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Watch your seas: Marine scientists call for European marine observatory network

Brussels, 16 September - More than 100 marine scientists, policy makers and members of industry unanimously call for action towards an integrated network of observatories monitoring Europe's seas, at the Marine Board-ESF Forum 'Towards a European Network of Marine Observatories'. This will give reliable, long-term data to underpin science and policy regarding the use of seas for fisheries, aquaculture, energy, shipping, as well as tourism and recreation.

"We should not take for granted the wealth and well-being provided by the seas and oceans" said Lars Horn from the Research Council of Norway and chair of the Marine Board. "This call needs to be heard by national and European decision makers and budget holders. Stable, long-term marine observations are essential so that we can interact with our marine environment in a sustainable way."

Participants in the Forum will adopt a joint vision for a European network of long-term marine observatories. A wide-range of issues related to marine observatories will be discussed: the role of observatories in providing marine knowledge, the technical challenges, the funding schemes and innovative governing structures needed.

Long-term sets of data from the marine environment would enable us to better understand ocean, earth and climate system processes. They are also critical for monitoring the scale and extent of environmental change which affects global society and economy. According to the European Commission, a 25% reduction in uncertainty in future sea-level rise alone could save €100 million annually in European coastal defences.

Professor Peter Haugan from the University of Bergen, Norway is moderating the discussions and will carry the message to the EuroOCEAN 2010 Conference, a high level science policy event organised by the Belgian EU Presidency on 12-13 October 2010 in Ostend, Belgium. At this conference the European marine and maritime research community is expected to call on the Member and Associated States of the European Union and the EU institutions, to recognise that "The seas and oceans are one of the Grand Challenges for the 21st Century". A European network of long-term marine observatories for monitoring and research would provide an effective tool to address this challenge.

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Notes to editors

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- The Marine Board provides a pan-European platform for its member organisations to develop common priorities, to advance marine research and to bridge the gap between science and policy, in order to meet future marine science challenges and opportunities. The Marine Board operates within the European Science Foundation. www.esf.org/marineboard and www.esf.org/marineboard/2ndforum
- The European Science Foundation (ESF) is an independent, non-governmental organisation that promotes collaboration in scientific research, funding of research and science policy across Europe. www.esf.org
- EurOCEAN 2010 Conference: www.eurocean2010.eu