ARPHA Conference Abstracts 9: e203641
doi: 10.3897/aca.9.e203641

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Conference Abstract

Living Labs for Cross-Border Management of Invasive Alien Plants in Northern Finland and Sweden

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Received: 11 Jun 2026 | Published: 11 Jun 2026

Citation: Blom H, Byrsten S, Karjalainen U, Huusela E, Jauni M (2026) Living Labs for Cross-Border Management of Invasive Alien Plants in Northern Finland and Sweden. ARPHA Conference Abstracts 9: e203641. https://doi.org/10.3897/aca.9.e203641

Abstract

Invasive alien species (IAS) pose a significant threat to biodiversity in northern regions, where climate change is increasingly favoring their establishment and spread over native species. Effective prevention and management of IAS requires coordinated action across administrative borders and governance levels.

The Interreg Aurora –funded project BB Alien (2025–2028) aims to strengthen cross-border cooperation between northern Sweden and Finland to improve the prevention, management, and eradication of IAS. The project area covers Finnish and Swedish Lapland, focusing on both sides of the international border along the Tornio River, and it specifically addresses issues unique to the northern context.

The project places strong emphasis on awareness-raising related to IAS introduction pathways to prevent their spread to and within the border region. Targeted communication activities, including videos and other outreach materials, are developed for relevant stakeholder groups. In addition, the project enhances professional collaboration and information exchange across the Nordic region by further developing the Nordic IAS network and organizing webinars and other knowledge-sharing events.

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BB Alien applies a living lab approach to support the eradication of invasive alien plant species and to prevent their further spread through multi-actor collaboration in Sweden and Finland. Researchers, municipalities, landowners, non-governmental organizations, and local communities jointly co-design and implement IAS management actions, exchanging practical experiences in selected riparian environments, including Natura 2000 sites. Target species include *Lupinus nootkatensis, L. polyphyllus, Rosa rugosa*, and *Impatiens glandulifera*.

The Finnish Living Lab activities are coordinated by Pidä Lappi Siistinä ry, which began its Living Lab work in autumn 2025. The first stakeholder meeting was held in the city of Kemi on 12 March 2026, and field-based pilot work at eradication sites is carried out across several municipalities in Lapland during the summers of 2026 and 2027.

The living labs integrate field inventories, collaborative planning, and environmentally sound eradication measures. These include community-led IAS removal activities and the testing of novel control methods, such as hot water treatment for *L. polyphyllus*. Eradication efforts are supported by citizen engagement tools, communication campaigns, and stakeholder-led implementation. The project aims to develop a transferable and cost-effective model for collaborative IAS management that promotes long-term continuity beyond the project duration. Capacity building through workshops and knowledge-sharing events equips stakeholders—particularly municipalities—with the skills and networks needed to sustain living lab–based IAS management and replicate the model in other regions.

The poster will give an overview of the projects Living Lab activities in Finland and Sweden and share experiences from the Finnish Living Lab after its first year working with stakeholders and on the eradication sites.

Presenting author

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Presented at

Neobiota 2026, the 14th International Conference on Biological Invasions

Conflicts of interest

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.