

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- A new strategy supporting a decade of marine Science in Europe and beyond
- First World Congress for Marine Station Directors 2020
- Call for members of the Board
- Call for secretariat

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MARS Relaunch - “Supporting a decade of Marine Science in Europe and beyond”

Welcome to the new MARS newsletter (incorporating the new logo, as part of the new strategy).

Marine Stations are one of the most valuable assets for the marine community worldwide as highlighted in the UN Global Ocean Science Report (2017, section 3.3) and at the recent MARS Directors meeting it was reemphasised that it was vital for MARS to focus on its core vision for “a network of connected marine stations across Europe, which are well-positioned to meet the future scientific and societal challenges for the marine environment from the na-



MARS Directors meeting

A new Strategy for MARS:
Supporting a Decade of Marine Science in Europe and Beyond

27th – 29th November, 2018
HCMR, Héraklion, Crete,
Hosted by:
Institute of Marine Biology, Biotechnology and Aquaculture (IMBBC),
Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR), Crete



tional to the global level”. The meeting was used to discuss and finalise the new strategy which is available at the MARS website.

We are confident that this strategy will place us in a better position to promote and support marine stations as ‘the jewel in the crown’ of marine biology.



Dr. Matt Frost
President of MARS

First World Congress for Marine Directors 2020

One of the key agreements from our discussions was to move ahead in collaboration with other national and regional groupings to establish the World Association of Marine Stations. This has the support of IOC-UNESCO and the aim is to hold the first World Congress for marine directors in 2020. We have already had an offer from

our colleagues in Moscow to both organise and host this meeting although further discussions are required with our colleagues running other networks across the world as well as the UN as a key supporter of this initiative. This is because the network of marine stations at a global level can be a key contributor to the UN global

sustainable development goal 14 and provide networking and capacity for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. It was great to have representation from the Japanese Association for Marine Biology (JAMBIO) at our meeting and learn from their experience.

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“MARS’ strategy in support of the Decade of Ocean Science”

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There was also discussion over the ‘umbrella function’ of MARS and it was good to be joined by colleagues from the European Scientific Diving Panel (ESDP, some also there as MARS members). The ESDP is an important European grouping that MARS is keen to support as it fulfils a crucial role in promoting good standards and practice at the European level (see below – ESDP)

As well as discussing strategy at the broadest level, there were also a number of practical decisions taken at our meeting:

- Future MARS Director meetings will be held in central

locations with the next being in Brussels (further details to follow)

- For purposes of transparency, a MARS annual report will be provided at the end of each calendar year including an activity update and a breakdown of financial spend.
- A new model will be implemented for running the MARS secretariat. The two models being considered are a ‘rotational model’ (secretariat based at whichever institution holds the presidency) and an ‘open call’ model where members of MARS can apply to host the secretariat (**please contact us if you would be interested in applying to host the secretariat¹**).

- All proposed Board and President appointments will be communicated to MARS members for comment and all MARS members are invited to provide nominations for consideration by the board.
- We are currently looking for new board members so **please let us know if you would like to find out more about contributing as a member of the MARS Board¹**.

One of the core values of MARS emphasised in our strategy is ‘inclusivity’. We have therefore always kept [our membership fees low](#) in order not to deter smaller marine stations from being engaged. For the past two years we have not collected fees whilst the focus has been on renewing our strategy and working practices. It is now important however to begin collecting membership fees again in order to move forward with the activities proposed as part of the new strategy. The fees are the same as previous as we recognise the challenges in marine science budgets. You will receive a formal request for your fees in January 2019 but **could I please ask that you confirm as soon as possible that you are intending to respond as we are currently setting a budget for the 2019 strategy¹**.

So, have a good Christmas and I look forward to meeting you at future meetings and receiving any comments you might have on the new Mars Strategy.



Dr Matt Frost
Mars President

EMBS53: linking the history, the present and the future of (European) marine biology.



The 53rd European Marine Biology Symposium was organized in Ostend by the Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ) and LifeWatch Belgium between September 17th and 21st, 2018.

EMBS53 aimed at linking the history, the present and the future of (European) marine biology. This edition was special, as 2018 is a celebration year in Ostend: the first marine station ever worldwide was inaugurated exactly 175 years ago, in Ostend, by professor Pierre-Joseph Van Beneden.

Since then, the world of marine biology has changed dramatically - both in Belgium and Europe - especially in relation to used technologies and

techniques. EMBS53 therefore focused on the following themes:

- Science from a historical perspective
- Science in a modern era
- Citizen science
- Science in the North Sea

Next year’s EMBS will take place in Dublin on August 25 to 29. It will be hosted by University College Dublin, in the state-of-the-art O’Brien Centre for Science. The social programme will provide opportunities to sample the city’s famous cultural life and explore the UNESCO Dublin Bay Biosphere.



¹ By email to matfr@MBA.ac.uk or secretariat@marinestations.org

Annual report 2017-2018

This report covers years 2017 and 2018. Future reports will cover a single calendar year.

Activity

Strategy: The main focus of MARS in this period was on drafting a new strategy. To that end the MARS Board held several meetings mainly via skype. A single face to face meeting was held in Brussels, February 2018 to discuss MARS strategy and engagement.

World Association of Marine Stations (WAMS): The MARS President met with IOC-Unesco representatives in Paris, March 2018 along with Pierre Lassere to discuss IOC support for WAMS and how MARS/WAMS could contribute to the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development Decade. Further engagement was carried out via skype, letter and email.

European Science Diving Panel (ESDP): The MARS board worked to develop an MOU with the ESDP. The MARS president attended an ESDP meeting in Stockholm and also gave a presentation by Skype.

EMBS: MARS supported the European Marine Biology Symposium in Piran, Slovenia in 2017 and in Ostend, Belgium in 2018. MARS provided six prizes in total jointly with the Marine Biological Association (MBA). The prizes were for best student poster

Website and communications: ongoing updates were made to the MARS website and work was undertaken on the World Atlas of Marine Stations. Regular social media updates were provided.

MARS Membership

Membership is based on those organisations who paid subscription fees at the last request.

Mars currently has 63 members with the geographic distribution being as follows: Albania (1); Belgium (1); Denmark (1); Finland (2); France (9); Germany (2); Greece (1); Ireland (1); Italy (10); Latvia

(1); Lithuania (1); Malta (1); Norway (2); Poland (3); Portugal (7); Russia (2); Scotland, UK (2); Slovenia (1); Spain (4); Sweden (3); Netherlands (2); UK (6). The full list of members can be found at the MARS website.

MARS Board

- Matt Frost, Marine Biological Association (MBA), UK
- Herman Hummel, Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (NIOZ), Netherlands
- Alexander Tzetlin, White Sea Biological Station, Russia
- Iwona Pawliczka, Institute of Oceanography, University of Gdansk, Poland
- Christos Arvanitidis, Institute of Marine Biology, Biotechnology and Aquaculture (IMBBC-HCMR), Greece
- Jesus Troncoso, University of Vigo (UVIGO), Spain

FINANCES

Expenditure	Year	Total €
Overheads	2017 & 2018	-145
MARS Directors meeting	2017	-3708
MC Meetings	2018	-863
Poster Awards	2017 & 2018	-600
Travel Awards	2017 & 2018*	-1305
Secretariat	2017 & 2018	-9482
Web hosting	2017 & 2018	-1937
Total		-18041
Actual balance:		+14000

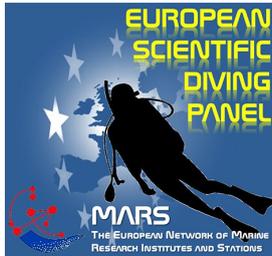
BALANCE

Subscriptions have not been collected for 2017 and 2018 whilst MARS focused on renewing the strategy and updating working practices.

Actual Balance: 14000 €

The European Scientific Diving Panel (ESDP) and MARS

By Jean-Pierre Féral, ESDP chairman, Institut Méditerranéen de Biodiversité et d'Ecologie marine et continentale, Station Marine d'Endoume, Marseille, France.



Scientific diving is an invaluable research tool that supports a wide range of aquatic science disciplines as well as underwater archaeology, earth sciences and, to a lesser extent, the physical and chemical sciences including European water body management (Sayer et al. 2008, Féral 2010, Benjamin and Mackintosh 2016). In addition to surface operated sampling from European research vessels, medium and deep water landers, and the application of remotely operated (ROV) and autonomous underwater vehicles (AUV), scientific diving supports cutting-edge aquatic sciences worldwide both in marine and freshwater environments. The method is predominantly used in marine environments. Diver-supported aquatic research allows for high-quality, highly-selective, accurately-repeated and ecologically-compatible research. Today, scientific diving is considered an essential tool for many research projects, predominantly in depth ranges of between 0 and 50m water depth but with the technical capability of now going deeper and longer (Sayer 2006, Sayer et al. 2008). **The most of SD throughout Europe is done in connection with marine research institutes and stations.**

The users of diving, like those of all other science techniques, need to frequently collaborate between countries in Europe. Working together in the field demonstrates the fast evolving nature of diving as a research method. However, the variety of specific diving regulations that exists across Europe, coupled with the fact that this activity is sometimes associated with a degree

of increased occupational risk, can make effective collaboration difficult at times.

This is the reason why, since the late 1980s, delegates of several countries have worked together to find solutions on the above issues. This approach was initially possible under the European Marine Science and Technology Program - MAST (DG XII). Then, after a somewhat difficult period, a European Scientific Diving Committee (ESDC) was set up. This committee drafted and accepted minimum competence standards for scientific diving that were approved by the majority of member states in 2000 (Banyuls-sur-Mer, FR).

Aims: The aims are to maintain and further develop a framework on which competencies for scientific diving recognized in different Member States under different training routes and differing levels of national legislation can be translated easily and effectively in order to facilitate greater participation by scientists in diving-based pan-EU research programs while continuing to advance collectively the available underwater techniques and technologies.

Objectives: Diving is a highly-productive, cost-effective research tool that supports underwater research through efficient and targeted sampling, quantitative survey, quantitative observation, making in situ measurement, undertaking impact studies, performing ecological analyses, evaluating new techniques, mapping underwater areas, profiling subtidal geology/geochemistry, and accurate deployment/retrieval of underwater apparatus. The objectives are:

To encourage international mobility in the European SD community through the implementation of a practical support framework by:

- promoting the widespread recognition of the existing ESD and AESD as the minimum standards for scientific diving by assuring their acceptance as the necessary qualification for scientific diving in Europe,
- becoming established as the recognized European body with responsibility to provide advice and guidance on the acceptance of existing standards for SD within national and international legislative processes,
- facilitating, promoting and maintaining communication

with and between present national scientific diving organizations and the National Scientific Diving Committees.

To promote safety in scientific diving across Europe through:

- facilitating a pan-European framework that exists to promote industry best practice in scientific diving,
- promotion and support for the establishment of national scientific diving committees where they don't exist,
- the development and maintenance of a EU database of scientific diving activities.
- To advance underwater scientific excellence in Europe through the facilitation of conferences, workshops, courses and publications where scientific diving is promoted as a research platform,
- encouragement and support for EU funded research networks that employ scientific diving.

One of the weaknesses of this committee was that it had little visibility within the formal science structure of Europe. A new committee was set up (Bremerhaven, DE, 2007). After seeking for support and a lot of effort, in October 2008 (Toulon, FR), SD was eventually accepted as a panel of the ESF, as part of the Marine Board (*European Scientific Diving Panel: ESDP*).

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The purpose of Scientific Diving (SD)

is the undertaking and delivery of underwater science. It is needed:

- to support research and education;
- for the protection and conservation of the natural and cultural environment.

It is neither recreational nor commercial diving.

SD exists in a health and safety framework that involves certified scientific divers, diving officers, scientific project leaders, heads of laboratories, administrators and legislators.

'The link between the ESDP and MARS will be of mutual benefit.'

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The official recognition permitted a number of initiatives to develop and, as a result, the number of countries where SD was recognized and regulated across Europe increased markedly. At the same time, funding was obtained for workshops and a number of transnational programs of research and training were created. Unfortunately, the longevity of a Marine Board panel is finite and although SD received eight years of support (4+4 years), that term finished with the last Marine Board plenary meeting in April 2017. During this period, ESDP focused on:

- Operational and safety issues related to SD,
- Diving as a tool for scientific research.

In that final meeting there was agreement of the participants that the progress made while functioning as a EU Marine Board panel would only be sustained if it continued to operate under the auspices of a recognized Scientific European Organization. This led us to prepare a request to the MARS network because SD is used on all European coasts and also because several objectives of the ESDP are similar to or complementary to those of MARS. The European Network of Marine Research Institutes and Stations has such a European-wide scope. On the one hand, ESDP will assist MARS in its core activities:

- creating awareness of marine stations as an important part of Europe's scientific patrimony, focusing on submarine intervention techniques naturally deployed from marine research institutes and stations,
- contributing to contact, and lobby, with the managers of European research (e.g. EC, UNESCO, ESF, IUCN),
- Identifying relevant science priorities and strategic themes in science policy, and stimulating international interdisciplinary marine science programs,
- contributing to the creation of a critical mass and focus for European and Global marine activities,
- promoting collaboration in spin-off projects,
- communicating the products with stakeholders,

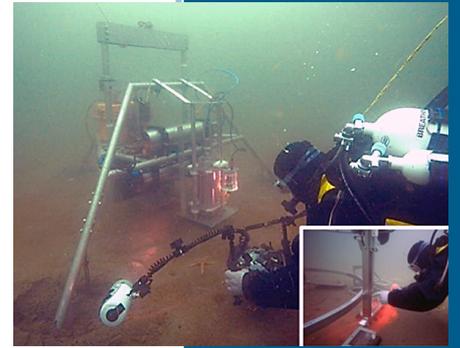
- contributing to the organization of symposia, workshops, capacity building and specific training.

On the other hand, what ESDP expect as a Panel of the MARS network is:

- To provide a EU platform to publish and distribute vision and strategy papers developed by the ESDP,
- To enhance the visibility of SD within Europe as an important scientific tool,
- To increase the efficiency of the work of the ESDP by being recognized as "THE" European Panel for SD across Europe,
- To stimulate as much as possible national SD boards to join the ESDP in order to significantly improve the SD method for European research by joining forces,
- To also encourage its member institutions to actively seek collaboration with the NSDCs,
- To facilitate networking opportunities for ESDP with MARS activities and Member Organizations and with other relevant networks,
- To keep an OFFICIAL STATUS in order the ESDP can approach other organizations for funding.

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Scientific divers check, monitor and evaluate performances of benthic landers.

Meeting of the Executive Board, Brussels, 26-27 February 2018

In 2018, the MARS Executive Board met in Brussels to draft the new MARS strategy. The meeting was hosted by Eleni Hatziyanni, director of Environment and Spatial Planning Region of Crete-HCMR.

On basis of several scoping discussions, here the final structure of the present document was molded into its present shape, and the (im)possibilities for the development of the World Association of Marine Stations were discussed.

Furthermore Dr. Hatziyanni shared her personal view on the lobbying possibilities and opportunities for MARS. Dr Maurice Hoffman (INBO) discussed possibilities for cooperation between AlterNET and MARS.

MARS Prizes, Awards

Poster Prizes



Zahra Alsaffar from King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) wins first prize at the 52nd EMBS, Piran, Slovenia.

2017 EMBS (Slovenia): Zahra Alsaffar was awarded the first prize for best student poster presentation at the 52nd EMBS for the poster: "Soft-sediment macrobenthic assemblages in space and time: exploring patterns of variation in a hypersaline sub-tropical coastal lagoon".

2018 (Ostend): Reyes Salas was awarded the first prize for best student poster presentation at the 53rd EMBS for the poster: "Time investment and territorial behaviour of lesser black-backed gulls (*Larus fuscus*) during the pre-laying period".

Travel Awards

In 2017, Angela Bartolo (Oceanlab, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, Scotland) visited Station Biologique de Roscoff (CNRS – UPMC Roscoff, France) to elucidate Malta's seaweed biodiversity using the Germling Emergence Method and DNA Barcoding. She presented the work at the 2017 EMBS (Slovenia).

Andrey Lavrov (Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia) went for a comparative investigation of regeneration in sponges (Porifera) to Station Marine d'Endoume (Marseille, France).

The reports are available at the website.

In 2018 no travel bursaries have been awarded.

Liaison with other networks: JERICO-NEXT

One of the objectives of MARS is to establish links with other relevant networks. In 2018 this activity gets an extra impetus, since Dr. Christos Arvanitidis (IMBBC-HCMR), member of the MARS executive board, got a prominent position in the JERICO NEXT project as the task leader "1.3 Interaction with biology and biogeochemistry infrastructures and consortia".

One of his first actions will be to establish a firm link between JERICO NEXT and MARS. There are several mutual objectives and both networks surely will benefit from this.

The European network of Marine stations



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The Marine Stations Network (MARS) was established in 1995 as a forum for bringing together directors of marine stations throughout Europe.

Its present mission is:

- To provide a forum for the directors of marine stations and institutes to come together and discuss issues relevant to the whole community in a collaborative and neutral manner.
- To provide an important avenue to feed into European and international marine policy related to marine research funding and broader strategic issues in order to promote the importance of marine stations
- To develop into a more internationally focused network.
- To support the organisation of symposia, workshops, capacity building and training and mobility of early career scientist of MARS Member institutes.
- MARS has an ethos of low membership fees in order to encourage as wide a membership as possible.

MARS Membership

The MARS Network is a foundation with specific [statutes](#) and [bylaws](#).

- **Membership** consists of:
 - an Executive Board (minimum 3 members)
- regular members

Regular members are at stations, laboratories, institutes or university departments primarily devoted to fundamental marine science and possessing coastal research facilities.

Membership subscription-fees are :

- 350 euros for labs with less than 25 total personnel¹
- 700 euros for labs with between 25-50 total personnel¹
- 1,250 euros for labs with more than 50 total personnel¹

¹ personnel: FTE permanent personnel including PhD's



MARS members 2015-2018

In 2019 MARS will start with the collection of subscription fees again.