

Information for Participants sheet

Implementing Legislation on Invasive Alien Species: Investigating socio-cultural barriers to the management of Invasive Alien Species in EU member countries (ILIAS)



If you are considering taking part in this research, this information sheet is for you to keep.

What is this research project about?

The increasing dispersal of invasive plant and animal species (IAS) causes significant environmental and economic damage in countries across the world. Facilitated by globalization and climate change, IAS threaten native species and harm agricultural livelihoods.

This project investigates how social and cultural beliefs and attitudes shape the management of invasive animal and plant species in protected areas in different EU member countries. The project examines different interpretations of current scientific evidence and best practice for IAS management, and how this affects the implementation of EU laws.

What do the researchers want to find out?

The researchers are interested in the way that individual and social attitudes, beliefs and values shape the implementation of EU legislation on the prevention and management of IAS in different member countries. They are looking at the way in which differing definitions of key terms influence the interpretation of scientific evidence, whether these differences stand in the way of collaborative action and compliance with EU laws, and how a more unified approach can be facilitated.

Who is running the project?

The researchers leading this project are:

Dr. Christine Horn, Centre for Functional Ecology, (CFE) Faculty of Sciences and Technology (FCTUC), University of Coimbra (UC) – Christine.Horn@uc.pt – tel 912 212 804

Prof. Fátima Alves, Department of Social Sciences and Management, Universidade Aberta / Centre for Functional Ecology (CFE), Faculty of Sciences and Technology (FCTUC), University of Coimbra (UC) – fatimaa@uab.pt

Who is funding the project?

The project is funded by the European Research Executive Agency (REA) of the European Commission under the Marie Skłodowska Curie Fellowship program.

Who can participate?

We are looking for participants from three different groups: Land users and managers; researchers and conservation professionals; and policy makers.

What does my participation involve?

If you agree to participate you can take part in an individual interview, focus group or both. Interviews will take between one to one-and-a-half hours at a time and will take place either online or at a place convenient for you and the researchers. Focus groups will take about two hours and will be held online or in a suitable and easily accessible location. You may be contacted for follow-up questions after the initial interview or focus group. If you do not want to be contacted for follow-up questions, please let the researchers know. Your data will be retained for a period of up to 5 years after completion of the project.

The project may involve questions about data deemed special categories of personal data under the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), such as questions about religious or philosophical beliefs. You are free to decline to answer any questions you are not comfortable with and can withdraw my consent to participate in this project at any time.

How will interviews and focus groups be conducted?

We will audio-record the interviews to make sure our transcripts of your comments are accurate. In the case of an online interview, we may record the interview via the app or platform through which the interview takes place, i.e. Zoom, Teams, Skype etc. These recordings will be destroyed once the transcripts have been checked for accuracy.

Do I need to give my formal consent to participate?

Yes. After you have read through the information in this document, you can ask the researchers any questions and share any concerns you may have about your participation. You will then be asked to complete and sign a written consent form. The consent form will record your name and signature as well as the date of your consent.

Can I speak freely? Will my confidentiality be maintained?

Your comments and feedback will be strictly confidential. Once the interview has been transcribed, your name will be replaced by an alphanumerical identifier. Any other identifying details will also be removed. No identifiable details will appear in any publication or in any presentations or materials relating to this project. The de-identified information you provide may be used in follow-on research.

Please note, though, that in a focus group setting researchers cannot guarantee that others in the group will maintain confidentiality. Also, where participants describe a situation or activity involving threats to community safety and/or activity that might be subject to criminal proceedings, researchers are required by law to pass on this information to the appropriate authorities and to identify the source of the information.

What if I prefer to be interviewed in another language?

If required, we will do our best to provide translation and interpretation services in the relevant language through an interpreter/translator.

What are the benefits of participating in this research?

The benefits to improving responses to IAS management are enormous and can be calculated in economic as well as environmental terms. This research may lead to more effective ways to manage IAS and inform collaborative strategies to protect endangered plants and animals and restore distinctive local ecosystems, as the project aims to improve our understanding, to inform policy and practice and to contribute to the public debate on invasive species.

What are the risks of my participating in this research?

If you feel discomfort or distress during an interview you can pause or stop your participation, have a break, or decline to answer a question without any negative consequences. Should you experience discomfort or distress as a result of your participation, the researchers can share strategies for seeking support or counseling. With regards to any social, professional or reputational risks, it is important that you consider whether you are comfortable participating, especially if you are participating in a focus group where confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

What happens if I change my mind?

You are free to withdraw from the project at any point, and all information and records relating to your participation will be destroyed. Please contact the researcher directly if you would like to withdraw from the research.

How can I find out about the outcomes of this research?

This project is expected to finish in February 2027. The researchers will ask you at the time of gaining your consent to participate in this project if you wish to receive publications from the project. You can also contact the researchers at any time using the email or telephone contact details provided above.

Complaints

If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the ethics committee at the Institute of Interdisciplinary Research at cetica_iiiuc@uc.pt

What if I have questions after reading this?

Please contact Christine.horn@uc.pt if you have any questions about the project or your participation that you would like answered.

You can also find more information at

www.iliaseurope.wordpress.com



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