

The LifeWatch Species Information Backbone: connecting information on taxonomy, biogeography, ecology, genetics and literature

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The Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ) is responsible for setting up the LifeWatch Species Information Backbone (LW-SIBb), as a central part of the European LifeWatch Infrastructure. The LW-SIBb (virtually) brings together different databases and systems, within five major components: (1) taxonomy [regional, national, global and thematic databases], (2) biogeography [databases dealing with species occurrences], (3) ecology, [species-specific traits], (4) genetics and (5) literature. Major components of the LW-SIBb are a.o. the World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS), the European node of the Ocean Biodiversity Information System (EurOBIS) and the Marine Regions gazetteer. These systems have a strong link and collaboration agreements with several international initiatives and ESFRIs. The expertise of the LW-SIBb data management teams was incorporated into the Ocean Teacher Global Academy training course “Ocean Data Management” of the IODE program of UNESCO. The LW-SIBb offers a wide variety of tools, functionalities and data services enabling the users to have free and easy access to data and information from a variety of resources, to standardize and quality control their own data, and to cross-check and link with other data available. This presentation will showcase how the LW-SIBb was used by scientific and industrial users, policy makers and civil society. Furthermore, in 2021 several components of the LW-SIBb were featured in two chapters of the Second World Ocean Assessment (WOA II). This global exercise, where hundreds of marine scientists evaluate trends and identify knowledge in gaps in the world ocean, will be repeated for a third time, again relying on the LW-SIBb.