

BIOMARE
Regional Meeting
March 2002



Short Notes

Institute of Marine Biology of Crete (IMBC)
Heraklion, Crete, Greece.

WP1 The Intensive and Extensive sites

Herman Hummel presented the results of the independent panel's evaluation of Intensive Flagship Sites. The panel had used a complex scoring system involving weightings of the different criteria (Pristineness, Habitat range, Information available, Conservation status, Facilities, Commitment, Representativeness) for the overall scoring. They considered that most sites were not appropriate for all possible future research objectives, and using various filters the sites were categorised as suitable for Long Term Ecological Research (LTER, blue star), Sites of Special Interest (SSI, red star) and sites where it would be possible to produce an All Taxon Biodiversity Inventory (ATBI, green star). Details of the evaluation criteria, the scores for each site and maps showing the distribution of the LTER, SSI and ATBI sites were distributed to the participants of the meeting. Richard Warwick thanked the anonymous members of the review panel for the considerable amount of time and effort they had spent on this evaluation. There would be an appeal system if participants felt that some sites had been treated unfairly: the case should be made to Herman Hummel in writing. The Extensive sites would be self-evaluated: participants would be asked to complete evaluation forms for their own site plus the two sites geographically adjacent to them. Such an evaluation would be largely based on local knowledge, since the questionnaires for extensive sites were not very detailed. There was some discussion as to the nomenclature used for the "intensive" and "extensive" sites which arrived at no firm conclusion, but would be further discussed at the Atlantic regional meeting in the Azores.

Separate regional discussion groups commented on the above as follows (the WP leader does not necessarily agree with these views!):

North Sea / Baltic group

- Sites should not be excluded from the list of potential IFS/ATBI/LTER/SSI because of the lack of funds for ongoing monitoring or available information (databases)
- The EFS should be connected to the IFS.
- All sites should be called "European Marine Biodiversity Flagship Sites" ("flagship" might be replaced by something else, e.g. "focal")
- Don't like the terms "intensive" and "extensive".
- Sites should be linked in a functional network.
- There should be a country centred approach – all countries well represented. The management structure of this network should be very flat.
- Centres responsible for various disciplines (e.g. genetics) should be established.
- The geographical distribution of the ATBI sites is not even. There is a gap in the eastern part of this region.
- Local organisers should contact persons in areas where there are obvious gaps in coverage of sites.

West Mediterranean group

- The terminology was not discussed in this group.
- Cabrera and Port –Cross sites incontestable.
- Scandola: considered as an SSI (threatened endemics) and an LTER site (strict protection).
- Cabrera should be an SSI site
- Sites need to be established in sharp geographic transitional areas – Straights of Messina and Gibraltar.

East Mediterranean group

- Agree with "intensive" and "extensive" terms.
- Some ATBI sites are close together so that some should be excluded - should be better geographical spread.
- Future European funding should go to countries with the least resources.

- Policy for proposal submission – LTER sites are already established and Europe should finance research at these sites (a large ambitious 5 year proposal).
- There should be co-ordinated research on dynamic ecosystem processes (achievable in 3 years), e.g. rates of destruction of habitats, importance of invaders.
- Marine biodiversity should be evaluated in economic terms.
- Geographic distinctness should be added as site evaluation criterion.

WP3 Dissemination and capacity building

Networking

Links have been established with
ICES, OSPAR, HELCOM, EEA, CIESM, OBIS

The newsletter

The newsletter is aiming at the general public, and should not be too scientific. It should be a kind of National Geographic kind of publication. The first newsletter is already in print. The second is in draft. Additional contributions (articles) are still required.

The next issue will contain the following items:

Regional biodiversity issues

Contribution from a young biodiversity researcher

Project progress

Reports of the regional meetings

An editorial on the proceedings of the BIOMARE econference

The following contributions were offered by BIOMARE participants:

Two articles from the IMBC (Greece)

Arctic: Loss of biodiversity due to glacier melt by Jan-Marcin Weslawski (Poland)

An article about the North Sea and a small publication about fish in estuaries (with a large picture) by Jean Paul Ducruetoy (UK).

An article about the Kaspian Sea by Ahmed Kideys (Turkey)

Hyperbenthos at the continental slope by Stephen Degraer (Belgium)

A contribution by Fred Buchholz (Germany)

The Pelagic system of the Black Sea (Bulgaria)

Format of the articles: maximal one A4 of text (single space) and 2 pictures or a map.

The third and last newsletter of BIOMARE should include at least an article about the follow up of BIOMARE, the 6th framework programme and a description of MARBENA.

Databases

Three databases are available at the website or will be at short notice:

1. Contact (member) database
2. Long term large scale monitoring projects meta-database
3. Mars database that will be adopted

There are still large gaps in the meta-database of long term monitoring projects. Initially the questionnaire was sent to the individual members. At a later stage the regional coordinators tried to collect information from the neighboring institutes of their regions. This appeared very difficult. The presentation gave a clear insight from which countries no contributions have been received and a subgroup was formed to complement the database.

Meta databases are already available in the Globec programme.

Description of the sites.

The final report of BIOMARE should contain an overview of the sites. For this the description of the sites should be prepared. Richard Warwick will make a template for this. Two templates will be made: one for the IFS and the second for the EFS. The first will be more extensive than the second.

The participants should send (above water) picture of their site(s) and the logo of their institutes to Chris.

Local authorities have an interest in the production of these descriptions in the form of a flyer, and fund may be available for their production. The template should be in the form of a leaflet (flyer).

The flyers of the sites should be produced quickly. The coordinates of the locations have to be checked for the production of maps.

Additional discussion items:

In preparation of the 6th framework programme discussion in Amsterdam, Fred Buchholz made an inventory of the success rate (in obtaining EU funds) and the topics of projects that have been proposed by BIOMARE members in the 5th framework programme. The overview could be used to focus the discussion about the future research directions for a network of excellence in marine biodiversity.

Propositions and conclusions

- The present evaluation method of the sites was approved.
- The average scores of the sites will not be mentioned in the brochure.
- There will be no obvious distinction between IFS and EFS.
- All sites will be called “European Marine Biodiversity Flagship Sites” or “European Marine Biodiversity Focal Sites”: EMBiFs, with several categories: ATBI, LTER, SSI
- The geographical distribution of the sites (within the different categories) shall be studied by the regional coordinators and propositions will be made to fill in obvious gaps.
- Within this respect scientists will be able to propose additional sites to fill in the gaps.