

# Biodiversity workshop

## 'Establishing a framework for the implementation of marine biodiversity research in Europe'

22 to 24 April 1999 at Yerseke, the Netherlands.

The purpose of the workshop was to prepare the grounds for a large European or joint European/US meeting housed by UNESCO at the end of 1999 or in the beginning of 2000 at which a memorandum of understanding will be signed. The commitment sought is based on a series of flagship sites covering Europe from Spitsbergen in the North to the Canary Islands and Madeira in the South and to Greece and Turkey in the East.

The criteria used for what constitutes a flagship site as well as the parameters, species and perhaps processes that need long-term monitoring (at least 10-15 years) at these sites need to be defined.

Besides proposing the basic mechanisms for the flagship site programme, the workshop aimed at presenting an overview of existing infrastructure in Europe for experimental biodiversity studies.

The objectives of the meeting were to :

- Prepare the implementation of a network of flagship sites as the basis for long-term and large-scale marine biodiversity research in Europe. The research performed through this network should be a major European contribution to the DIVERSITAS programme. The implementation proposal includes both an outline of methodology and an outline of the protocol to be signed by the parties willing to participate.
- Prepare an updated inventory of ongoing national research programmes and existing large infrastructure in the field of marine biodiversity research
- Prepare jointly with EU and EMaPS (ESF) an Euroconference on Marine Biodiversity to be held in 2001.

A Concerted Action at the European scale to establish the infrastructure required was urgently because :

- several national programmes are running or starting soon
- EU projects in the fifth framework programme will be starting as from 2000
- these projects are bottom-up and short term (3-4 years)
- the European contribution to DIVERSITAS and to the International Biodiversity Observation Year IBOY needs to be prepared now.
- Many important research questions cannot be addressed at local scales and require the establishment of a network of institutes. These include
  - Comparative Inventories of Europe's marine microbiota, flora and fauna
  - Change of biodiversity on large latitudinal and longitudinal gradients
  - Long-term Changes in Populations and Biodiversity

The workshop was fostered by EMaPS-ESF and sponsored by EC-DGXII, MARS and Unesco-Diversitas.