

**Press Release**

**October 2009**

## **The EUROFLEETS European project: a first step towards a wider coordination within research fleets in Europe**

The EUROFLEETS project has been launched recently (22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2009) during a meeting aggregating 70 scientists and fleet operators from the consortium and 29 invitees.

Twenty four partners (research institutes, fleet managing structures, SMEs or foundations) from sixteen member states of the European Union or associated countries to it, contribute to the EUROFLEETS project, to develop the coordination within European research fleets.

The Project plans networking of European vessels, underwater vehicles and embarked equipment, the reception of multinational scientific teams on board modern research vessels and common technological development of software and innovating sensors.

This I3 (Integrated Infrastructure Initiative) project is planned for the next four years and benefits from an important funding granted by the European Commission (7.2 M€ on a total amount of 9 M€).

Ifremer (French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Seas) coordinates the Project.

*Mrs. Claudie HAIGNERE, host of the meeting as Chairperson of "Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie" and former French Minister for Research and European Affairs, welcomed the participants and wished to the EUROFLEETS project the success of the European Space Agency.*

*Jean-Yves Perrot, Chairman of Ifremer, pointed out the importance of the project for the future development of European research fleets.*

*Urmas LIPS, Professor at the Tallinn University of Technology (TUT), presents Estonian context and TUT involvement in a lot of European projects. TUT owns a recently rebuilt vessel Salme that will be opened for European access within EUROFLEETS. TUT main expectations concern access for Estonian research teams to larger Research Vessels and equipment, and education and training issues.*

*The German forward look was presented by Prof.Dr. Karin LOCHTE, director of the Alfred Wegener Institut of Bremerhaven, member of the German Council of Science and Humanities and leader of an important EUROFLEETS Work Package.*

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***She presented future challenges and pointed out important issues connected with marine research to secure the future development of our society. The key question is how to go from distributed national research fleets to a well managed Research Infrastructure (RI) that provides best possible support to European marine sciences. To facilitate this move, she entrusts EUROFLEETS to open a lot of opportunities concerning strategic vision, efficiency, easy and wider access to RI, sharing of knowledge and technologies and greener vessels.***

***Hervé PERO, head of the Infrastructure Unit at the European Commission, presented the concept of European RI within the frame of ERA (European Research Area): essential for Europe's researchers to stay at the forefront of research development, these RI remain a key component of Europe's competitiveness in "frontier" research.***

***He introduced the ESFRI roadmap and its perspectives. He then described a future 'eco system' of RI. Interconnected with e-infrastructures, it has to develop and maintain close cooperation with academic and industrial spheres. He concluded inviting EUROFLEETS to take an active part to the management of this new 'eco system', and claiming for a professional management of RI.***

***The French Ministry of Research concluded the official session.***

Despite the development of satellites and autonomous buoys, oceanographic vessels and underwater vehicles remain essential means to acquire scientific data necessary for the progress of ocean knowledge. These infrastructures represent 40 to 50% of the cost of research in marine sciences.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme, and in particular the Integrating Activities under the Research Infrastructures action, aims to optimize the usage and the development of worldwide scale research infrastructures and is an opportunity to strengthen wide-ranging partnership.

The EUROFLEETS proposal was submitted to the European Commission on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

It brings together 24 Institutes representing 16 countries, member states or associated countries: Belgium (2)<sup>1</sup>, Bulgaria (1), Estonia (1), France (2), Germany (3), Greece (1), Ireland (1), Italy (2), Netherlands (2 including 1 SME), Norway (1), Poland (1), Portugal (2 including EurOcean foundation), Romania (1), Spain (2), United Kingdom (1), Turkey (1).

The EUROFLEETS project covers 3 aspects :

**Networking Activity** in which working groups (specification, training and information) will meet to strengthen the coordination within research fleets, focusing on:

- shared strategic vision (future investment)
- eco-responsibility (guidelines of good practices) and environment friendly research vessels
- interoperability and operational progress
- European peer review of cruise projects and harmonization proposals
- training and education
- Dissemination and exploitation.

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<sup>1</sup> Number of national partners

**Trans National Access** in order to welcome multinational scientific teams on board vessels with performing equipment. Will be so opened under European calls :

- **5 Ocean large vessels** with underwater vehicles and embarked equipment of international class (seismics or long coring), for **66 days**,
- **13 Regional vessels**, carrying out cruises in 6 European eco regions, for **110 days**.

**Joint Research Activity** to modernize infrastructure or service regarding:

- innovating software and on board data processing
- interoperable sensors to equip European underwater vehicles.

## Partnership repartition map

