

# Casting a net over fisheries research

“By better coordinating our research efforts we will be in a stronger position to tackle the significant challenges facing European fisheries management.”

Good-quality research provides the sound knowledge base which policy-makers need to promote sustainable levels of fishing in the seas around Europe. Therefore, robust science plays a key role in the European Union's Common Fisheries Policy and other (non-EU) fisheries management programmes.

At present, programme managers across Europe responsible for fisheries research funding do not always work closely together, despite facing shared challenges and problems. An ERA-NET project called MariFish – Coordination of European Marine Fisheries Research Programmes – aims to correct this situation and encourage the development of lasting working partnerships between the organisations that fund fisheries research.

Partners in the MariFish project have a combined annual research budget of €160 million. Much of their work is geared towards providing a better understanding of the biology and dynamics of fish stocks and the impact of fishing on the marine environment. Fisheries managers use the results of the research to assess the sustainability of fishing levels and, when necessary, to make adjustments to fishing quotas and fishing effort. This is vitally important work as many of Europe's coastal regions are dependent on fisheries for a living. Research also helps managers adopt appropriate ecosystem-based approaches to fisheries management in order to protect the wider marine environment.

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) is the key international body advising the European Commission and national governments on scientific issues relating to fisheries. This intergovernmental organisation serves as a catalyst for fisheries research, significantly influencing the research programmes of its member countries. Priorities for research, however, are still largely determined on an individual basis by ICES members, and there is no formal mechanism for coordination of fisheries research between the funders, which could benefit all parties.

## Joining forces

MariFish intends to address this current weakness by establishing a network comprising Europe's most important marine fisheries research funding bodies. The aim is to improve the coordination, planning and funding of research, and to make the most of ICES expertise.

MariFish activities include exchanging information on current national research and development programmes being run by the partners; finding ways to improve research planning and procurement by pooling knowledge; and identifying areas of existing collaboration at regional, European and international level. The project also aims to compare and analyse national research programmes to identify areas of common interest, gaps in research and areas of duplication. This will help the partners develop and commission shared research activities in up to five pilot areas.

The long-term aim is to identify the strategic and innovative requirements of fisheries research over the next ten years, before developing jointly funded programmes to meet those needs.



## Coordination Action MARIFISH



### Full title:

Coordination of European Marine Fisheries Research Programmes

### Research field:

Marine Fisheries Research

### Co-ordinator:

United Kingdom: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Fisheries Directorate

### Partners:

- Norway: The Research Council of Norway
- Germany: The Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture, and the Federal Research Centre for Fisheries
- The Netherlands: Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, Department of Fisheries
- Sweden: The Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning
- Iceland: The Icelandic Centre for Research
- France: French Research Institute for the Exploitation of the Sea
- Denmark: Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, Directorate for Food, Fisheries and Agri Business
- Portugal: Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries
- Poland: Morski Instytut Rybacki w Gdyni/Sea Fisheries Institute in Gdynia
- Cyprus: Research Promotion Foundation
- Greece: General Secretariat for Research and Technology, Ministry of Development
- Ireland: Marine Institute
- Belgium: Ministry of the Flemish Government Centre for Agricultural Research, Sea Fisheries Department
- United Kingdom: Scottish Executive, Fisheries Research Services
- Spain: Ministry of Education and Science
- Poland: Ministry of Science and Information Society Technologies

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### Duration:

5 years

### EC funding:

€2 977 070

### Project reference:

CA 025989

“ For the first time, major funders of fisheries research will be able to meet and discuss a wide range of issues including the future priorities for research, identification of gaps and overlaps in our national programmes, and how to achieve better collaboration. ”

### Creating consensus

To drive the work, MariFish's partners have adopted a statement of purpose, which reads: "MariFish will focus on that research which provides evidence to managers for the development of strategies for sustainable fisheries, including links with aquaculture, set within the ecosystem-based principle."

The project promises to improve the cost-effectiveness of research by creating a consensus on funding issues and activities. By improving the coherence and coordination of national research programmes, MariFish will certainly contribute to the building of the European Research Area (ERA). And by providing the opportunity for a number of distinct, autonomous organisations to learn from each other, the Coordination Action will help to develop a strong strategic dimension to marine fisheries research in Europe. In keeping with ERA-NET's objectives, MariFish will encourage joint working and increased understanding between the project partners. This will help to avoid duplication and reduce financial risk by spreading the cost of new research.

### European-level goals

One of MariFish's objectives is to identify research topics that will be particularly suitable for coordination at European level and will bring added benefits to the ERA. Work here will include reporting on specific problems in the EU's fisheries management and research programmes. Research issues with an EU dimension will then be identified within existing national and international programmes. These findings will feed into the development of the project's five pilot research areas, ensuring that national and European needs are both given due consideration by MariFish.