



Press Release - May 2013

STAGES Project to Host its First MSFD Workshop

The **STAGES** (Science and Technology Advancing Governance on Good Environmental Status) project will host a *“Workshop on Needs for Further Research to Support Improved and More Efficient Monitoring Programmes Under the MSFD”*, from 13-15 May 2013 in Brussels, Belgium.

STAGES is an EC FP7-funded project that is directly responding to a request from DG Environment to put a support action in place to facilitate the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Under the MSFD, EU Member States are expected to assess the overall status of their respective marine environments and to put in place the necessary measures to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) by 2020.

The workshop is organised by the **STAGES** partner the Institute of Marine Research (IMR) in close collaboration with the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES); l’Institut français de recherche pour l’exploitation de la mer (IFREMER); the European Marine Board; the Joint Research Centre (JRC); and the Centro Tecnológico del Mar (CETMAR).

The workshop report will form the basis of the **STAGES** science-policy reports on needs for further research for the implementation of the MSFD. Participants have been invited from a wide range of interested parties: Regional Seas Commissions (OSPAR, HELCOM and BALTIC); DG RTD; DG Environment; related MSFD projects and initiatives; ICES; JRC-ICES task groups; and relevant Member State competent authorities.

A consultation process is underway prior to the workshop that will help to identify research needs regarding monitoring programmes for the 11 Good Environmental Status (GES) descriptors. This consultation will inform the workshop focus of the five Thematic Group discussions: the Biodiversity Group; the Contaminants & Nutrients Group; the Disturbances Group; the Commercially Exploited Fish Group; and the Hydrographical Conditions Group. [See **Notes for Editors** for more detailed information about the workshop’s objectives and how the Thematic Groups address the GES descriptors.]

"This is the first in a series of three **STAGES** workshops that will investigate the needs for further research to support the implementation of the MSFD. We expect that it will lead to greater understanding of current knowledge gaps and associated uncertainties in relation to monitoring programmes. The outputs from the workshop will help us to assess what is required to adapt and upgrade monitoring programmes, and to produce a list of needs for further research and methodological development to inform future research programmes, as well as managers and decision makers," explained Marisa Fernández of CETMAR, the **STAGES** coordinating partner.

Two more **STAGES** workshops, *The Identification of Research Needs with Regard to the Pressures and their Impacts on Marine Ecosystems* and *The Identification of Research Needs with Regard to Socio-Economic Analysis* will be held later this year (provisionally scheduled for September and October).

In other **STAGES**-related news, a Steering Committee meeting was held on 13 March at CETMAR's headquarters in Vigo, Spain. The committee reviewed the project's first period of activity and planned for the next phase. Several significant milestones have already been achieved across the project's work packages, including:

- The development of a MFSD-related stakeholder database containing more than 400 organisations and 550 contact persons across Europe.
- Identification (through a desktop study) of more than 1,500 European-funded projects and 2,000 Member State projects that might have a potential relevance to the MSFD which are currently being asked to complete a survey to elaborate on their objectives and expected results.
- Engagement with more than 100 institutions across Member States to request assistance in identifying nationally-funded projects with a relevance to the MSFD.
- The launch of a project website, brochure and factsheet to introduce the project to marine stakeholders and wider society.
- The preparation for an expert workshop on research gaps related to the MSFD monitoring programmes.

For more information about **STAGES** and the *Workshop on Needs for Further Research to Support Improved and More Efficient Monitoring Programmes under the MSFD*, please visit www.stagesproject.eu or contact Marisa Fernández Cañamero, **STAGES** Coordinator (mfernandez@cetmar.org) or Raquel Díez Arenas (rdiez@cetmar.org), Centro Tecnológico del Mar - Fundación (CETMAR) www.cetmar.org.

Notes for Editors

The **STAGES** project is being carried out by a consortium of eight partners in seven countries and is being coordinated by the Centro Tecnológico del Mar (CETMAR) in Spain. **STAGES** has received funding from the European Union Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013) under grant agreement n° 308473.

Workshop on Needs for Further Research to Support Improved and More Efficient Monitoring Programmes under the MSFD objectives:

- Sharing state-of-the-art knowledge on monitoring programmes for the MSFD
- Identifying knowledge gaps and associated uncertainties of monitoring programmes
- Assessing what is required to adapt/upgrade monitoring programmes so that they align with emerging knowledge and new technologies
- Producing a list of needs for further research and methodological development to inform future research programmes

The workshop will focus on five Thematic Group discussions:

- **Biodiversity Group** - Biodiversity, Non-indigenous species, Elements of marine food webs and Sea floor integrity (Descriptors 1, 2, 4, and 6 respectively)
- **Contaminants & Nutrients Group** - Eutrophication, Concentration of contaminants and Contaminants in fish and seafood for human consumption (Descriptors 5, 8 and 9)
- **Disturbances Group** - Marine litter and Underwater energy, including noise (Descriptors 10 and 11)
- **Commercially Exploited fish Group** - Population of commercial fish/shellfish (Descriptor 3)
- **Hydrographical Conditions Group** - Alteration of hydrographical conditions (Descriptor 7)

Glossary

Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD): The MSFD was the first legislative instrument in relation to marine policy in the EU. The MSFD lists 11 descriptors to guide evaluation of GES.

Good Environmental Status (GES): GES means that the overall state of the environment in marine waters provides ecologically diverse and dynamic oceans and seas which are clean, healthy and productive. The use of the marine environment must be kept at a sustainable level that safeguards potential uses and activities by current and future generations. This means the structure, functions and processes of marine ecosystems have to be fully considered, marine species and habitats must be protected and human-induced decline of biodiversity prevented.

11 qualitative descriptors for determining GES:

1. Biological diversity
2. Non-indigenous species
3. Population of commercial fish/shellfish
4. Elements of marine food webs
5. Eutrophication
6. Sea floor integrity
7. Alteration of hydrographical conditions
8. Concentration of contaminants
9. Contaminants in fish and seafood for human consumption
10. Marine litter, and
11. Introduction of energy, including underwater noise

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