

Innovative BlueBRIDGE data services

New European consortium building data services for fisheries, aquaculture, ecosystem management, livelihoods and food system analysis

Pisa – 1 October 2015. Oceans are the world's seventh largest economy and are fundamental to strengthen Europe's competitiveness and labour market. However, poorly managed fisheries and pollution, amongst others, are causing serious damage to its carrying capacity and international intervention is needed. Europe is taking bold steps to address this with Blue Growth, the long-term strategy for sustainable growth in the marine sector. This requires comprehensive and accessible information about Europe's seas and oceans, such as fisheries databases, sea maps, etc., for policy makers to make informed decisions to ensure that a healthy marine environment can sustain growth in Europe. This is where the BlueBRIDGE project comes in.

BlueBRIDGE - Building Research environments fostering Innovation, Decision making, Governance and Education - is funded under H2020 and provides data services to scientists, researchers and data managers delivering a solid foundation for informed advice to competent authorities. A complete set of web-based data and computational resources will enable them to address key challenges related to the Blue Growth long term strategy with a strong focus on sustainable growth. BlueBRIDGE will specifically target:

- Stock assessment and a global register for stocks and fisheries, disseminating comprehensive information on the location, status and trend of fish stocks and fisheries.
- The analysis of socio-economic performance in aquaculture, also identifying suitable locations for aquaculture. The companies running these farms will be able to see how well they are performing, if the business is sustainable and if they are operating in an environmentally sustainable mode.

“These are just a few of the challenges BlueBRIDGE will address”, says Marc Taconet, from FIPS at the Food and Agriculture Organisation and chair of the BlueBRIDGE External Advisory Board, “The development of smart solutions will importantly support decision-makers involved in the ecosystem approach to fisheries and aquaculture management, by facilitating the knowledge production chain from the initial phases of data collection, through to aggregation, analysis and the production of indicators for competent authorities and investors. These solutions will help bridging the work of international organisations and communities of scientists from different disciplines (e.g. fisheries, biology, economics, statistics, environment, etc).”

“This knowledge production chain is usually the result of the work of multidisciplinary scientific communities working in silos”, says Donatella Castelli from the National Research Council in Italy and BlueBRIDGE project director, “BlueBRIDGE will radically transform the way they work together by enabling collaboration and alignment. Members from different sectors with specific competences will benefit from data sharing and re-use as well as processing capabilities they cannot typically afford. As a result, users will gain mutual economies of scale.”

BlueBRIDGE services aim to have a measurable impact in Europe and worldwide. Empowering the next generation of scientists through training is fundamental for this as is engaging small and medium enterprises (SMEs) operating in the sector. One of the strongest assets of BlueBRIDGE is indeed its public-private collaboration. Seven of the fourteen partners in BlueBRIDGE are private companies specialising in aquaculture and fisheries management; the French Business and Sea Innovation Clusters with their network of 400 SMEs is also part of the consortium. Having their experience and their knowledge of the real needs will be a key driver for wide uptake of the services and their sustainability.

BlueBRIDGE services will be built on top of the iMarine infrastructure (www.i-marine.eu) in order to capitalize on the previous investments made by the European Commission and as a first step towards their sustainability after the end of the project. With such data and computational resources and the expertise of the consortium, BlueBRIDGE can really help make a difference.