

ELIXIR STEERS

Argentina Outreach Event Report

16th April, 2025



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Executive Summary

This report summarises the [ELIXIR STEERS](#) WP5 outreach event held in Buenos Aires, Argentina on April 16, 2025. The event successfully introduced the ELIXIR Research Infrastructure, its services, and operational model to Argentinian researchers and stakeholders. Additionally, Argentinian research infrastructure efforts ([CEBEM](#)) were presented to support knowledge exchange and identify collaboration opportunities. A subsequent round table discussion focused on the value proposition of bioinformatics infrastructure, challenges related to funding sustainability, the importance of collaboration, and evolving approaches to research credit and recognition. Key outcomes highlighted the potential benefits of closer interaction with ELIXIR, particularly in training, network building, and understanding sustainable infrastructure management.

Introduction & Objectives

As part of the ELIXIR STEERS initiative, this outreach event aimed to:

- Introduce the ELIXIR infrastructure, its mission, and services to the Argentinian life science community.
- Showcase examples of ELIXIR Node activities and impact.
- Provide a platform for discussion on Argentinian bioinformatics needs and potential future interactions with ELIXIR.
- Explore mutually beneficial opportunities between ELIXIR and synergistic South American research infrastructure initiatives.

Session 1: Presentations

Chair: Wim Vranken (ELIXIR-BE)

- Opened the session with a Welcome Note setting the context for the day.

Overview of ELIXIR Europe: Gavin Farrell (University of Padova & ELIXIR-IT)

- Provided a comprehensive introduction to ELIXIR's distributed structure across Europe, its goals in coordinating bioinformatics resources, and the range of services offered through its Nodes, Platforms and Communities.

The European Bioinformatics Institute & the Value of Biodata: Henning Hermjakob (EMBL-EBI)

- Detailed the role of EMBL-EBI within ELIXIR and the broader life sciences, highlighting the importance of open, well-curated biological data resources for research and innovation.

ELIXIR Hungary Node & the IDP Community: Zsuzsanna Dosztanyi (Eötvös Loránd University & ELIXIR-HU)

- Presented an example of a national ELIXIR Node, focusing on ELIXIR Hungary's focuses and specialised activities within the Intrinsically Disordered Proteins (IDP) research community.

CEBEM Structural Biology Community in South America: Lucía Chemes (Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Argentina)

- Offered a valuable regional perspective, introducing the CEBEM network, its focus on structural biology in South America, and highlighting existing collaborative activities and infrastructure within the continent.

Credit & Recognition in the Life Sciences: Silvio Tosatto (University of Padova & ELIXIR-IT)

- Addressed the crucial topic of ensuring fair credit and recognition for contributions to data resources, software, and other outputs essential for modern life science research.

Session 2: The ELIXIR Infrastructure - Round Table Discussion

Chair: Silvio Tosatto (ELIXIR-IT)

The round table discussion brought together a panel of experts from ELIXIR and key Argentinian institutions and initiatives. Panel participants included:

- **Alejandro Benaben** (Subsecretaría de Políticas Universitarias, Secretaría de Educación de la Nación)
- **Pablo Cerdán** (Vicedirector, Fundación Instituto Leloir)
- **Lucía Chemes** (Universidad Nacional de San Martín & Centro de Biología Estructural del Mercosur - CEBEM)
- **Henning Hermjakob** (Head of Molecular Systems, European Bioinformatics Institute - EMBL-EBI)
- **Tomás Poklepovich** (Director de Bioinformática y Genómica, Administración Nacional de Laboratorios e Institutos de Salud - ANLIS Malbrán)

The round table panel discussion provided a valuable forum for exchange between ELIXIR representatives and Argentinian participants. Key themes emerged:

- **Value & Funding:** Discussion highlighted the significant return on investment bioinformatics infrastructure provides, even amidst challenges of funding instability. The importance of demonstrating impact (e.g., through dedicated studies like [EMBL-EBI's](#)) to secure sustainable funding was emphasized, alongside the value Open Science delivers.
- **Networking & Collaboration:** The critical role of networks for building infrastructure, securing grants, and sharing knowledge was a central point. ELIXIR

was viewed as a potential model for developing national/regional collaborations. Lessons from the pandemic reinforced the power of established networks (like [ELIXIR CONVERGE](#), [BY-COVID](#)) and global solidarity in data/tool sharing.

- **Infrastructure Sustainability:** Participants discussed the significant challenge of long-term maintenance and staffing for research infrastructure, noting the need for strategic planning beyond initial acquisition. The benefits of network-based decisions on infrastructure development were raised. This was especially relevant for sustainability of Southamerican networks such as CEBEM.
- **Open Science & Access:** The commitment to Open Science principles was shared, while acknowledging challenges like access barriers (paywalls, OA fees) and potential geopolitical stresses on data sharing. Minimising barriers to resource use was seen as crucial.
- **Training & Capacity Building:** A strong, recurring need for training at all levels – from end-users to future infrastructure leaders – was identified. Specific interest was expressed in ELIXIR's training models (Train-the-Trainer, ELITMa leadership modules) and exploring opportunities for cross-continental training expansion.
- **Credit & Recognition:** The conversation explored moving beyond traditional publication metrics to value diverse research outputs (data, code). Initiatives like [COARA](#) and tools promoting transparency ([APICURON](#), structured CVs) were discussed as part of evolving assessment cultures, alongside challenges related to current publishing models.

Key Outcomes & Conclusions

- The event successfully raised awareness of ELIXIR's structure, services, and collaborative model within the Argentinian life science community.
- Strong interest was expressed in learning from ELIXIR's experience in building and sustaining a distributed research infrastructure, particularly regarding governance, funding models, and demonstrating impact.
- Training and upskilling emerged as a key area for potential collaboration, including Train-the-Trainer programs, and leadership/management development for research infrastructures.
- Networking and community building were recognised as vital, with participants seeing value in connecting with ELIXIR Communities and potentially adopting ELIXIR's approaches to cohesive branding and network building strategies.
- Shared challenges related to sustainable funding, infrastructure maintenance, Open Access implementation, and fair research assessment provide common ground for future dialogue and knowledge exchange.

- Existing Argentinian and European links (e.g., CEBEM-Instruct ERIC) offer potential pathways for strengthening connections between Argentinian and European research infrastructures.
- Major points that drew clear interest for the [CEBEM](#) institutions were:
 - CEBEM enhancing its brand visibility as a key strategic element, a conclusion reinforced by observing the positive branding outcomes at peer institutions like ELIXIR and EMBL-EBI.
 - The strategic importance of undertaking impact assessment studies, particularly for their role in streamlining dialogue and relationships with governmental and funding partners.
 - Looking ahead, CEBEM aims to build a stronger collaborative framework with ELIXIR, potentially creating more formal ties analogous to its established partnership with [INSTRUCT ERIC](#).
 - CEBEM positively anticipates and values the prospective collaboration over training approaches that future engagement with ELIXIR could offer.

Next Steps

- Further explore knowledge exchange with Argentinian counterparts over flagged areas of interest such as ELIXIR's training and upskilling initiatives (e.g. [Train-the-Trainer](#), [ELITMa](#)).
- Support building connections between Argentinian researchers/communities (e.g. CEBEM) and highly relevant European life science Research Infrastructures such as EuroBioimaging & ELIXIR.
- Share resources and information on impact assessment methodologies and research infrastructure management practices developed within ELIXIR. (e.g. [ELIXIR Impact toolkit](#))
- Maintain dialogue between ELIXIR representatives and Argentinian stakeholders to identify concrete areas for future collaboration or support.
- Consider follow-up dialogue focused on specific areas of interest (e.g., credit and recognition, specific technology platforms, leadership training).

Event Photos

Henning Hermjakob
(EMBL-EBI)



Lucía Chemes
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Silvio Tosatto
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Round Table Discussion - Panel Members



Closing keynote - Argentinian schools outreach afternoon session



Acknowledgements

Event organiser

Special thanks are due to Diana Battistella (University of Padova) whose exceptional organisational efforts were instrumental in making this outreach event a success.

Participating local institutions

We also extend our sincere gratitude to the participating Argentinian institutions – [Secretaría de Innovación, Ciencia y Tecnología](#), [ANLIS Malbrán](#), [Fundación Instituto Leloir](#), [Secretaría de Educación de la Nación](#), and [Universidad Nacional de San Martín](#) / [CEBEM](#) – for their valuable contributions and engagement during this event.

Funding

This event was supported by the ELIXIR STEERS project, which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101131096.