



Towards integrated European marine
research strategy and programmes

Seas-era
EUFP7ERA-NET

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General concept of the Common Programs and Guidelines for Implementing Common Programs in Seas-era

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General concept of the Common Programs and Guidelines for Implementing Common Programs in Seas-era

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Summary

The aim of this report is to explain what is meant by the concept of “Common Programs”, and to provide guidance on implementing this approach for collaboration within SEAS-ERA. It provides conditions for success and explains benefits that can arise.

By way of introduction, the paper gives some background to common programs in the context of the wider European arena, including collaborative instruments such as ERA-Nets, JPIs, EUROCORES and its place in other organizations such as the Marine Board, EFARO and ICES.

Secondly, the report mentions the outcomes of the previous experience of the ERA-Net MariFish in developing common activities at the regional level or at pan European scale. The collaboration developed through MariFish has set a firm foundation on which further similar collaboration can be built within the Seas-era project.

The report also provides good practice guidance which aims at helping Seas-era to develop its own common programs.

In the last part of the report, the authors, having taken into account the S.W.O.T analyses of the previous experiences, explain the difficulties to build Common Programs in relation with the partnership composition of all the ERA-Nets. The analysis also shows that it is often easier to have an efficient collaboration at the regional level due to the closer interest of the actors involved.

At this time of decreasing science budgets there is an urgent need to make maximum use of investments in research. A priority for all funders should be to consider how to combine efforts and resources, both human and infrastructure, to face the coming challenges.

One of the goals of SEAS-ERA is to demonstrate the feasibility and effectiveness of working together including through common programs at the regional and pan-European levels.

General concept of the Common Program and guidelines for implementing Common Programs in Seas-era

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to explain what is meant by the concept of “Common Programs”, and provide guidance on implementing this approach to collaboration within the Seas-era project. It provides conditions for success and explains the benefits that can arise. One core aim to be achieved in the Seas-era project is to foster synergies, mobilizing non-competitive funds for research in a more coordinated way through Common Programs at regional and pan-European level, opening to excellent high level research collaboration. The WP2 in Seas-era is in charge of designing Common Programs. The global objective is to push national programs towards European collaboration in order to increase coordination between the major Research Performing Organizations (RPOs) for more efficiency and critical mass effect.

The main rationale of the report is to propose a clear definition of the concept of Common Program, to explain what a step by step approach towards Common Program could be and to propose to identify and define key conditions for success and what could be the added value of Seas-era.

1. The potential contribution Common Programs can make

The objective of the ERA-NET scheme is to enhance the cooperation and coordination of research activities carried out at national or regional level by the Member States and Associated States through the:

- Networking of research activities conducted at national or regional level, and
- Mutual opening of national and regional research programs.

The scheme contributes to making the European Research Area a reality by improving the coherence and coordination of research programs across Europe. The scheme also enables national systems to take on tasks collectively that they would not have been able to tackle independently. Both networking and mutual opening of programs require a progressive step by step approach. The ERA-Net scheme therefore has a long-term perspective that must also allow for the different ways that research is organized in Member States and Associated States to merge to a consensual basis for common management.

The collaboration within the “joint Call” approach, which involves partners agreeing to commit new funds to support a research topic, is well understood within the context of ERA-NETs. The “Common Program” concept, which aims at stimulating collaboration without “new” funds, is less well understood or applied and can still be considered as being at the experimental stage. Whilst it is possible to draw on the experience of other ERA-NETs when designing and managing joint calls, such experience is not available for common programs.

Furthermore, drawing up Common or Joint Program in the ERA-Net scheme is innovative and it can be considered that it is still at the experimental level.

1.1 Some examples of collaboration supported through EU systems and instruments

In order to help develop an understanding of what is meant by the concept of common programs, and its potential scope, it is worth summarising examples of improved collaboration that are developing under other instruments.

As few ERA-Nets develop “joint action plan” which will ultimately lead to a new RTD program based upon cooperation, it could be considered that for these reasons, the EU created the articles 169 (now 185) to enable their development.

BONUS, an Article 185 initiative based in the Baltic area, is developing cooperation through its regional strategic research agenda. It aims to link common programs with new projects funded through competitive calls.

The EUROCORES scheme seeks to provide an effective and efficient need-driven collaboration mechanism at a multinational level within Europe, responsive to emerging priorities of national funding agencies within the ESF membership. Whilst leaving funding 'ownership' with the national agencies, it aims to enhance existing national structures through collaboration. A budget has been allocated to help cover the additional cost associated with the collaborative projects.

Several other EU instruments which promote networking, for example **EUREKA and Technology Platforms** provide specific funds to support cooperation.

EUROMARINE, a cluster of previous networks of excellence in Marine research (Marbef, Marine Genomics, Eur-Oceans), is mostly composed by senior scientists who as such do not represent any institution. It could explain why only a few common projects mainly based on Human Capacity Building are developed when budget-lines are co-funded by the Commission.

Within the **Joint Programming Initiative** concept, the marine-related proposal, “Healthy and Productive Oceans and Seas”, is currently under development and has yet to define how it will use the common program approach in some case studies. Experience gained from building common programs within SEAS-ERA, and the earlier ERA-NET MariFish, could potentially contribute to the development of enhanced collaboration under this JPI. JPIs offer the opportunity for a more efficient utilization of scarce resources and bringing a new dimension to European research by aligning national programs across participating countries. By working together towards a common vision and strategic research agenda and by pooling together limited resources, Member States will be able to make significant contributions to research by avoiding duplication, filling gaps and creating critical mass. This will increase the visibility and impact of the European research at the international level.

Commitment by Member States is essential if common programs are to contribute to the establishment of a long-term, significant research base which will foster innovative, high impact research in Europe. The JPI FACCE (Agriculture) provides a good example of what can be achieved. FACCE is aligning national programs across participating Member/Associated States to address the research questions defined in the strategic research agenda and to “share the burden”. To this end, partners have shown a great willingness to work together and to advance rapidly as demonstrated by the implementation of pilot joint actions and by the use of a new JPI-specific instrument known as a FACCE-JPI Knowledge Hub. Other ways of developing a common research agenda are being considered, including harmonising methodologies and data analysis. The additional cost of collaboration is covered by contributions provided by the partners.

1.2 Context of the collaborations achieved through organizations

The Marine Board -ESF, established in 1995, is a network of 30 leading European Marine Research Institutes from 20 European countries. The Marine Board is actively involved in promoting the marine research agenda at both European and Member State levels and in fostering research cooperation between its Member Organizations and Member countries. The Marine Board has had significant input to the European Research Framework Program Agenda and to the recent European Strategy for Marine and Maritime Research (2008) through strategic position papers and through the influential Galway, Aberdeen and Oostende Declarations. However the Marine Board has not managed to build cooperation in implementing collaborative programs.

The European Fisheries Aquaculture Research Organizations (EFARO), established in 2004, is a network of the directors from 25 research organizations, working in the area of Fisheries, Aquaculture, Seafood processing and Marine Environment. Its goal is to share the best practices and knowledge between the research institutes, to achieve some foresight studies and to promote them to DG Mare and DG research. EFARO also facilitates scientific collaboration between its members in the European Research Area, connecting its members to elaborate common proposals. However the network has not managed to build Common Programs, even though some members have dedicated budgets to facilitate the cooperation.

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), founded in 1902, is a network of more than 1600 scientists from 200 institutes linked by an intergovernmental agreement between the 20 states (the ICES Convention) to add value to national research efforts. Scientists are working through ICES to gather information about the marine ecosystem. It coordinates and promotes marine research on oceanography, the marine environment, the marine ecosystem, and on living marine resources in the North Atlantic. Members of the ICES community now include all coastal states bordering the North Atlantic and the Baltic Sea. ICES cooperates with organizations and institutes on an international scale.

ICES successfully coordinates collaborative programs at national expenses because the programs are mainly governed by advice on fisheries, ecosystems and environment for its members, for EU commissions, for all the other regional organizations and for the Oslo, Paris and Helsinki conventions. As all the members states are committed to produce this advice, they find it more convenient, efficient and scientifically more credible, to participate in the cooperative works even if the cooperative programs are not funded. In that case the environmental and fisheries commitment is so strong that it can force the Members states to cooperate. But ICES is an international institution, not just a European one. It is involved for example in North America and Russia.

There are strong opportunities for EU instruments to develop Common research Program avoiding overlapping and increasing mutual benefits.

1.3 Conditions to design Common Programs in ERANETs

1.3.1- Common program is cooperation among national programs already funded.

By cooperation, it is intended a junction of some national programs funded through their national marine research organizations (Operators – RPOs), in a view of contributing collectively to Common research Programs.

Thereby research programs carried out at national or regional level should have the following characteristics:

- be strategically planned, i.e., should be composed of a number of research projects focused on a defined subject area or set of problems, scheduled to run for a set dedicated period of time and have a coordinated management;
- be carried out at national or regional level, and
- be already funded by national or regional public bodies(*)

The major objective is to push these national programs to build collaboration at European level, so based mainly on non-competitive funds, in order to stimulate the coordination and to increase the critical masses among the major Research Performing Organizations (RPO) of the EU.

() in major cases the funders of national programs are:*

- Ministries
- Government or regional authorities
- Research Council or agencies
- Research Foundations

The overall aims of Common Program are to foster practical cooperation between Partners on existing or planned research programs, and to improve the collaboration between scientific institutions in Europe where appropriate, and to introduce more complementarity among the National Programs definition.

The aim behind this challenge is to try to move closer together on important areas of research already targeted and funded by partners. By experience, it appears that many of the research challenges are actually common across Europe. Therefore, working collaboratively will bring added value and benefits.

1.3.2- Common program is different than bilateral cooperation

A common Program does not seek to substitute bi- or multi- lateral initiatives or projects, but aims at harmonizing and clustering existing joint research priorities already developed at the regional and pan- European level.

The implementation of Common Program requires a minimum of three countries involved.

The most optimal implementation way could be the regional level with the involvement of all the neighbouring countries which share the same sea with similar management concerns.

Common Program aims to increase or strengthen multinational cooperation according to regional focus and/or topical thematic issues. In addition, it can induce structure changes among the involved RPOs with concern about the full sharing of existing services and the achievement of critical masses: -

e.g sharing and specialization of some tasks, creation of virtual laboratories, putting in network all the available expertise for a given scientific challenge.

The regional (European eco-region) approach between the Member/Associated States in Common Program is also a practical way to involve bordering non-EU countries. It has been achieved in ARIMNet with the countries of the south of Mediterranean Sea.

2. Developing Common Programs within an ERA-NET – a practical example provided by MariFish

MariFish was a five year ERA-NET project composed of 18 European partners from fifteen Member and Associate States. It aimed to improve collaboration between the funders of marine fisheries research by providing opportunities for fisheries managers to work together in a collaborative partnership. A significant effort was directed at developing common programs, and this section provides details on what was achieved.

Within Marifish, the term “Common Programs” was used for the activity aimed at stimulating collaboration “without additional funds”. Common programs are not to be confused with the “Common Pot” approach which involves partners agreeing to commit new funds to support an agreed research topic.

For the MariFish partners the rationale for adopting common programs was very clear. Partners’ combined annual investment in fisheries science was approximately €190 million. A common pot, the final goal for all ERA-NETs, was successfully funded, at a level of approximately €2million per annum over three years. Yet this represented only 1% of the total funds committed by the partnership annually. In other words, 99% of the partners’ science had no formal collaboration under MariFish, highlighting the need for the common program approach aimed at bringing together at least some of the existing work.

Advantages arising from such collaboration identified by MariFish included:

- Sharing experiences and output from research;
- Bringing added value by drawing together research funded by several partners;
- Sharing scientific equipment;
- Providing opportunities to exchange personnel;
- Providing critical mass to address common challenges;
- Identifying research gaps;
- Avoiding duplication.

The collaboration achieved under MariFish illustrate that collaboration undertaken by MariFish has extended outside the strict focus of developing joint research projects. Collaborative activities have included: developing detailed databases on current research to help identify common priorities and avoid duplication; reaching agreement on the sharing of data on fishing vessel activity in the Channel and on ground fish surveys in parts of the Mediterranean; bringing together gear technologists and modellers to share experiences. Future research needs and the scope for collaboration were identified through focus workshops, for example on integrated ecosystem models and indicators for inshore and deep waters.

3. Guidance on developing Common Programs within SEAS-ERA

Within Seas-era a number of activities are aimed at developing common programs, as listed in Table 1.

Task	Activity
1.1	Collation and synthesis of existing science and technology plans and strategic priorities. Inform the development of common programs
2.1	Updating existing inventories of priority programs. Analysis of these to determine common priorities and visions. Identify new areas or themes for joint funding (and collaborative programs).
2.2	Developing guidelines for implementing collaborative programs.
2.3	Implementing up to two common programs at EU level.
6.1	Develop strategic marine research plan for the Atlantic region which identifies potential ideas for collaborative programs.
6.2	For the Atlantic region identify and select topics for common programs. Pilot common programs involving partners and develop further for Atlantic region.
7.1	Develop strategic marine research agenda for Mediterranean Sea which identifies potential ideas for joint research activities.
7.2	For the Mediterranean region review existing programs and activities. Identify themes that could be addressed using collaborative programs. Implement programs.

Table 1 – List of activities in SEAS-ERA DoW related to the development of collaborative programs

What is offered is general guidance rather than “best practice” since there are a number of alternative approaches that could be adopted. It is suggested that there are main stages in developing and adopting Common Programs: Identifying candidates; refining the list and developing a work program; and finally formalising the collaboration.

Based on the previous experience, it is proposed to implement Common Program at both regional and Pan-European levels in a way that ensure that the priorities and interests of all partners are taken into account. The general guidelines proposed below set out different stages and different levels of involvement of the various actors.

Building Common Programs is anyway a **new step by step approach** that requires strong commitments and also flexibility from the partners, involving ministries, funding agencies, research operators and experts. The roles of each actor must be well defined in a participative way.

It is also a step by step approach to translate the strategic research agenda of the ERA-net and of the JPI in a variety of eligible Common Programs.

3.1 Identifying common research theme to develop collaboration

At first, the ERA-Net projects focus mostly on updating inventory and analysis of existing national and regional science and technology strategic plans and address the priorities of the partners (in general RFOs) at the pan-European and regional level.

One part of this exercise may help at informing the development of Common Programs taking into account the definition of common themes priorities to be addressed at European and regional levels by the major marine and maritime research components.

Indeed, by comparing the national priorities, the analysis allows to identify common themes considered as necessary for a collective development.

Then a negotiation phase is necessary to gain a consensus among the interested partners on so called “selected topic” or “research area”.

- ⇒ At the end of this process, the Seas-era partners establish a broad theme to develop collaboration and agree that each specific research area would benefit from enhanced collaboration in order to avoid duplication, to share expertise and achieve improved standardisation

3.2 Refining the selected topic and developing a work program

The next stage is to refine the selected topic and develop a detailed work program for the key scientific challenge. Ideally planning needs a close co-operation between scientific experts who have detailed knowledge and expertise of the research area; program managers who can map out current research programs; and policy-makers who use the output from research to develop policies

3.2.1. Inventory of National programs and projects on the selected topic

It is proposed on the selected topic/research area, an inventory and an identification of existing national programs/projects and corresponding planned programs/projects for the next years by the national research performing organizations.

A detailed analysis of the existing research will show the convergence, the gaps and the alignment of the different projects, leading to identify the contents of the Common Program.

The mapping of the national programs/projects for each partner will address the partner/country profile and the European added values for designing Common Program.

3.2.2. Work up into detailed plans using Experts groups (experts and managers)

The objective is to list partner’s priority research areas in relation to the “selected topic” to develop a set of priority projects and potential partnerships that addressed true gap areas and avoided duplication.

The RPOs that perform the national program have to be involved in the elaboration of the precise content and in the discussion on how the national projects could be interlinked, what areas would be most valuable for collaboration, with which schedule.

In the general case, the scientific leaders and national experts from a research organization participate in the drafting of the Common Programs.

- ⇒ At the end of these steps [the mapping of the existing national programs/projects on the selected topic (3.3.2) and the Experts group results (3.3.3)], the Seas-era partners interested in future collaborative work should achieve to define the corresponding content of the Common Programs and the agenda.

3.3 Formalising a Collaborative Program through an agreement

The Seas-era partners involved in Common Program sign an agreement or Memorandum of Understanding that set out what would be achieved and the modalities for partners to work together. The MoU is a mutual statement of intention among the partners agreeing to make efforts to fulfil their intentions and which also establishes the nature and the specific governance attached to the agreed collaboration in terms of shared resources, timing and practical interactions between project participants. It could normally be signed for the total duration of the program even if it lasts longer than the duration of the ERA-Net.

A Steering Group is created including the leading scientific actors as well as the concerned partners of the ERA-Net to follow up the results and to achieve continuous improvement of the collaboration.

The follow up of the activities is an important process with periodic analysis of the activity reports and results of the Common Program.

3.4 Knowledge management

It is essential to implement communication to the Members countries, to the stakeholders and to the general public the results through the Seas-era web site or all other appropriate means.

4. Proposals to go further in Seas-era ERA-Net

4.1- SWOT analysis of MariFish common programs

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis has been performed to identify key problems or success stories of common program developed within the MariFish ERA-Net (*Héral and Sergent 2010 - D-7.6 report MariFish*). The results of this SWOT analysis are presented in Annex 2, and can be summarised as follows:

Strengths identified included helping provide critical mass; identifying research gaps; and avoiding duplication.

Weaknesses included insufficient time and resources allocated to involving scientists in collaboration; and protracted time needed to identify common priorities and build collaborative programs.

Opportunities included encouraging researchers to collaborate from the start; and offering an effective way of maintaining research output as budgets decline.

Threats included the loss of momentum once the MariFish project comes to an end.

4.2- Challenges for Seas-era project: developing the concept of Common Programs further

A general analysis of the application of the Common Program has clearly demonstrated that this concept is difficult to implement in reality without extra funding. Nobody has achieved to develop them in a long perspective except ICES which benefit from the members being committed by regional authorities to produce advice. Furthermore, all the ERA-Net structures are not well designed to achieve this task due to the fact that the partnerships with the funding agencies are adequate to

co-fund calls but not relevant to build collaborative project without extra funding. The absence in all the Era-Nets consortia of the actors of the Common Program represents also a major difficulty.

Nevertheless, the ERA-Net Seas-era will try to demonstrate by following the steps methodology, it could be feasible to implement regional case studies as common scientific interest could be stronger and so easier to mobilize the scientific community.

The benefits that can arise from common programs are clear, as identified by the MariFish partners. They include bringing added value by drawing together research funded by partners, sharing experience and output from nationally funded research, helping to identify gaps, and avoiding duplication. The SEAS-ERA work program includes two tasks that will build on the achievements of MariFish at the regional level: Task 6.2 which involves identifying and selecting topics for common programs in the Atlantic Region; and Task 7.2 which aims to do the same in the Mediterranean Region. Planning is already underway for delivering on both these tasks.

A third task, Task 2.3, which involves implementing common programs at the pan-European level, provides an opportunity to take common programs one step further. The specific challenge is for partners to agree to shape a part of their national research programs around a single pan-European topic. Analysis has yet to be undertaken on what that topic will be, but one suggestion is that efforts should focus around the science needed to implement the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). The MSFD includes many science challenges, for example developing suitable Descriptors and Indicators, and developing a better understanding of what is meant by Good Environmental Status (GES). All member states are committing funds to these areas of research and therefore it is an opportunity for SEAS-ERA partners to work together, at this formative stage when research needs are still being identified, and develop a common program that helps deliver the appropriate evidence. As highlighted in this paper, building common programs that are effective is dependent on available fundings at adequate level. The partners may identify the need to commit all together additional funds to this task beyond the ERA-Net.

SEAS-ERA also should not work in isolation, rather it should link through to the MSFD and GES-related work that is already being undertaken, for example by OSPAR, ICES, the European Commission and by JPI Oceans.

Seas-era project will seek to work with the main actors involved in research, beyond the only ERA-Net consortium but with its support, to build effective collaboration around this concept of Common Programs to address significant advances as a part of the construction of the JPI Oceans.

5. Conclusions

Implementing common programs within ERA-Nets, JPIs or other instruments provides a significant opportunity to build more collaboration in the ERA, opening up national programs, pooling resources, improving cross border cooperation, achieving critical mass, avoiding duplication etc. Their development and maintenance requires dedicated funding to cover project design, implementation of the work, and production of publications and relevant advice, and return on investment may take several years. A mechanism to support the financial effort associated with developing and maintaining common programs does not exist at present at the EU or MS level.

The recent Communication "Partnering in Research and Innovation" has emphasized the need for long-term commitment from all Member States through multi-annual financial commitments and a simplification of the partnering landscape. This will be achieved at least partially through the creation of a new single and more flexible type of ERA-Net that combines features of ERA-NET and ERA-NET Plus schemes. It was also suggested that in the future, EU funding may be conditional on appropriate application of the voluntary guidelines known as the "Framework conditions". These developments are in line with the conclusions of the present paper. Any new instrument will need to facilitate not only the production of calls but also to consider and promote the favourable conditions for common programming.

ANNEXE 1- ERA-Net MariFish

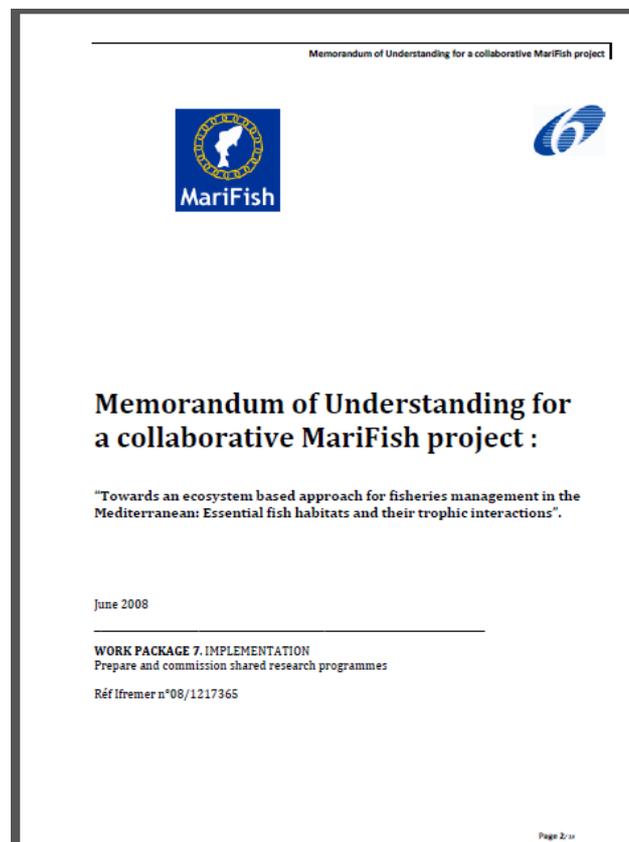
Memorandum of Understanding for Mediterranean regional case study

Note: for WP7 collaborative project in Mediterranean Sea – Task “Essential fish habitat of small pelagic” - in 2009 Italy and Croatia have joined the Common Program as associated partner and through the operators CNR-IAMC & IOF-Split – The group is now composed between 15 and 18 people involved in the work

Memorandum of Understanding for Mediterranean regional case study

This MoU sets out the details of the planned collaborative work which will take place in the Mediterranean Sea on “Towards an ecosystem based approach for fisheries management in the Mediterranean: Essential fish habitats and their trophic interactions”.

This Mediterranean project is coordinated by Partner 7, France (IFREMER) and led by Partner 12, Greece (Ministry of Development, General Secretariat for Research and Technology GSRT).



Between :

The MariFish members interested in the management and the development of a transversal research programme in the Mediterranean regional case study are : France, Greece and Spain :

- French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea (Ifremer), France
and,
- Ministry of Development, General Secretariat for Research and Technology (GSRT), Greece
and,
- The Ministry of Science and Innovation, (MICINN), Spain

referred to hereinafter as «the Partners».

This MoU is a mutual statement of intention among the Partners. It is not intended to be, and shall not constitute in anyway, a binding or legal agreement, or impose any legal obligation or duty on any Partner. But the Partners agree to make all reasonable efforts to fulfil their intentions herein.

Preamble

The ERA-NET scheme is an innovative component of the European Union's Sixth Framework Programme providing funding to improve the cooperation and coordination of national research activities and thus strengthen the European Research Area (ERA).

Supported under the ERA-Net scheme, the MarIFish network began its activities in January 2006. Members of the network aim to strengthen the links between European marine fisheries science and fisheries management.

MarIFish work package 7 is looking at increasing multinational cooperation at a regional scale and aims to consider regional and/or topical thematic issues. It will achieve this through the development of five collaborative projects. The MarIFish Steering Committee has agreed that the Mediterranean Sea is a suitable candidate for a collaborative regional project.

1 - Purposes

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding, hereafter called MoU, are to facilitate:

- the identification of existing programmes and the planned programmes for the next four years by the different national institutes,
- the specification by the funding agencies of their requirements and priorities for research,
- the development of a transversal programme in this area to be applied to different species and different areas of the Mediterranean Sea, as described in annex 4,

This MoU also establishes the nature of the agreed collaboration in terms of resources shared and practical interactions between project participants.

2 -Geographical area

This MoU relates to the ecosystem approach of fisheries management in the "Mediterranean Sea", including Western and Eastern Mediterranean.

The geographic areas and particularities for the pilot project execution are based on ongoing research projects in the member states, the existence of data time series from previous scientific work and the general research and scientific interests for all participating member states.

3- Commitments of participants

- 3.1 All the MarIFish members that are identified as "Partners" in this MoU have a major interest in fishing activities in the area and have signed this MoU,
- 3.2 Some other MarIFish members interested in the development of the concept of regional collaboration in the area could be identified as "observers" and could signed this MoU. They could attend the Scientific Committee and the Joint Management Committee (annex 1.).
- 3.3 Other Mediterranean Countries, not members of MarIFish, developing fishing research programme in the area, are encouraged to participate in the study (sign the MoU if they wish), as Associated Partners. They could attend the Scientific Committee and the Joint Management Committee (annex 2.).

4- Principles

The principles of this MoU are the common interest of the Partners in combining national programmes in the Mediterranean Sea in order to :

- Develop innovative concepts :
 - avoid duplication,
 - share expertise,
- Contribute to the management of the same ecosystem with the same fish and shellfish stocks.
- Increase scientific cooperation by :
 - exchanging information on the national priorities, on a regular basis and through appropriate means,
 - mutual use of the facilities and instruments of each partner,
 - sharing the knowledge, the data, scientific cruises,
 - organizing workshops and symposia on topics of mutual interest.
- Exchange respective expertise in personnel including junior and senior scientists and technical experts.

The Partners have identified the national marine research organizations which will contribute to common research programmes through studies and expert assessments (*referred as «the Operators» in annex 3.*).

The Partners agree that funds will be made available in order to develop cooperation, to carry out the project meetings, to communicate regularly, to maintain systems, to exchange students etc as appropriate. Partners can contribute either financially or through the provision of infrastructures and/or resources.

Depending on requirements, the Partners accept the principle of a call that may be proposed by the management committee, to fund collaborative activities and possibly to propose research topics for thesis, post-doctorate or employment contract, and funding workshop facilities.

5- Procedures

5.1. Defining the topic

The Partners intend to develop a joint regional programme on the following topic :

“Towards an ecosystem based approach for fisheries management in the Mediterranean: Essential fish habitats and their trophic interactions” (*details are specified in annex 4.*).

5.2. Management for the “Mediterranean” regional case study

5.2.1 Joint Management Committee

The Partners agree on the creation of a Joint Management Committee to be chaired by Ifremer, as workpackage 7 leader and Partner 12, Greece (Ministry of Development, General Secretariat for Research and Technology GSRT).

This Committee is composed of two nominated representatives from each Partner and each Associated Partner (*1 manager and 1 scientist*).

The Joint Management Committee will be responsible for the coordination of the cooperation between the national programmes, and for the practical implementation of the MoU including :

- Inventory of the national programmes and associated budget at the national level,
- identify common approaches,
- endorse methodology proposed by the Scientific Committee
- facilitate access to data,
- encourage exchange of facilities used by each research group,
- adapt a common approach to :
 - the publication of research results,
 - the ownership of research output or possible intellectual or economic benefits (*in agreement with the rule 9 of this MoU*),
- develop procedures for exchange human resources between the different partners,
- monitor progress of the projects.

The members of the Joint Management Committee are assisted by Ifremer administration.

The management committee will meet one time a year and may be organized in conjunction with the scientific committee.

The Associated Partners may attend the Joint Management Committee. If funding is available, MariFish WP7 supports their attendances to the meetings.

The Observers may attend the Joint Management Committee on invitation. MariFish WP7 do not support their attendances to the meetings.

Under the MariFish workpackage 7 budget, funding has been allocated to cover all the operating costs of the Joint Management Committee until January 16, 2011. From January 16, 2011, each Partner shall bear all the costs for its participation in the Joint Management Committee.

5.2.2 Scientific Committee

The Joint Management Committee agrees to the creation of a Scientific Committee to be chaired by Ifremer, as workpackage 7 leader and Partner 12, Greece (Ministry of Development, General Secretariat for Research and Technology GSRT).

This Committee is composed up to three scientists (nominated representatives) from each Partner and each Associated Partner.

The Scientific Committee will be charged with elaborating detailed plans for the Mediterranean project including:

- project goals, tasks, delivery calendar,
- facilitate access to large infrastructure,
- setting out action plans for interaction and partnership,
- budgetary requirement,
- description of staff involved and their roles in each project to enable exchanges of staff (including profile for exchange human resources & Research topics for student exchanges),
- reporting.

The Scientific Committee reports to the Joint Management Committee and after its agreement, the scientific Committee will implement the cooperation.

If necessary, the Scientific Committee will advise the Joint Management Committee on the scope and the content of any gaps which could be filled by a common call.

In any publication relating to this regional programme the coordination role of MariFish will be acknowledged.

The Scientific Committee will meet two times a year.

The Associated Partners may attend the Scientific Committee. If funding is available, MariFish WP7 supports their attendances to the meetings.

The Observers may attend the Scientific Committee on invitation. MariFish WP7 do not support their attendances to the meetings.

Under the MariFish workpackage 7 budget, funding has been allocated to cover all the operating costs of the Scientific Committee until January 16, 2011. From January 16, 2011, each Partner shall bear all the costs for its participation in the Joint Management Committee.

If extra meetings of the Scientific Committee are requested, these meetings will be in that case covered by the national expenses.

6 - Evaluation procedure

The projects and overall programme will be evaluated by independent Scientific experts nominated by the Joint Management Committee with 3 sets of criteria: (1) the scientific aspects (2) the project management (3) the EU MariFish added value and mainly to ensure complementarities between national projects, to achieve the programme's thematic and regional goals and to issue a "label of excellence MariFish".

The result of the review is presented during a session involving the partners and the main investigators.

A mid-term review may be considered, and a final evaluation must take place about three months before the official termination of the MariFish project in 2011.

7 - Funding Model

At the time of signing the MoU, this collaborative project has no plans to conduct a joint call for new research.

Each Partner will apply for funding at various regional, national, european and international institutions.

If necessary, under the MariFish Work Package 7, the funding provided for joint calls would involve the 'juste retour' principle whereby funding is provided to the research organisation of the origin country.

8 - Duration - Renewal

This MoU shall enter into force on the date of signature of the MariFish Partners. It shall remain in force for four years, unless terminated by the individual Partners giving other Partners at least six months written advance notice of its intention to terminate this MoU.

This MoU may be extended or amended by mutual agreement of the Partners.

9 – Intellectual Property Rights

The ownership, protection, use, dissemination and access rights relating to knowledge arising from this collaborative programme are as set out in PART C “Intellectual Property Rights” of ANNEX II “General Conditions” of the MarIFish Contract, No 025989 (ERAC).

10 – Confidentiality and publication

In the framework of this MoU the Partners undertake to apply the provisions relating to confidentiality and publication defined in Article 9 “Confidentiality and Publication” of the MarIFish Consortium Agreement dated 5 December 2005.

11. Miscellaneous provisions

11.1. Entire agreement

This MoU, the Consortium Agreement, the EC Contract and any subsequent when such apply, addendum and any complementary contract(s), shall constitute the entire agreement among the Partners in respect of MarIFish, and supersede all previous negotiations, commitments and documents concerning MarIFish.

11.2. Controlling provisions

In case of inconsistencies between the contractual provisions signed by the Partners in connection with this Project, the provisions of the EC Contract and Consortium agreement shall prevail over those of this MoU, which shall themselves prevail over any special contract or agreement signed for its application.

11.3. Language

This MoU is drawn up in the English language, which shall govern all documents, notices and meetings, for its application and/or extension or in any other way relative thereto.

11.4. Settlement of disputes

All disputes or differences arising from this MoU which cannot be amicably resolved by the Joint Management Committee shall be submitted to the MarIFish Steering Committee for arbitration and resolution.

11.5. Amendments

Amendments or changes to this MoU shall be valid only if made in writing and signed by any and all of the Partners.

11.6. General provisions relating to termination

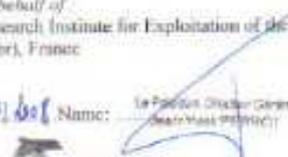
The provisions of this MoU relating to liability, confidentiality, intellectual property rights and publications shall survive the term or termination of this MoU for any reason whatsoever to the extent needed to enable the Partners to pursue the rights and remedies provided for therein.

For the avoidance of doubt, termination or withdrawal shall not affect any rights or obligations incurred prior to the date of the termination.

"The Partners":

Signed on behalf of:
French Research Institute for Exploitation of the
Sea (Ifremer), France

Date: 1/02/08 Name: Le Patron, Olivier Genet
(Acting Head of Institute)

Signature: 
Ifremer
INSTITUT FRANÇAIS DE RECHERCHE
POUR L'EXPLOITATION DE LA MER

Signed on behalf of:
Ministry of Development, General
Secretariat for Research and
Technology (DSRF), Greece

Signature: 
Name: Professor Philippos Tsolika
Date: 29/4/08


Signed on behalf of:
The Ministry of Science and
Innovation, (MICYT), Spain
Signature: 

Name: Prof. Dr. F. Gavara-Ochoa
Date: 17/10/2008

Annex 1.

- Other MariFish members that have an interest in the development of the concept of regional collaboration in the area :

Signed on behalf of:
The Research Promotion Foundation,
Cyprus
Signature :


Name: PAVLOS PATZINAIKOS
Date: 29/09/08

referred as «Observers».

Annex 2.

- The partners agreed to extend the cooperation by involving the Mediterranean countries, not members of MariFish, interested in the management and development of a common research programme in the area:

referred as «the Associated Partners».

- At present (June 2008), no Mediterranean countries, not members of MariFish, are «the Associated Partners». Italy and Croatia have been positively contacted.

Annex 3.

At present, the following National Institutes are interested in the implementation of the projects :

- French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea (IFREMER), France
- Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR), Greece
- Spanish Institute of Oceanography (IEO), Spain

referred as «the Operators».

Annex 4.

The Partners intend to develop a joint regional programme titled : **Towards an ecosystem based approach for fisheries management in the Mediterranean: Essential fish habitats and their trophic interactions.**

The following research actions will be addressed within the project. Each partner will contribute to their achievement and each action will be lead by a specific Partner.

Essential fish habitats: Mapping key spawning areas, habitat mapping of feeding and nurseries areas of exploited fish population. Identify refuges and key areas to be used for the implementation of Marine Protected Areas (MPA).

- **Large pelagic fish, such as bluefin tuna, albacore and swordfish (France and Greece):**
Habitat mapping of the abundance of the fish will be achieved in relation with environmental condition. Evaluating catches by area needs to have access to VMS data. Tagging experiments developed by each country will be put together in the same common data base. This work will be done in strong partnership with the ICCAT secretariat.
- **Small pelagic fish, such as anchovy and sardine (Greece and Spain) :**
The abundance of small pelagics is estimated by acoustic methodology. Mapping of the habitat of small pelagics will be achieved in relation to environmental conditions. Habitat mapping will be based on a presence absence approach at different periods of the year.
- **Demersal fisheries (France) :**
The data will come from the Medits and it is underlined that there is no access to the data from some UE countries.
The previous coordinator of Medits will be in charge to build this common access data base. In case of difficulties, the WP7 leader will address a letter to DG MARE to facilitate this task.
- **The environmental condition (France) :**
They will be obtained using comprehensive remote sensing data's on the whole Mediterranean.
CLS will provide conditions to access to this type of data.

Trophic interactions: Understanding trophic interactions of key Mediterranean food webs and its implications on fish condition and contamination.

- **Trophic relationships (France) :**
An inventory of the different laboratories or teams very often from Universities will be addressed with the different techniques such as stomach content, mass spectrometry, and analysis contaminants as tracers.
The modeling approach will be identified to address the following topics:
 - impact of climate change on the trophic web and consequences for recruitment or juvenile survival
 - effect of accumulation of pollutants from phytoplankton to top predators

Annex 2: Extract from the MariFish SWOT analysis on Common Programs

4.1.1. Strengths

The Network is (i) a close co-operation between scientists, funders and policy - makers, the forum increases the culture of trust, (ii) improves communication and strong relationships between funding agencies, managers, RPOs and scientists, (iii) brings the EC closer to the scientists, (iv) a real long term Network closer to the scientists –and acts by signing MoU as a catalyst for long term agreements despite the end of the ERA-Net.

The Network's funds: the network develops operational research funded by the national budget owners and a part of the cooperation costs is supported by the EU. The partners are budget holders so they are committed to deliver practical results.

The collaborative work

- Learn experience from each other to overcome difficulties
- Build upon on-going projects: increase efficiency
- Find advantages to work together (1+1>2)
- Linkage between Fisheries Policies and Marine Strategy Framework: increase convergence
- Help to provide a critical mass, identify research gaps, fill the gaps and avoid duplication of work
- Provide access to the infrastructure, technologies, and good practices of other countries
- Favour data exchanges and common database
- Address regional dimension for scientific and management reasons
- Provide access to national funds for scientists to carry out smaller cooperative projects than those normally commissioned by the EC
- Focus on specific areas; making decisions more likely, more effective and responsive

4.1.2. Weaknesses

Institutional problems:

- Difficulties to involve Ministries, Funding agencies and Research organizations at the right level
- Long time to identify common real priorities and to build Common Program
- The priorities of all countries may be not the same
- Lack of consistency between MariFish partner institutions, Ministries / Funding agencies
- No real national connexion between funding agencies and RPOs: loose commitments
- Insufficient level of representation for funding agencies and RPOs in the Network
- Not all the EU countries have been involved
- The focus on fisheries should benefit from experts from other disciplines to encourage the ecosystem approach

Funding issues:

- Difficulties in raising awareness and mobilizing resources to implement the projects in particular with the decrease of national budgets
- Research is now organized by projects funded from different sources including competitive money
- Not enough research time allocated, time available from experts is an issue with the lack of funding
- Lack of dedicated resources for future cooperation

Communication:

- Time needed to communicate with all the actors on the concept of joint program and how to build it and the benefits expected, many actors to convince

Necessary complementarities

- Possible overlap with ICES, DG MARE (DCF) and DG RESEARCH in evaluating the gaps
- Possible overlap with projects already funded by the E.C.

4.1.3. Opportunities

For research and strategy:

- Joint Programming Initiative on “Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans” is the way forward to benefit from the experience gained
- Possibility to encourage researchers to collaborate from the start of a project
- Better connecting the application of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)
- Better coordination of research programs at the regional level in relation with national funding difficulties will decrease the costs
- Facilitate data exchange between researchers in different countries, possibly through contractual obligation, to increase data usage
- Provide resources for scientists to communicate their work and knowledge
- Develop knowledge at a European rather than national scale and creating a space for more coordination
- Increase communication visiting some actors [RFO,RPOs] to explain the Common Program approach
- Possibilities to involve the RACs as regional stakeholders
- Increase partnerships in the Med and in Black Sea where its lack is more important

4.1.4. Threats

- Conceptual issues are difficult to communicate except to real experts
- Need to find a niche or funds in order to continue the collaboration
- Processes or structure becoming too complicated,
- Available funds to communicate with a broad audience not identified

4.1.5. Conclusions of the S.W.O.T

It has been demonstrated that Regional approaches could be successful to build cooperation on a long-term perspective because the states have common interests in managing the same sea and science. Furthermore multidisciplinary approach is easier to implement at the regional level and to build critical masses of scientists is more feasible as well as sharing data and infrastructure. But the main weakness is due to the new way of research funding. Funds are more and more based on competitive funds.

Therefore, in this period of decreasing budget dedicated to science, it is requested to make the most efficient use of investments in research. Indeed a reflection should be engaged on how to better join efforts, human and infrastructure resources to be able to keep pace with these challenges. In the RPOs, there is now a lack of dedicated funds for future cooperation.

There is also an important institutional problem as Common Program approach absolutely requires working in close connection between the management actors, funding agencies and research organization which are not formally involved in ERA-Nets. In theory ERA-Nets are built on the concept that the Ministries and the funding Agencies are controlling all the national research activities. But the reality is different from one country to another. Innovative research is often independent from the Ministries.