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Conference Abstract

Twenty-five years of Neobiota: Building a Community for Invasion Science in Europe and beyond

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Abstract

While the influential role of scientific associations in shaping research fields is well recognized, their impact within the domain of invasion science remains underexplored. This review combines qualitative narrative with quantitative metrics to trace the development of *Neobiota*, the first European non-profit and non-governmental scientific association dedicated to the study of biological invasions. Since its foundation in 1999, the *Neobiota* network has aimed to foster scientific exchange and collaboration, advance and integrate research across all dimensions of invasion science, and disseminate

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findings to support evidence-based policies. Evolving rapidly from a German working group into Europe's leading network for invasion science, *Neobiota* has united researchers and practitioners across disciplines, taxa, and national boundaries. In contrast to many other associations, *Neobiota* operates with a low-threshold, non-bureaucratic governance model, promoting inclusivity and cross-border engagement. We document how its biennial conferences—hosted in twelve European countries between 2000 and 2024—have supported thematic diversity (ranging from molecular biology to socio-economy), increasing international participation (from nine to 47 countries globally), and active policy outreach. Thematically, the focus of research presented at conferences has shifted over time from ecological patterns and species inventories to environmental impacts, predictive modelling, management strategies, and socio-political dimensions of invasions. Trends in equity reveal progress towards gender parity among keynote speakers and session chairs. *Neobiota* has also supported the dissemination of knowledge through two publication platforms: the Neobiota series (2000–2008), and the open-access, peer-reviewed journal NeoBiota launched in 2011. This journal currently operates under an innovative editorial model with 75 subject editors and a team of five Co-Editors-in-Chief. We conclude that over the past 25 years, *Neobiota* has been instrumental in building a cohesive and inclusive scientific community globally, advancing and disseminating interdisciplinary research on biological invasions, and informing policy, particularly in support of legal frameworks to prevent and mitigate the negative impacts of non-native species.

Keywords

Alien species; biological invasions; environmental impacts; environmental management; international cooperation; non-native species; research topics; science-policy interface; scientific associations; scientific conferences

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Conflicts of interest

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.
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