



The **CSA MarineBiotech** held its start-up in Oslo, hosted by the CSA's co-ordinator the Research Council of Norway (RCN). MarineBiotech has been established to enhance the prospects of cross-national collaboration in marine biotechnology research, technology development and innovation in Europe. The CSA's actions will be focused on bringing funding agencies together to discuss and agree strategic themes that will form the basis for an ERA-NET in marine biotechnology and engaging stakeholders to provide the context that will assure the relevance of the programmes to European scientific, economic and social progress in this area.

Dr Christina I M Abildgaard, Director of Marine and Environmental Sciences for RCN, welcomed the consortium and described Norway's involvement in marine biosciences, biotechnology and mariculture. Norway's exports of seafood, with recent growth driven by aquaculture, exceed NOK 53 billion, approx. €6 billion per annum. Of the total NOK 42B research budget, 6.6% is for marine biosciences, equivalent to over €300M. There are national Strategies for Marine Research and Innovation, Marine Bioprospecting and Biotechnology. The national genomics project FUGE and aquaculture project HAVBRUK are both relevant for marine biotechnology. In 2010, 16 projects were funded within marine biotechnology. There is work on access and benefit-sharing as part of the regulation of marine genetic resources, and work is ongoing to create a network of biobanks and enhance marine bioprospecting in Norway. SINTEF in Norway is working on renewable energy research including cultivation of algae in the sea for Bioenergy. Most recently, the Joint Programming Initiative "Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans" (JPI Oceans) has been started by Norway, Spain and Belgium, with 13 other countries joining in. Its pillars or themes are highly relevant for a future ERA-NET in marine biotechnology.

Dr Garbiñe Guiu of the European Commission's DG Research & Innovation summarised the European Commission's interest in marine biotechnology and Dr Steinar Bergseth of the Research Council of Norway, who is coordinating the CSA MarineBiotech, gave more detail on the history behind the CSA MarineBiotech, starting with the actions and the background paper from the KBBE-Net coordinated working group on marine biotechnology. The CWG-MB's work, the ESF Marine Board's white paper on marine biotechnology, the establishment of a Blue Biotech group within the biotechnology trade association EuropaBio, the on-going OECD action on marine biotechnology and the establishment of JPI Oceans have been very important in developing the EU approach to marine biotech and the feed into Horizon 2020 as well, with a strong effect on the policymakers.

The consortium includes

-  the Research Council of Norway,
-  FCT, the main national funding agency in Portugal
-  the research establishment IARC in Italy, representing the research council CNR
-  the Marine Board of the European Science Foundation, which has a broad coordination, networking and strategy role
-  VLIZ, the institute in Belgium that assembles, organises and makes available a very wide range of marine sciences information for researchers, policymakers and as part of international projects
-  Norgenta, an economic support and development agency from north Germany, also involved in the regional network ScanBalt
-  The Danish Technical University, representing the Ministry of Research, Education and Innovation
-  Ifremer, the French institute for marine research, involved in AllEnvi, a national alliance of universities and research organisations covering environmental, including marine, sciences
-  CNRS-Roscoff, one of France's main marine biosciences research organisations and involved in marine genomics projects
-  TÜBITAK, the Turkish research and technology-funding agency
-  BioBridge, a bioscience innovation company, carrying out the project management function.





The team discussed and agreed a logo and style for communications from MarineBiotech, and started to plan 2 workshops in 2012 and a final public conference in the first half of 2013. The workshops will engage and inform funding agencies and stakeholders and set in motion the steps towards an ERA-NET in marine biotechnology. The general assembly discussed the work of the Project Management Team, consisting of the 5 work-package leaders, and the Steering Committee, representing all consortium members, and agreed an Action Plan for the first 6 months, assigning tasks to individual partners and ratifying the workplan proposed to the European Commission.

In addition to the workshops and conference, more general communication of progress and important issues in marine biotechnology will take place via a web-site [www.marinebiotech.eu](http://www.marinebiotech.eu), regular newsletters (3 during the project) for electronic circulation, and reports profiling the status of marine biotechnology RTDI in Europe and internationally.

The next internal meetings of the MarineBiotech CSA will take place in April 2012 in conjunction with the first Workshop to engage funding agencies and stakeholders, and a further public report will be issued after this.

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