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Press release

EurOcean: A New Tool for a Marine European Research Area

The Chairman of the Foundation for Science and Technology (Portugal) and the Chief Executive Officer of Ifremer (the French Research Institute for the Exploitation of the Sea) will officialise on February 28th 2002 the creation of EurOcean - European Centre for Information on Marine Science and Technology, in Lisbon.

This launching will take place with the participation of Jose Mariano Gago, the Portuguese Minister for Science and Technology, Pierre Brochand, Ambassador of France in Portugal, the Executive Secretary of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, and the President of the Portuguese Intersectorial Oceanographic Commission.

The creation of EurOcean results from governmental initiatives engaged by Portugal with the support of France during the International Year of the Ocean in 1998 in order to promote a European politic of the Ocean. EurOcean aims to implement the conclusions of the report titled "Towards a new marine dimension for Europe through research and technological development", published in May 2000 by a group of government experts from 15 European countries brought together under the invitation of the Portuguese Minister for Science and Technology. This report was officially presented to the European Research Council, the 15th of June 2000.

EurOcean's main goal is to contribute to the development of a Marine European Research Area as follows:

- to implement an operational online system to identify sources of information and to facilitate access to their use.
- to compile information about the new trends in marine research and technology in Europe; to stimulate the development of indicators and to contribute to the preparation of analyses and syntheses according to the demands of the decision-makers.
- to facilitate co-operation amongst European organisations dealing with marine science and technology, so as to promote synergies and to develop actions of common interest.

The creation of an Internet portal for marine science and technology is one of EurOcean's first projects already engaged. This portal is attempting to network many existing sites covering the various sectors of marine research - fisheries, environment, industry, transportation, science, etc. Online tools - specialized search engine, customized and manageable information profiles, interactive communication - are planned in order to meet the needs of a large spectrum of users - scientists, engineers, decision-makers, journalists, educators and students.

The implementation of the Internet portal is being done in close collaboration with all European institutions interested in participating in its development, and later on in its operation. Furthermore, an agreement with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) is being concluded whereby EurOcean will maintain the IOC regional portal for Europe.

EurOcean founded by the Foundation for Science and Technology (Portugal) and Ifremer (France), wishes to broaden its membership to other European institutions and contacts have been already established with several countries. Moreover, privileged links will be sought with the European Commission in Brussels and the European Science Foundation's Marine Board in Strasbourg.

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