

PEP725: Celebrating 15 Years of this Phenological Research Infrastructure

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A brief review of the origins of PEP725

In the late 1990s, phenology came into focus as an indicator of climate change.

POSITIVE (Phenological Observations and Satellite Data (NDVI) - Trends in the Vegetation Cycle in Europe) was one of the first major phenological projects initiated in Europe. The project ran from 2000 to 2002 under the Fifth EU Framework Programme,

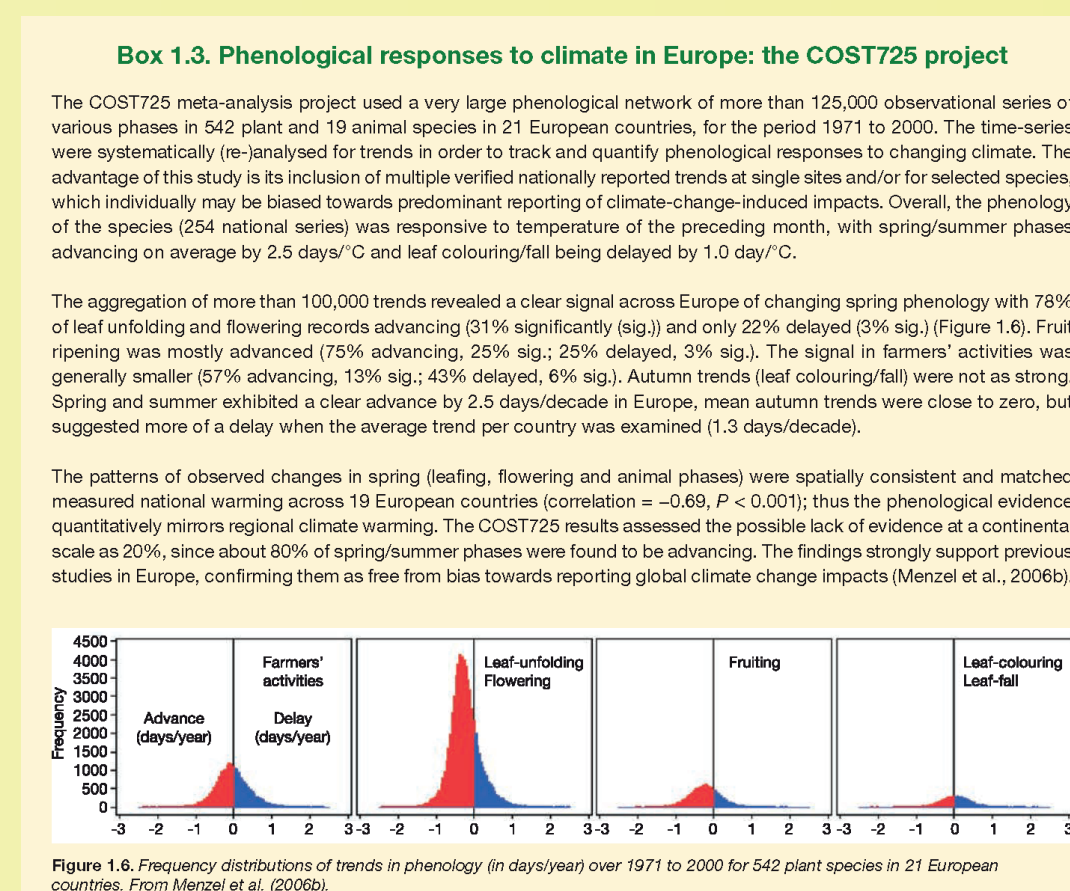
with the participation of the International Phenological Gardens, the national phenological networks of the German, Swiss, Austrian and Estonian weather services, and others.



Only two years later, in 2004, COST 725 - Establishing a European Phenological Data Platform for Climatological Applications (led by Elisabeth Koch / ZAMG) was launched. The focus was to establish a European reference dataset of phenological observations that can be used for climatological purposes, in particular for climate monitoring and detection of changes.

The results of this COST Action were published in a booklet 'The history and current status of plant phenology in Europe' - an extract of which was even included in the Fourth IPCC Assessment Report, 2007.

At the end of COST 725, a large amount of data was available - a waste to store it only on a hard disk. Many of the former project members are committed to making this data set available for further research and, if possible, to continue to add new observations.



The era of PEP725

Work began in 2009 to continue the successful collaboration. The first meetings were held and the search for a sponsor started.

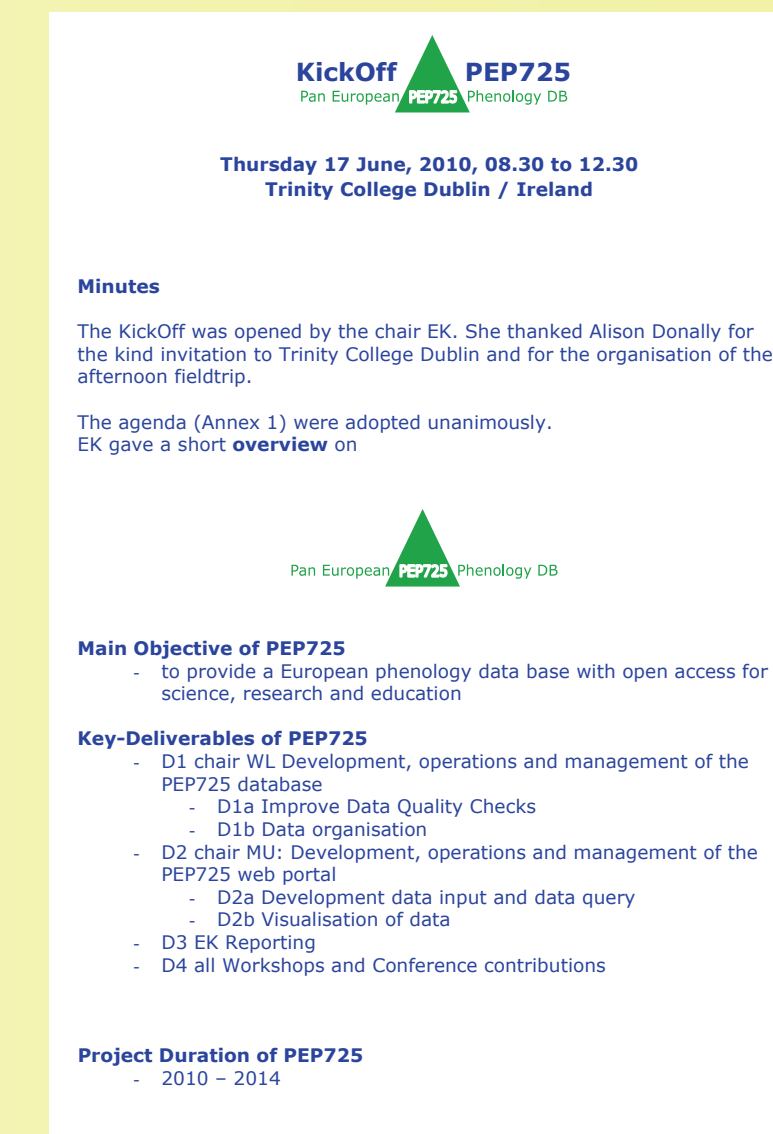
The official birth of PEP725 took place almost a year later on 17. June 2010 at the Phenology 2010 conference in Dublin, Ireland.

Funding for the first project phase from 2010 - 2014 was secured by EUMETNET and ZAMG (now GeoSphere Austria).



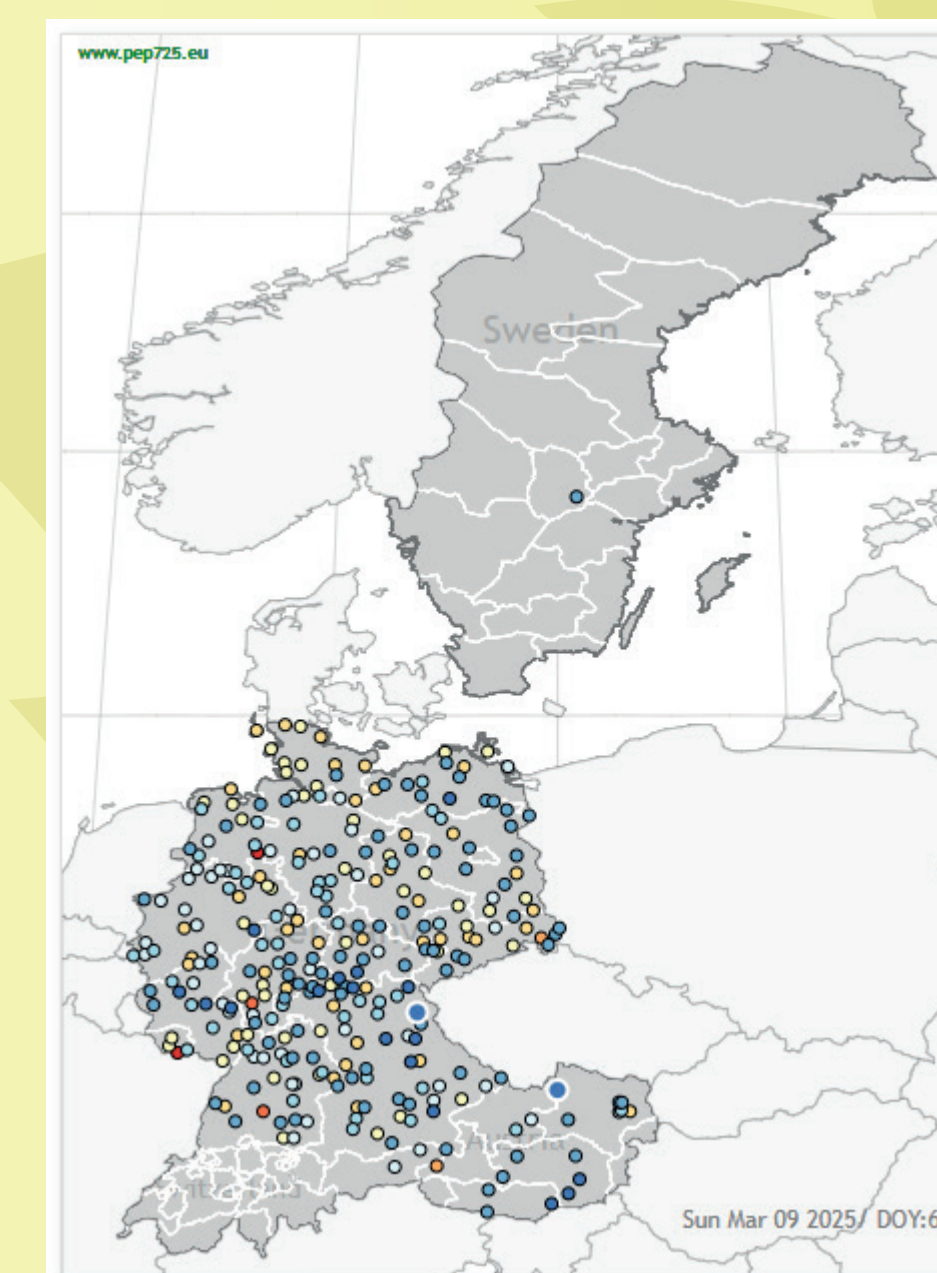
During the past 15 years, PEP725 has collected and prepared more than 13 million plant phenological observations and made them available for research.

We are extremely grateful to the organisations listed in the title, as well as the 30,000+ observers behind them who have dedicated their precious time and energy to collect all this records.



Some highlights

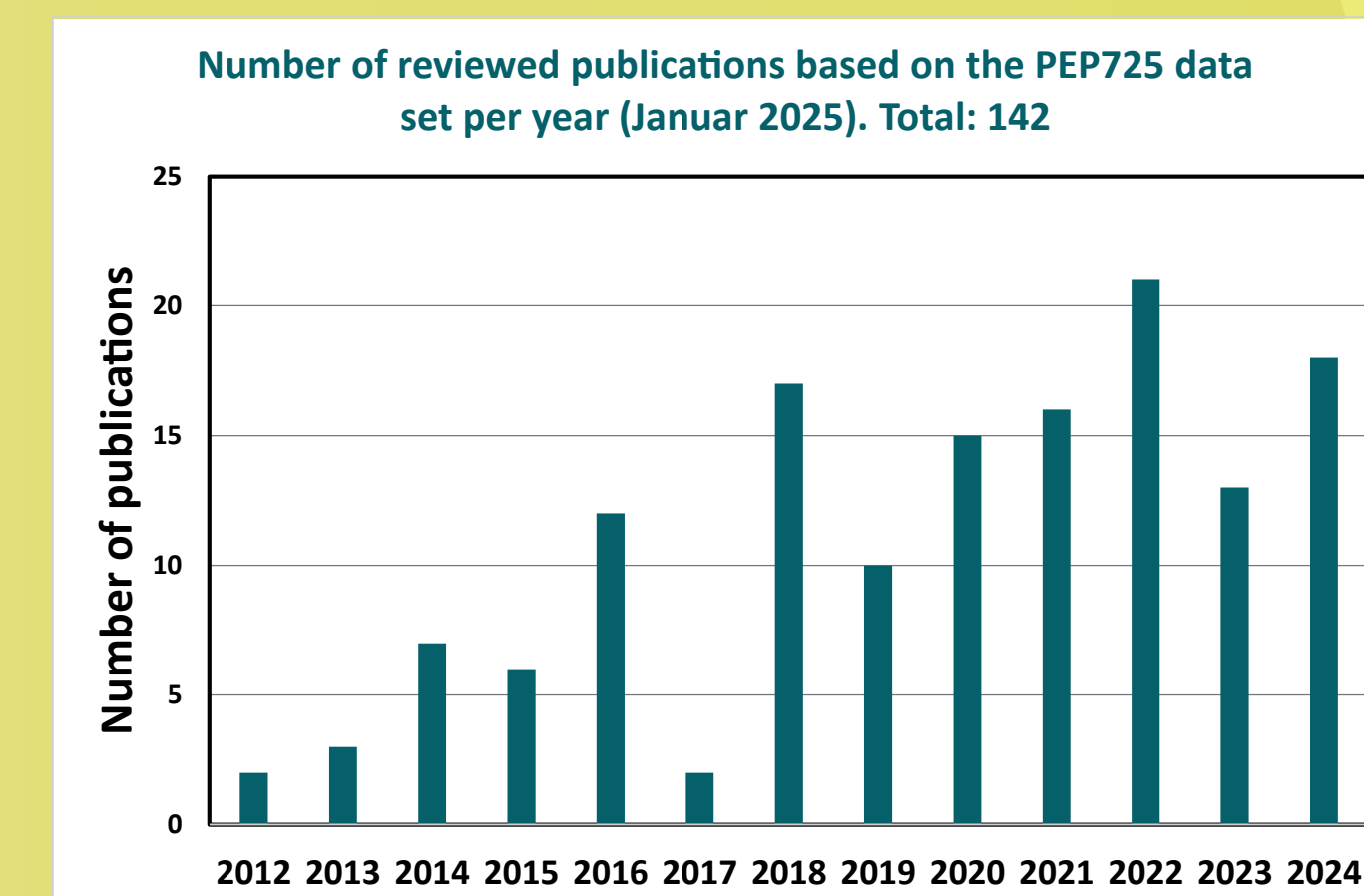
It was a gradual transition from a data-only project to the formation of a small but very fine PEP725 community. Through our annual meetings in Vienna, more than just a professional exchange of ideas has been established.



Within PEP725, the first real-time phenology monitor for Europe was put online. Unfortunately, it remained with the original contributors (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden) and we were unable to expand the sub-project to other countries.

There is still a lot of interest in data about the timing of natural events from whole of Europe. Since 2011, we have recorded more than 160,000 downloads (which is about 2.4 billion observations).

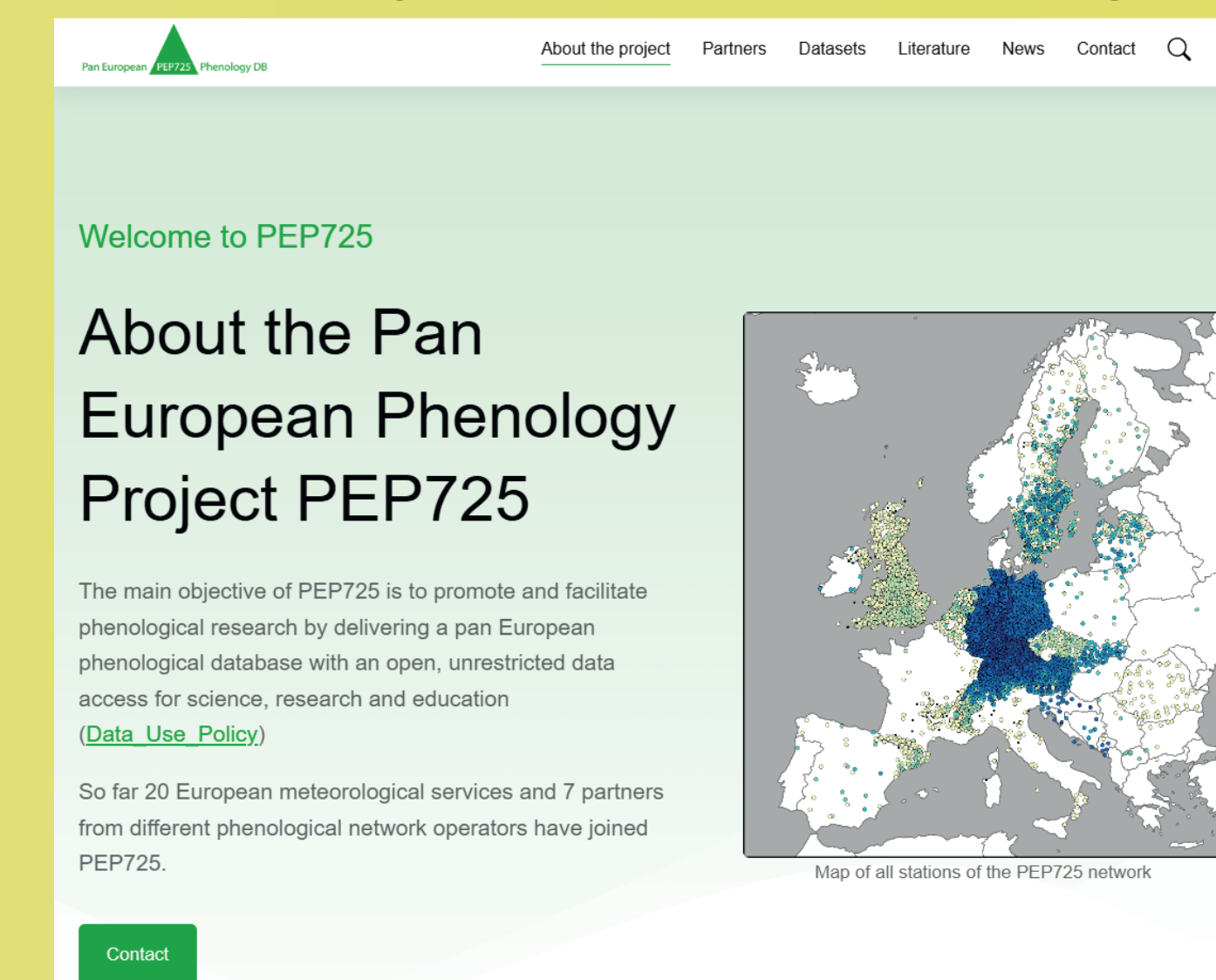
But how can we measure the success of a scientific project if not by the number of publications it generates? I think PEP725 has filled this gap by providing a data platform for Europe. Without it, many of the currently 142 reviewed articles would not have been published.



The near future of PEP725

For the current period 2024 - 2028, PEP725 has again received funding from EUMETNET and GeoSphere Austria.

This ensures the continued operation of the project and also facilitates the realisation of the long-cherished wish for a new website (which should be online by the end of 2025). The subsequent milestone is the implementation of a contemporary API to streamline data retrieval, which is expected to be completed by the end of the current project phase.



This project would not have been possible without the continuous support of:




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