted by the E-Publishing group, and works to expand, support and promote this journal as a community endorsed initiative. In 2024, the group actively participated in the launch of the **Disentis roadmap** and the development of an action plan. The E-Publishing group was part of the **BICIKL project** led by the publisher Pensoft, which ended in 2024. The e-Publishing working plan for 2024 also included the drafting of a collaborative joint paper on Non-Copyrightability in scientific publishing in taxonomy, the definition and implementation of XML-first based workflows for taxonomic journals and finally the implementation of GBIF hosted portals allowing FAIR journals to display their data within GBIF (see EJT, DBJ, and lots of other journals...).

Scientific Research Group

Coordinator: Gila Kahila (NNHC HUJ Jerusalem, IL) and Thierry Bourgoin (MNHN Paris, FR)

The CETAF Scientific Research Group was established to coordinate the research agenda of CETAF institutions, with a focus on strategic priorities and political positioning within major scientific and research frameworks such as the European Research Area (ERA). In 2024, the group underwent a period of reevaluation to ensure its role and aligned with the activities are fully forthcoming CETAF Strategy 2025-2030. To this end, several discussions were held at

the level of the CETAF Executive Committee, exploring different pathways for the group's future evolution and how it might best serve the collective scientific ambitions of the consortium. These deliberations will continue into 2025, with proposals to be further examined and addressed during the General Assembly in Luxembourg, ensuring that the group's redefined scope responds both to institutional needs and to broader European research policy developments.



Communications Working Group

Coordinator: Alessandro Marchi (CETAF GS, Brussels, BE)

The Communications Working Group is devoted to sharing expertise from across our community. **Experts** in communication discuss emerging topics and brainstorm together on how to better keep everyone informed, internally within CETAF, and the best channels to position the community externally. During the World Café at CETAF55 in Oslo, the function of the WG was debated, particularly in view of the scarce availability of human resources for regular collaboration on shared campaigns. It was therefore decided that the group's feasibility will be analysed post-CETAF55, with the process still ongoing by the end of 2024.

3.2 Development of CETAF initiatives and services

During the year 2024, CETAF contributed to the enhancement and further development of certain critical tools and services for the community, namely the training platform, the GeoCASe portal and the CETAF Registry of Collections.

CETAF-DEST, the training platform for taxonomy

The CETAF-DEST **online platform** aims to be a leading resource for taxonomy training and capacity building. In 2024, DEST expanded its offerings, initiated collaborations with new partners, and began developing a new **Business Plan** to be published in 2025, ensuring high-quality training and sustainable growth. Leadership of the Te-L Working Group passed to **lasmi Stathi** following Dr. Voreadu's retirement. Throughout 2024, CETAF-DEST was active, including an online presentation in March during a Collections Working Group meeting, which helped recruit new members and promote engagement with the platform and the Te-L Working Group.





> The comprehensive CETAF Registry of collections

The CETAF Registry of Collections is a comprehensive **database documenting** the biological and geological collections of CETAF member institutions. It provides researchers, curators, and the public with detailed information on specimens, including taxonomy, geographic origin, and other metadata. In 2024, the Secretariat, in collaboration with the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS), disseminated structured data collection forms to **DiSSCo Nodes** to begin providing information about their institutions and collections. CETAF and RBINS also coordinated with the DiSSCo technical team to ensure data provision aligns with infrastructure requirements. Further developments will continue under the DiSSCo Transition project to establish the registry as a reliable source of information on institutions, collections, facilities, expertise, and other assets.

> The GeoCASe Portal for geological collections

GeoCASe stands for Geoscience Collections Access Service. It is a community collaborative initiative focused on creating a comprehensive and standardised database of geological and paleontological specimens. It aims to facilitate the sharing and accessibility of information about geological specimens held in Europe and worldwide.

In 2024, CETAF is continuing to investigate ways to **improve data pipelines** and looking for funding and collaborations for the portals development.



In support of new generations of taxonomists, the CETAF E-SCoRe Award

The CETAF E-SCoRe Award recognises and supports young scientists in collection-based research. encouraging excellence taxonomy and systematic biology. The 2024 edition, the fifth overall, focused on Early Researchers and received applications from 13 different countries. Nathan Vranken, from the Department of Biology at KU Leuven, won for his taxonomic revision of cichlids in Lake Edward. He presented his research remotely to members at the 55th CETAF General Assembly in Oslo and received his award certificate in person during the first Taxonomy Recognition Day, organised by CETAF and RBINS at the Royal Museum.

In parallel, the 6th edition of the E-SCoRe Award was launched in 2024, aiming to continue supporting young scientists in taxonomy. The 2025 award will specifically recognise a **PhD student**, further promoting early career development and excellence in collection-based research.



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Participation in European Projects

During 2024, several DiSSCo-linked projects have started, as it is the case with Past to the Future (P2F); and others have finalised, notably Biodiversity Community Integrated Knowledge Library (BiCIKL).

Transforming European Taxonomy through Training, Research and Innovation -TETTRIS



Coordinator: Institute of Natural Sciences-RBINS, and CETAF

The TETTRIs project is a **3.5-year** initiative launched in **December 2022**, bringing together **17 partners** from **11 countries** with a budget of **€5.99 million**. Co-coordinated by **CETAF** (Technical Coordinator) and **RBINS** (Financial Coordinator), it aims to strengthen taxonomy's role in addressing biodiversity loss through innovative tools, collaborative frameworks, and stakeholder engagement. CETAF contributes 70.8 person-months and **€2.62** million, including **€1.8** million for Third-Party Projects.

In 2024, major milestones included the first **All Hands Meeting** and second **General Assembly** in Brussels, the **Interim Review** meeting, and the second **Stakeholder Lab** in Vienna, which connected industry and taxonomy communities to explore joint solutions to biodiversity challenges.

CETAF Contributions:

CETAF leads the Taxonomic Expertise Marketplace, develops the concept of the European Agency for Taxonomy, and manages the implementation of satellite projects. It also drives communication and outreach, including the official website, social media, promotional materials, and the first Taxonomy Recognition Day.

As Technical Coordinator, CETAF ensures governance and management through regular boards and assemblies, supports internal communication and coordination, oversees planning and risk management, and leads reporting. It further contributes to expertise mapping, training alignment, and ethics and gender activities. Through these roles, CETAF ensures TETTRIs delivers its mission to reinforce taxonomy, connect communities, and provide effective tools to address biodiversity loss.











Biodiversity Genomic Europe - BGE

Coordinator: Naturalis Biodiversity Center



The BGE project is a **3.5-year** initiative (September 2022–March 2026) involving **33 partners** from **20 countries**, and funded with a budget of **€21.3 million**. CETAF dedicates 33 person-months and €332,625 to the project, which aims to accelerate the use of genomic science to understand biodiversity, monitor change, and guide interventions. BGE brings together two major networks: **iBOL Europe**, focused on **DNA barcoding**, and the **European Reference Genome Atlas** (ERGA), focused on genome sequencing.

CETAF Contributions:

CETAF participates in the Executive Board and Coordination team. It completed the periodic progress report, co-drafted the Engagement Plan, and supported the definition of Key Exploitable Results (KERs).

CETAF is also developing the Policy Guidance Tool ("Genomic Table of Policies"), finalizing content for Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) and mapping relevant policies to genomic research. It also maintains the ABS helpdesk and contributed to ERGA's guidelines on Material Transfer Agreements. On the other hand, CETAF leds the design of the Policy Guidance Tool's Compliance Assessment feature, coordinating technical development and releasing a test version in late 2024.

It also supports governance models for iBOL Europe, and co-leading Engagement and Exploitation with Naturalis and RBGE. It updated the strategy in 2024, identified KERs such as policy briefs, and is preparing the final BGE conference in Brussels (October 2025).

Through these activities, CETAF ensures that BGE delivers strong policy frameworks, practical compliance tools, and effective engagement strategies to advance biodiversity genomics in Europe.



September 2022

33

Partners

20

Countries



Budget

Past to Future - P2F

Coordinator: University of Utrecht



The P2F project is a **4 year** initiative officially signed in **October 2024** and launching on 1 March 2025. It brings together **24 partners** from **11 countries**, with a total budget of **€15 million** to advance climate science through the integration of **paleoenvironmental data**, Earth system models (ESMs), and theoretical approaches. With CETAF contributing 24 person-months through Luomus, which will provide critical data, the project aims to strengthen the accuracy of climate change predictions by extending the temporal baseline of current models.

P2F addresses the need to move beyond the **170 years of observational data** on which present-day ESMs rely, incorporating insights from past climatic transitions to better understand long-term patterns and societal impacts. By doing so, it will enhance the capabilities of ESMs, contribute to the Climate Model Intercomparison Project development cycle, and generate paleo-informed models to support future climate scenarios.

CETAF Contributions:

CETAF, through the Earth Science Group and Luomus, plays a key role in supplying paleoenvironmental data and ensuring its effective integration into project workflows. By contributing expertise and coordinating data delivery, CETAF supports the development of more robust and reliable climate models. Through these contributions, CETAF helps position P2F as a major step forward in understanding the climatic and societal impacts of the ongoing climate crisis.



Years



March 2025



Partners



Countries



Budget

Biodiversity Community Integrated Knowledge Library -BiCIKL



Coordinator: Pensoft Publishers

The BiCIKL project was a **3 year** initiative (May 2021–May 2024) involving **14 partners** from **10 countries**, with a total budget of €**4.99 million**. With CETAF contributing 26 person-months and an approved budget of €229,275, the project successfully delivered its final report. BiCIKL aimed to enable integrated **access to sub-article level biodiversity data** - including specimens, material citations, samples, sequences, taxonomic names, treatments, figures, and tables - while ensuring that data use could be linked and tracked throughout the research cycle. Its main outcome was the **Biodiversity Knowledge Hub** (BKH), a one-stop portal acting as a knowledge broker for navigating open and FAIR biodiversity data, guidelines, tools, and services across Europe's research infrastructures.

CETAF Contributions:

CETAF played a central role in developing and promoting the BKH as the project's flagship product. In addition, CETAF focused on strengthening the Hub's functionality and supporting community alignment. Through these efforts, CETAF ensured that the BKH was firmly rooted in user needs and effectively connected with key stakeholders, thereby enhancing its long-term sustainability and impact within the biodiversity informatics landscape.

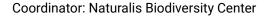








DiSSCo Transition-DTP





The DiSSCo Transition Project (DTP) is an **18-month** initiative launched in **December 202**3, involving **16 partners** from **11 countries** and funded with a total budget of €**1.5 million**. With CETAF contributing 15 person-months and a dedicated budget of €**152**,812.50, the project prepares the **Distributed System of Scientific Collections** (DiSSCo) for its transformation into a fully operational European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC). DTP is essential for establishing DiSSCo's governance, technical readiness, and strategic frameworks to initiate construction and operation phases under the ERIC model.

DTP is structured around four key goals: advancing the **ERIC legal process** and policy framework, supporting the engagement of **National Nodes**, developing **core e-services**, and fostering **international collaboration** on standards and best practices. These goals are achieved through closely coordinated work packages and tasks across the participating institutions.

CETAF Contributions:

CETAF leads the work on engaging and integrating National Nodes within the DiSSCo framework, consolidating participation channels and enabling effective coordination and feedback mechanisms. As the main driver of National Node engagement, CETAF ensures that the project's activities remain closely aligned with community needs through targeted coordination and communication efforts. It also contributes to the testing and rollout of strategic tools such as the Specialisation Tool for assessing institutional capabilities and thematic focuses.

Additionally, CETAF spearheads the task to develop foundational resources for the DiSSCo Helpdesk, translating best practices from previous projects into practical support materials. It plays a key cross-cutting role in several other tasks, including those related to ERIC implementation, standards adoption, and governance support. Through these activities, CETAF strengthens both the operational and strategic capacities of the DiSSCo infrastructure.











EPIC-Bee

Coordinator: University of Mons



The EPIC-Bee project is a **24-month** initiative that will launch in **January 2025**, led by **UMONS** with **15 partners** involved as sub-contractors or coordinators, and engaging a wider network of experts across the EU. With a focus on wild **bee identification**, the project aims to **build para-taxonomic capacity** across the 27 EU Member States and prepare the ground for implementing the EU Pollinator Monitoring Scheme (EU-PoMS). By training a critical mass of experts to identify wild bees to species level, EPIC-Bee directly contributes to tackling pollinator decline and supports the **EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030**.

CETAF Contributions:

CETAF ensures that the project's training activities are well designed and aligned with community needs. In addition, CETAF contributes to other tasks covering areas from technical training and programme delivery to stakeholder engagement and dissemination. Through this work, CETAF strengthens the project's capacity-building dimension and supports the integration of expert networks, ensuring that EPIC-Bee achieves lasting impact in pollinator monitoring and conservation efforts.













GETTY IMAGES, 2024

5.1 Advocacy and engagement for a stronger taxonomy

Advocacy and engagement are central to CETAF's mission, ensuring that scientific knowledge, particularly from natural science collections, informs policymaking and sustainability initiatives. CETAF promotes the role of taxonomy in biodiversity monitoring, supports policies that protect ecosystems, and improves access to critical data. By collaborating with policymakers, scientists, and civil society, the organisation bridges the gap between research and regulation, advancing evidence-based governance. Through initiatives such as monitoring frameworks, open data promotion, and expert policy contributions, CETAF ensures that decisions are grounded in science and aligned with global sustainability goals.

> Strongly supporting the Green Deal

In December 2024, CETAF joined over **2,200 scientists** and **30 scientific organisations** in signing an **Open Letter to EU policymakers**, expressing strong concern over recent decisions that undermined the **European Green Deal**. These actions significantly weakened the EU's capacity to meet its climate, biodiversity and pollution goals, posing risks to public health, food systems and ecosystem stability. As a science-based organisation, CETAF strongly advocates for evidence-informed policymaking and recognises the critical role of natural science collections in shaping sustainable decisions. The letter urged EU leaders to restore **strong environmental protections**, **accelerate legislative implementation** and reinforce collaboration between science and policy to develop a sustainability agenda aligned with planetary boundaries and global commitments.

Participation in relevant policy dialogues

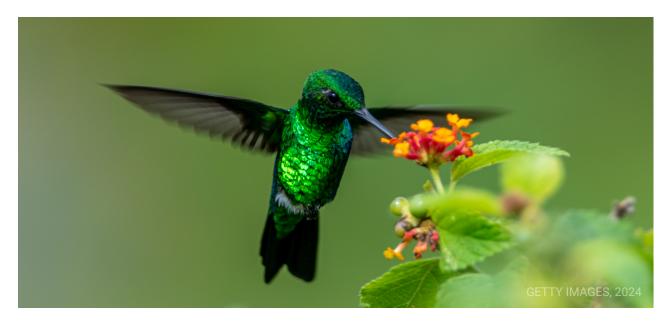
The CETAF General Secretariat took part in a series of direct consultations with **Nature Protection** unit (D.3) of the **European Commission's Directorate-General for Environment** (DG ENV) as a continuation of strong engagement on taxonomy-related issues, primarily in the context of pollinators. Notably, the Unit invited CETAF's Secretariat delegation to present their vision of the taxonomic community's contributions towards the establishment of the EU's biodiversity monitoring schemes, focusing on the case of **pollinators**. Building on the previous body of work, including the Red List of Insect Taxonomists, relevant outcomes of TETTRIs (e.g. virtual reference collections, e-marketplace of taxonomic services, training courses, etc.) as well as participation in the STING project -CETAF shared recommendations and lessons learned on how to close the current gaps in taxonomic expertise and knowledge when it comes to monitoring efforts. Additionally, CETAF also had the opportunity to present key elements of the TETTRIs project to the EU Member States in the Pollinators Working Group of the EU Biodiversity Platform, chaired by DG ENV.

CETAF has participated, together with the CETAF Legislation working group coordinators in the **ABS Consultation Forum** organised by the European Commission, to discuss COP16 decisions and how ABS and DSI topics are being addressed from the European perspective.

Contributing to the European pollinator monitoring

As part of the STING initiative (Science and Technology for Pollinating Insects), CETAF helped to develop a methodology that will lay the foundation for the 'EU Pollinator Monitoring Scheme' (EU PoMS), in line with the revised EU Pollinators Initiative, aimed at improving knowledge of at improving knowledge of pollinator decline. In October 2024, the Joint Research Centre (JRC) introduced a Refined Proposal for an EU-wide pollinator monitoring scheme based on the outcomes of STING-2. Developed with input from nearly 30 leading experts, including CETAF's Executive Director, this proposal establishes standardised methods for monitoring key pollinator species —wild bees, hoverflies, butterflies, and moths. As such, it forms the foundation of the EU Pollinator Monitoring Scheme.

As the next step, CETAF is participating in the follow-up activity, **SIMPOLL project**, which aims to build on the current framework, deepening efforts to protect pollinator species and secure their future role in sustaining biodiversity and human well-being.



Championing FAIR and Open Access to Biodiversity Data

CETAF has long stood firmly for the principles of **FAIR** (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) data, recognising that **open access to biodiversity data** is foundational to scientific progress and global sustainability goals. Through our active involvement in numerous projects, we continue to advocate for free and equitable access to biodiversity and genetic information.

Despite this commitment, true accessibility remains hindered—by paywalls, mandatory user registration, and other restrictive practices. In response, the CETAF **Legislation and Regulations Working Group**, under the coordination of Dirk Neumann, prepared and circulated an open letter ahead of COP 16 in Cali, Colombia (October 2024).

The letter called on international delegates to support **open, free, and fair access** to Digital Sequence Information (DSI). While affirming support for benefit-sharing principles, CETAF and cosignatories stressed that such mechanisms must be mandatory yet aligned with open science principles—legally sound, technically feasible, and non-restrictive. Specifically, the letter advocated for:

- A multilateral, decoupled benefit-sharing system for DSI
- No payment at the point of access, and no compulsory user registration
- Recognition and visibility of **non-monetary benefit** sharing from scientific research
- Cross-sectoral, harmonized approaches to ensure long-term viability and global alignment

The letter was sent to representatives from the European Commission, Member States, as well as Switzerland, Norway, and the United Kingdom.

We are pleased to report that during **COP 16**, delegates acknowledged the crucial role of open access to DSI in supporting scientific research and sustainable development. The final decision included the establishment of the "**Cali Fund**" and a commitment to explore new tools—such as public databases—to enhance transparent and equitable access to digital sequence information globally.





5.2 Collaborations

Collaboration is central to CETAF's approach in biodiversity research and policy. By partnering with like-minded organisations and initiatives, CETAF amplifies the **scientific community's voice**, promotes knowledge exchange, and enhances the reach of shared environmental solutions. Through dialogue and joint activities, it aligns scientific expertise with practical applications in biodiversity monitoring, conservation, and policy support. These collaborations support capacity-building, strengthen advocacy networks, and connect taxonomy with emerging technologies, helping bridge gaps across disciplines and sectors. By fostering strategic relationships, CETAF advances its mission to keep science at the heart of sustainable development and biodiversity governance.

IPBES Capacity Building TSU



As part of an attempt to deepen CETAF's participation in the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services (IPBES) processes, the Secretariat reached out to its Capacity Building Technical Support Unit to better understand how CETAF should position itself as a capacity-building provider. As a result, the TSU head joined the CETAF55 General Assembly on 24 May to present the work of the unit and elaborate on the different ways that the CETAF community could get involved. CETAF also planned to attend the IPBES Capacity Building meeting in Trondheim, Norway, in October, which was ultimately cancelled.

EuropeanEnvironmental Bureau(EEB)



Over the course of 2024, CETAF established contact with several representatives of the EEB and met to discuss exploring possible synergies between the two institutions. As one of the largest European networks of environmental NGOs, the EEB is an **influential interlocutor** on the European policy scene. As such, CETAF aims to deepen relations in terms of EU advocacy and create opportunities for joint activities. So far, the GS attended **EEB's 50th Anniversary Conference** on 13 May 2024, while the EEB Vice-President participated in the TETTRIs-organised Stakeholder Forum on 6 November as a panellist. Additionally, several informal meetings were held and an EEB representative attended the **First Taxonomy Recognition Day** at RBINS.

> iBOL Europe



The European node of iBOL, the renamed iBOL-E (former BIOSCAN initiative), aims to gather European efforts and experts from the iBOL global initiative, to focus on the monitoring of biodiversity using DNA for rapid identification and monitoring of species.

Under the auspices of the EU-funded project BGE, a work package is dedicated to setting up this European node made up of experts and institutions working in DNA techniques and applications. Among the over **100 members** from 29 countries of this growing network, most of the CETAF members are already included. CETAF works towards the correct alignment of activities, supports successful functioning of the node and contributes to efficient merging of taxonomy and DNA objectives.

> Be.DiSSCo-FED



The Belgian node of DiSSCo organised a networking event at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences on Friday, **20**th **December 2024**.

The event members of the Belgian scientific community to explore and strengthen Belgium's role in the Distributed System of Scientific Collections – Research Infrastructure (DiSSCo-RI). Attendees engaged in discussions, practical demonstrations and valuable networking opportunities. With the double role of associated partner of the Be.DiSSCo-FED and member of the DiSSCo CSO, CETAF organised a panel about the CETAF Registry of Collections.

> CEBioS



On **December 5th, 2024**, CETAF met with CEBioS (Capacities for Biodiversity and Sustainable Development), which is also hosted by the **Royal Belgian Institute for Natural Sciences**, to discuss shared goals and explore collaborative opportunities. This meeting is the first step in what could become uniting efforts to advance biodiversity conservation and sustainable development through complementary expertise and initiatives. The key discussion points were the mutual commitment to promoting taxonomy and enhancing biodiversity research, knowledge exchange and potential future collaboration. This partnership promises to bring new momentum to the mutual mission of conserving biodiversity and promoting sustainable development worldwide.

5.3 Ensuring alignment with DiSSCo RI through CSO

The CETAF Executive Director serves as Deputy Coordinator of the DiSSCo Coordination and Support Office (CSO), leading Communication and Engagement, while most CETAF GS staff are part of the CSO's distributed team. CETAF contributes in-kind (20% equivalent to full members' cash contributions) to DiSSCo's interim development and participates in its strategic planning toward establishing the DiSSCo ERIC.

In 2024, CETAF focused on **engaging new members**, supporting decision-making bodies, and contributing to DiSSCo communications. It played a key role in governance matters, including the transition from the **Funders Forum** to the interim **Founders Council**, and supported the ESFRI assessment report, highlighting progress since the 2018 Roadmap approval. CETAF also helped develop the scientific, technical, and governance documentation required for DiSSCo ERIC Step 1 and participated in the ERIC Forum sessions in September 2024.

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The public presence of CETAF

The communication and dissemination efforts of CETAF are intended to expand the reach of the contents produced, the multiplication of the impact of the resources and activities of the community and also the increase of the awareness of citizens around biodiversity-related issues to become more literate and active by providing scientifically-proven evidence and reliable information.

6.1 Creating an impactful brand image

The permanent support and exploitation to CETAF branding appears to be instrumental while the activity in a wide variety of channels has efficient proven meaningful. During 2024, CETAF produced and developed a corporate video aimed at strengthening the brand's presence and bringing taxonomy closer to society, focusing on explaining "Why Taxonomy is Key for Biodiversity and Life on Earth". However, the release of this video was postponed to 2025. On the other hand, CETAF has also developed different materials to give the organisation more outreach tools conferences and events. Two different rollups were conceived and printed in order to be used in the two General Assemblies in Oslo (CETAF55, May) and Madrid (CETAF56, November), the TETTRIs Stakeholder Lab in Brussels (6 of November).



In 2024 CETAF also released the "10 years Report", containing a brief summary of the 2013-2023 decade of evolution for the organisation. This product was conceived internally as well, following the branding introduced in 2023 and expanded in 2024.

This Above the Line communication, in particular, was at the core of the **First Taxonomy Recognition Day**, established under the EU-funded TETTRIs Project, where CETAF massively contributed in creating all the communication and branding material to frame the event with a command layout in 10 European Countries.



6.2 Communicating to raise awareness

The **CETAF** website is considered the main vehicle to communicate and disseminate CETAF activity. As such, it is subject to continuous update, enhancement and enlargement with news feeds, social media links and services and tools for the taxonomic community. The continuous work to attract visits to **cetaf.org** is reflected by the growing numbers:







Despite the 2021 restructuration, the website appears no longer suitable to host the new services CETAF will implement in 2025, so a rethinking process has started and shall be completed in the next year.

> The Social Media presence

In 2024, CETAF was active on four social media channels: **Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, and X**. The rapidly changing environment on X, including controversies surrounding its owner and declining moderation quality, led many like-minded organisations to leave the platform. This contributed to lower engagement and, for the first time, a temporary decrease in follower numbers in December, despite a slight increase over the year. In response, CETAF opened a BlueSky account in December 2024 and is evaluating the possibility of **leaving X**, though this would temporarily reduce its reach due to X's large existing follower base.

LinkedIn continued to show strong engagement, prompting CETAF to increase content sharing and collaboration with project partners, which resulted in a **31% growth** in followers. **Facebook** remained relevant, particularly for engaging partners who are more active on this older platform, achieving a **26%** increase in followers. **YouTube** functioned primarily as a content repository. **BlueSky**, as a new and independent platform, has potential as a niche network for the scientific community, though its reach is currently much smaller than X and unlikely to match it in the short term.

Despite challenges on X, CETAF's overall social media presence in 2024 strengthened, with increased visibility, audience engagement, and strategic adjustments across platforms, positioning the organisation to continue expanding its online impact in 2025.







The **newsletter** of CETAF is titled e-Pulse to summarise what is critically new and relevant to the community. It has been published since June 2022, on a 6-months periodicity, with a special issue dedicated to the E-SCoRe Award as **e.pulse #8**, in March 2024; another one dedicated to CETAF55 as **e.pulse #9**, in July 2024.







7.1 The resources to support CETAF activity

The financial resources of CETAF are primarily coming from two different types of sources, namely the participation in external projects, which allows contracting personnel to tackle specific tasks to develop new services and consolidate CETAF initiatives. Additionally, the core activity of the Secretariat is supported by the membership fees granted on an annual basis by the Member institutions of the organisation.

The Business Model for the period 2023-2027 provides a well-ground, stable and long term schema for supporting the core activities of the Secretariat. Still, the ambitious **Strategy 2025-2030** may lead to a revision of the model to ensure that the Secretariat has enough resources to accomplish the CETAF goals. The Annual Accounts for year 2023 were approved along with the positive assessment of the Audit Report produced. Similarly, the Budget for year 2025 was also approved as the main mechanism to guide the use of resources gathered by CETAF.

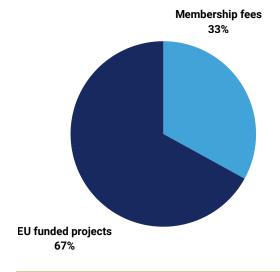
For the year 2024, the Annual Accounts followed similar distribution schema as for previous years with a good balance between Incomes and Expenses, the latter being supported thanks to the important contribution of funds coming from the different projects and initiatives in which the CETAF Secretariat is involved.

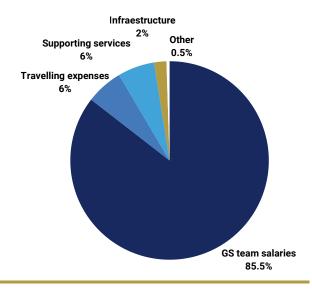
In 2024, Membership fees, up to 207.100 euros, represent 33% of CETAF total **income**. The other 67% are from EU funded projects which either entered into force or received instalments during the year namely TETTRIs, BiCIKL, BGE, DiSSCo Prepare and DiSSCo Transition.

As for the **expenses** in 2024, the General Secretariat team salaries account for 85.5% of the total budget, followed by traveling expenses at 6% and supporting services also at 6%. Infrastructure represents 2%, while other costs make up 0.5%.

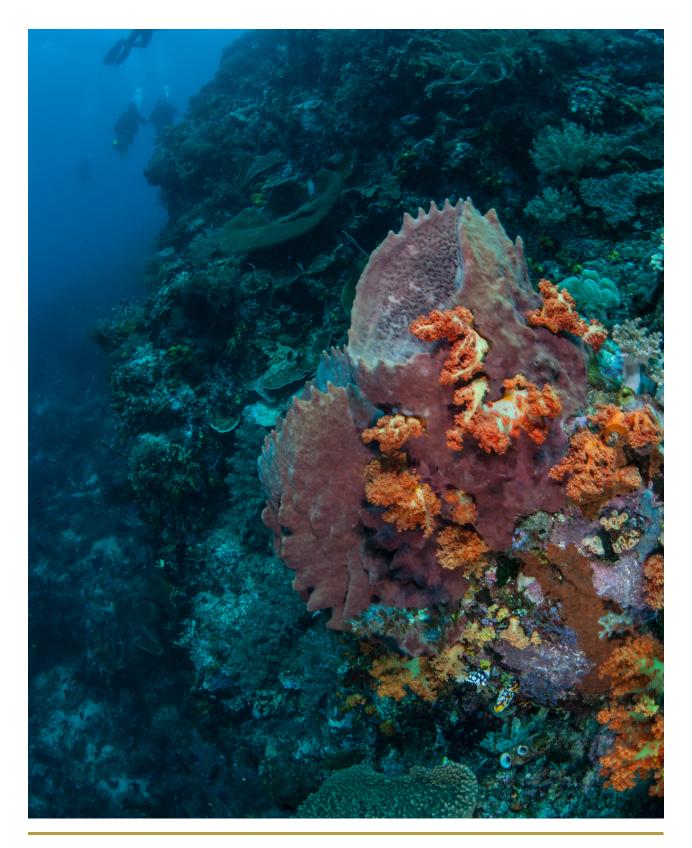


Expenses





An important milestone achieved in 2024 was the translation to a **double-try accounting system** which will provide clarity, consistency and objectivity to the financial matters, in alignment with internationally recognised standards. Albeit the process could not be completed in 2024 the foundations were settled and the financial year 2025 will be fully recorded under this new system. To support the Secretariat in this transformation process and towards the compliance with Belgian protocols, the Belgian company **PROFISCAL** was hired as an external supporting expert.

























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