

Report on MASTS PEER funding to attend to the iMarCo meeting in Montpellier

PEER19 : Research Network on Marine Connectivity (iMarCo)

1. The meeting

The proposal was to attend the kick-off meeting of the international Marine Connectivity network, held in Montpellier (France) between the 16th and 18th of September 2015.

This initiative stems from the previous French network of Research MarCo (<http://wwz.ifremer.fr/gdrmarco>), which triggered interactions among research communities involved in the understanding of marine connectivity. The network was extended to create a European network to promote collaborative projects in this area of research. It covers a broad spectrum of marine science disciplines including physical oceanography, microchemistry, genetics and evolutionary ecology, behaviour, tagging, fisheries and aquaculture. **Its final goal is to promote an interdisciplinary approach to the management of marine resources.**

The Scottish representative is Oscar Gaggiotti from University of St Andrews (MASTS). The other attendees from Scotland were Thomas Adams from SAMS, Peter Wright from Marine Scotland, Les Noble from Aberdeen University and myself.

First day, previously to scientific presentations, there was a special session to discuss collaborative research and identifying funding opportunities to extend the consortium from a national initiative in France to an international group. The main idea was to get funding for PhD studentships. Two main funding calls were proposed:

- a) The COST action for European funding: http://www.cost.eu/about_cost.

COST does not fund research itself, but provides support for networking activities carried out within COST Actions. COST Actions are bottom-up science and technology networks open to researchers and stakeholders, with a four-year duration and a minimum participation of five COST Countries. 15 pages proposal were required. It was agreed that Peter Wright would lead this call. The aim would be to develop a training programme to fund up to 30 PhD fellows.

- b) Innovative training network (ITN) funding. This is for networking and it is larger than the COST action one. It requires non-academic partners. Horizon2020 has 3 types of ITN: academic (ETN), industrial (EID) and Doctorates (EJD). Oscar Gaggiotti was appointed to lead the ITN.

Since I have a background in Marine Science and expertise in hydrodynamic numerical modelling I enjoyed the presentations because most of the projects presented there had an

interdisciplinary approach and this is something I consider essential to understand marine processes. I was impressed by the TARA OCEAN project, in which the research vessel *Tara*, in the *Tara Oceans* expedition sampled plankton ecosystems around the world and collected associated oceanographic data. <https://www.embl.de/tara-oceans/start/>

2. Next steps

During that meeting in Montpellier it was decided to hold the first official meeting of the international network in Scotland. This will take place at the University of St Andrews between 26-29th of June 2016. All of the Scottish attendees are part of the organizing committee.

Being part of this network allowed me to meet MASTS colleagues at different institutions around Scotland, and I will take the opportunity to meet them again in St Andrews to enhance our links and propose collaborative work.

3. Cost incurred

The PEER grant awarded to SAMS was for a maximum of £2000. The costs incurred include: Return flight from Kirkwall to Montpellier: £687.03, Hotel cost: £386.58 and expenses: £14.76. Total: £1088.37

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