



Overview of the CoCoNET GIS and Marxan Summer Course Constanța, 9-15 September 2013 <i>(Tania Zaharia, Dragoș Micu, Mariana Golumbeanu)</i>	“Cercetări Marine” Issue no. 43 Pages 377-378	2013
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OVERVIEW OF THE COCONET GIS AND MARXAN SUMMER COURSE CONSTANȚA, 9-15 SEPTEMBER 2013

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Within the EU-FP7 CoCoNET Project - Towards COast to COast NETworks of marine protected areas (from the shore to the high and deep sea), coupled with sea-based wind energy potential, the National Institute for Marine Research and Development “Grigore Antipa” (NIMRD), Constanța, hosted an intensive summer course on GIS and Marxan training. The summer course was held at the Institute’s headquarters from 9 to 15 September 2013. The course was organized by Federica Foglini - ISMAR CNR (Institute of Marine Science - National Research Council), Bologna, Italy.

The CoCoNET GIS and Marxan Summer Course provided CoCoNET PhD students and junior marine scientists dedicated to spatial data collection and analysis in different disciplines (geology, biology, oceanography) with up to date tools and skills. The instructors for GIS (9-12 September) were Federica Foglini (CNR-ISMAR, Bologna, Italy), Devrim Tezcan (IMS METU - Turcia) and Oleksandr Neprokin (UkrSCES, Ukraine), and for Marxan (13-15 September) Norma Serra and Trevor Wiens (PacMARA).

CoCoNET is a European FP-7 Project, comprising 39 research institutes from 22 countries. The Project brings together experts in a wide array of scientific disciplines, integrating the Mediterranean and Black Seas scientific communities through intense cooperative research and training. The project aims are to identify interconnected Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the Mediterranean and the Black Seas, shifting focus from local (single MPA) to regional (Networks of MPAs) and basin wide (network of networks) scales, inclusive of off shore and deep sea habitats; identify areas for possible construction of Offshore Wind Farms; produce guidelines to design, manage and monitor a network of MPAs, and prepare a detailed wind atlas for the Mediterranean and the Black Seas. Two pilot project (one each in the Mediterranean and Black Seas) are underway.



Photo 1 - CoCoNET GIS and Marxan Summer Course students and trainers

GIS and Marxan software tools are extremely useful for researchers substantiating the proper management of marine protected areas.

GIS represents a powerful tool to manage analyse and integrate huge amounts of spatial data coming from different scientific fields. The GIS course aimed at providing tools and capabilities to manage and analyse GIS data in the framework of CoCoNET projects to support partners in fulfilling their goals.

Marxan is a software program used to support the design of marine and terrestrial reserves worldwide able to handle the complexity of the data that will be produced from CoCoNET activities. This course will represent an excellent opportunity to understand how we can identify an efficient system of conservation sites that include a suite of conservation targets at a minimal cost, which are the gaps of knowledge we have to face in order to produce an effective regional spatial conservation prioritization, and the challenge to incorporate both ecological (e.g. connectivity) and socio-economical data within a heavily exploited region like the Mediterranean and Black Seas.

One of the aims of CoCoNET is the identification of suitable sites in shallow and deep-water areas for MPA network implementation in the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea. This is not a novel idea, since multiple spatial conservation plans have been developed or proposed in recent years in an effort to advance the protection of highly threatened hotspots of marine biodiversity such as the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea. However, these past initiatives largely differ in terms of objectives, criteria and data used and no attempt has been made to integrate geological, biological, oceanographic, biochemical and socioeconomic data to produce effective conservation outcomes at basin scale.