

Report provides overview of marine research in FP6

As there is presently no specific EU funding programme for marine research, one may suppose that the EU does little to support scientists studying Europe's oceans. This assumption would be incorrect.

While the dedicated programmes stopped with the arrival of the Fifth Framework Programme (FP5) in 1998, funding for marine research has steadily increased, reaching 3.2 % of the programme's budget in FP6.

Evidence of this trend can be found in a new report that gives an overview of EU funded marine science and technology projects, which has been produced by the independent organisation EurOcean (the European centre for information on marine science and technology).

Speaking to CORDIS News, Director of EurOcean Dr Laurent d'Ozouville did not need to hesitate before explaining why marine research is important. 'The ocean covers 70 % of the Earth and our planet should really be called Ocean,' he pointed out. And there is of course so much more to learn.

Such a report was necessary in order to indicate the impact of the EU's framework programmes for research, and in particular FP6, on marine research and to provide an online data bank of projects. Access to the information will be free to all interested users.

EurOcean has so far identified 245 marine-related projects supported by the European Commission under FP6, which ran from 2002 until 2006. These involved 83 countries. Based on the present inventory, the United Kingdom was the most enthusiastic participant, working on 164 projects. The United Kingdom was followed by France, and then Germany and Italy, which ranked equally.

The report illustrates the wide range of applications that marine research can have, as it has received funding from all but 5 of the 19 sub-programmes in FP6. The largest amount of money came from the 'Global change and ecosystems' thematic priority, which budgeted over EUR 171 million for marine research — some 22.8 % of the priority's budget.

The steady increase in funding can be attributed in part to the growth in the average size of research projects, as well as the way in which the marine research community has now organised itself so that it is able to take advantage of funding on offer. Recent funding increases can also be ascribed to a growing interest in climate change and public pressure on politicians.

The largest project to receive funding so far has been the 'Integrated collaborative design and production of cruise vessels, passenger ships and ro-pax' (InterSHIP) project, which is working to increase the competitiveness of EU shipbuilders by better integrating tools and methods that can be used to design and manufacture complex, one-of-a-kind vessels. The project received EUR 19 million from the European Commission, and is coordinated by Aker Finnyards in Norway.

'EU funding has been excellent at bringing countries together,' says Dr d'Ozouville. Transnational cooperation has been slower to take off in marine research than in other fields. Most funding still comes from national authorities, and individual countries still prefer to own their research vessels instead of building joint research vessels. 'Progress is slow, but what is changing is access to infrastructure,' says Dr d'Ozouville. Even if individual countries still wish to own their own research vessel, scientists from other countries are now able to use it. Facilitating the access to marine research infrastructures in Europe is also a priority task for EurOcean.

While the report welcomes the increase in EU funding for marine research over the past decade or so, it emphasises that the funding envelope must expand further. 'The 3.2 % allocated to marine research in FP6 still represents a small percentage in comparison with other RTD [research and technological development] domains in a scope of a future maritime policy to support an ocean-based economy,' states the paper.

Based on a CORDIS News interview with the EurOcean Director Dr Laurent d'Ozouville.
For further information, please visit:
<http://www.eurocean.org/contents.php?id=346>
RCN: 27003



<http://cordis.europa.eu>

FP7 draft grant agreement published

The European Commission has published a draft grant agreement for FP7.

The draft has been published for the sole purpose of informing applicants of the broad nature of the future standard grant agreement. Available online are the main sections of the draft standard grant agreement comprising the core text and the 'gen-

eral conditions'. Other related annexes will be available later on.

The Commission emphasises that the text may yet change as it is still the subject of ongoing consultations.

Based on this standard text, separate texts will be drafted for the 'People' and 'Ideas' programmes.

Based on information from the European Commission.
To access the draft agreement, please visit:
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/calls-grant-agreement_en.html
RCN: 26943