



## EUROFLEETS: towards an alliance of European research fleets

The marine environment represents a vast universe of natural resources that has yet to be fully explored. This universe holds a myriad of opportunities that can help support European economic development. While the marine environment holds such potential, it is still costly to access, highly variable and very unpredictable. This, together with increasing societal demands, means that marine research needs to come together and work in a holistic manner with a long-term approach. The EU-funded EUROFLEETS project will work to do just this by promoting an alliance of marine research centres, universities, SMEs and foundations across Europe and associated countries that will be able to work together and share infrastructure and resources, improving the quality of marine research services rendered in Europe.

### ● EXPLORING THE OPEN SEAS

The infrastructures required for marine research necessitate a variety of specialised expensive facilities. This includes research vessels, satellites, observation networks, data centres and computing and experimental facilities. Together these tools can make up around 50% of the total running costs of a marine research project. Of particular importance are the research vessels which are used to maintain observation systems, monitor oceanographic parameters, implement sophisticated and innovative equipment, collect rare and sensitive biological samples and acquire enormous data volume. However, these vessels are expensive to maintain and operate. Thus EUROFLEETS is building a coherent pan-European approach to infrastructure policy. Through enhanced partnership, development and use, solutions will be created to meet the many needs of European marine research.

By bringing together marine research fleet operators and users, EUROFLEETS will enhance coordination between fleets and promote the cost-effective use of their facilities with the scope of supporting the efficient provision of necessary research services for monitoring and sustainable management of regional seas and oceans. This will also give access to all European scientists to a large variety of vessels and, in turn, give support to environmental and biodiversity protection and climate change research. EUROFLEETS will also benefit the sustainable exploitation of marine resources and provide for more education and training.



### ● USING THE OCEANS' TREASURES

EUROFLEETS' networking activities will create a common strategic vision for European research fleets and their associated heavy equipment, such as submersible vehicles. This will ensure that the best quality research is carried out and will work to avoid investment duplication. Moreover,

the project will provide coordinated infrastructure access to researchers across Europe which will allow them to take full advantage of marine research fleet services and facilities which will also be improved as part of the project.

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EUROFLEETS will also create a set of standards and experimental protocols to be used by all beneficiaries of the project. The implementation of such standards will serve to ensure the optimal use of marine research fleets and to promote interoperability of equipment. There will also be an emphasis on eco-responsibility and guidelines will be created to limit the environmental impact of research vessels.

Training is another key element of EUROFLEETS. Researchers will be trained in modern interoperable equipment and international activities will take place to encourage the alliance to grow within Europe as

internationally. The project will also work together with industry, policy-makers and citizens to ensure the infrastructure is used to the fullest extent possible.

In addition, EUROFLEETS focuses on transnational access and will provide researchers across Europe with access to Ocean (5 Research vessels) and Regional research vessels (14) and their associated equipment which can be used for a wide variety of different cruises for a total duration of 176 days at sea. This will also allow researchers to more easily share data and results, providing an overall boost to European research in this field.



**Project acronym:** EUROFLEETS

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**EU project officer:** Agnès Robin

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