



The EU Coordination and Support Action (CSA) for marine biotechnology, CSA MarineBiotech, held its second workshop 'Mobilisation and Engagement of Funding Agencies and Stakeholders' in Hamburg, Germany, on 8-9 October 2012. The event was organized by Norgenta (North German Life Science Agency), one of the consortium partners. During the workshop, 57 industry, academic, policy and funding agency representatives debated the role and future of marine biotechnology in Europe, contributed to plans for the final public conference of the CSA MarineBiotech, to be held in Brussels in March 2013, and considered the Work Packages needed in a proposal for a European Research Area Network in Marine Biotechnology (ERA-NET in MBt).

Marine bioresources promise a renewable and highly sustainable source of molecules, materials, food and energy. Alignment and collaboration in European and national funding of R&D and innovation will make a more efficient use of limited resources as well as, hopefully, accelerate the development of technologies and new products and services. The aim is to make the sustainable utilization of marine biotechnology one of the foundations of the Bioeconomy, for the short-, medium- and long-term future.

Attendees were welcomed by Norgenta's managing director, Dr Hinrich Habeck, and were then brought up to date with the CSA MarineBiotech's activities by consortium members.

Dr Adrianna Ianora of the Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn, Naples Italy, provided the keynote talk, summarizing the achievements, key topics and outlook for marine biotechnology. The EMBRC, ([European Marine Biological Resource Centre](#)) is gearing up to provide a virtual marine laboratory that covers Europe, interlinking laboratory resources, field resources including research vessels, and the knowledge and skills of the associated scientists, as well as identifying the gaps and planning for their infill. There is a vast range of resources and marine environments that no one country can afford to establish or has access to, and great efficiencies are expected from the EMBRC when it is established in 2014. The [EU OPENSREEN](#) project was also presented, which provides screening facilities.

In the plenaries, an update was given on current initiatives in Europe which will provide interfaces with the proposed ERA-NET in MBt. These include the ERA-NET PLATFORM, the new CSA supporting the Joint Programming Initiative JPI-OCEANS and the Knowledge and Innovation Centre Marine-KIC. [PLATFORM](#) brings together the Bioeconomy-relevant ERA-NETs, CSAs, KBBE-NET Working Groups and the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research SCAR, and was presented by Dr Christine Bunthof, coordinator from the University of Wageningen. The work of PLATFORM includes mutual learning to enhance the impacts of the involved European RTDI instruments, making sure that mechanisms are in place to serve the priority needs for coordination, improving networking between ERA-NETs and CSAs, achieving a common vision and strategy for the contribution of the biosciences to the KBBE, and communicating an aligned perspective. The next conference is at INRA France in 2013.

[JPI-OCEANS](#) - the Joint Programming Initiative on Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans – is supported in its planning and preparation phase by the new CSA, which will generate the Strategic

Research and Innovation Agenda covering all of the applicable marine topics as well as a Foresighting exercise.

[The Marine-KIC](#) is still in the process of being formally adopted as a possibility under the Knowledge and Innovation Centres scheme funded by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology [EIT]. KICs are intended to bring together industry, academics, and funders to move research on into industry. They provide not only information, but also Venture Capital or seed funding for spin-outs and start-ups, and higher-level training including new MSc and PhD courses. The EIT has funded similar KICs at a level of €20-30M a year for 3 years or more. The JPI-OCEANS CSA and Marine-KIC were presented by Dr John Hanus of KMD, the German Marine Research Consortium.

The opportunities for an ERA-NET in MBt to provide complementary approaches for these initiatives are clear. The group of funding agencies making up the CSA MarineBiotech's Strategic Forum and the members of the CSA MarineBiotech's Stakeholders Group were able to hold separate sessions and joint plenary sessions to discuss the content, scope and structure of a future ERA-NET in MBt and their interests in this area.

As the EU has published [a call for an ERA-NET in Marine Biotechnology](#) as part of the last FP7 round, with a deadline of February 28<sup>th</sup> 2013 for submission of a proposal, the workshop was the ideal venue for committed funding agencies to work together on the outline and tasks. 16 Eligible funding agencies have confirmed commitment to leading or helping in tasks, and others have indicated strong interest in being observers with the option of joining relevant calls from the ERA-NET. The working group, formed by the committed funding agencies, has elected the Research Council of Norway to be coordinator of the ERA-NET and has laid out the planning and preparation activities to start the development of the proposal for the ERA-NET in MBt.

The CSA MarineBiotech has fulfilled all its objectives to-date, notably the establishment of an enlarged group of funding agencies committed to an ERA-NET in MBt, a group of committed academic, industry and policy stakeholders who will advise on content and direction of research, and communication activities that have raised the profile of marine biotechnology in Europe as a contributor to KBBE and the Grand Challenges. For further information on the CSA MarineBiotech and marine biotechnology, including summaries of strategies and programmes in Europe and internationally, and to add your own contact information to the CSA MBt registers, visit [www.marinebiotech.eu](http://www.marinebiotech.eu).

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