Transatlantic Cooperation: European and Canadian Marine Stakeholders Discuss Sustaining Ocean Ecosystems

Press release: 23 May 2018

New research results emerging from the EU-funded Horizon 2020 project **ATLAS** were presented to the Canadian government on 11 May 2018, with the hope that the science-based recommendations will be implemented in future policy-making for sustainable oceans.

Billions of people worldwide rely on the oceans and seas for both food and jobs. In Europe alone, the Marine and Maritime sectors represent roughly 5.4 million jobs and generate a gross added value of almost €500 billion a year. The great potential for innovation and growth of the "blue" economy is recognised by the European Commission's long-term "Blue Growth" strategy to support sustainable growth, and this meeting proved to be a major step in bringing scientific results to those who draft policies to protect this valuable resource.

The **ATLAS** consortium, together with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), hosted a Science–Policy meeting in Ottawa, Canada. Illustrating the power of transatlantic cooperation between Europe, Canada and the USA through the 'Galway Declaration', this important meeting paved the way for future transatlantic collaborative initiatives and frameworks in ocean research. Representatives from both consortia reviewed emerging scientific results to inform Marine Spatial Planning, Blue Growth scenarios and the implications of climate change for deep-sea ecosystems. **ATLAS** policy lead, Prof David Johnson (Seascape Consultants Ltd., UK) commented on the importance of these efforts: "Environmental change is forcing us to reconsider our approach to managing ocean areas. In Canada we have brought together experts to help identify research results from **ATLAS** which can be used to inform future governance."

Discussions continued at the **ATLAS** symposium on North Atlantic Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas, Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems and High Seas Marine Protected Areas in a changing ocean, which was held on 12 May. The symposium attracted 50 participants and discussions focused on identifying areas of Blue Growth in the North Atlantic, and adaptive tools to manage these areas.

These events preceded the 4th World Conference on Marine Biodiversity (WCMB) in Montréal. Running from 13–16 May, WCMB is the major focal assembly to share research outcomes, management and policy issues, and discussions on the role of biodiversity in sustaining ocean

ecosystems. **ATLAS** and its sister H2020 projects SponGES and MERCES, had a session on 'Ocean Basin Scale Research' running throughout the week and hosted a booth for visitors. Local teachers and students from the area were invited to come and learn more about the deep sea using an innovative 360 Virtual Reality (VR) head set. The eager students were able to experience life on board a research vessel, witnessing all the interesting work that is done on board without getting their feet wet!

The weeks' events were a significant milestone in **ATLAS**' mission to develop a scientific knowledge base that can inform the development of appropriate international policies to ensure deep-sea Atlantic resources are managed effectively. Prof J Murray Roberts, the **ATLAS** Coordinator at the University of Edinburgh (Scotland, UK) explains "The **ATLAS** project is intensively studying the best ways society can understand how these remote ecosystems work, and then develop long-lasting management plans to ensure they're still in good health for future generations."

Photo caption: **ATLAS** policy lead, Prof David Johnson experiencing 'life on board a research vessel' through a VR head set (Credit: David Johnson).

Photo caption: ATLAS and DFO representatives at the Science–Policy meeting in Ottawa, Canada (Credit: David Johnson).

Notes for Editors:

For more information on the ATLAS project, please visit www.eu-atlas.org, follow @eu_atlas on Twitter or contact Prof J Murray Roberts (Murray.Roberts@ed.ac.uk).

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ATLAS ("A Trans-Atlantic Assessment and deep-water ecosystem-based spatial management for Europe") is a research and innovation action funded under the European Union's Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020, Grant No 678760. It is the largest integrated study of deep Atlantic ecosystems ever undertaken. The four-year project was launched in May 2016 and has a total budget of €9.4 million. Led by the University of Edinburgh (Scotland, UK) **ATLAS** brings together 24 partners (and one linked third party) from 10 European countries, the USA and Canada. It consists of 12 universities, four national research institutes, five small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and four government agencies.

For more information on the World Conference on Marine Biodiversity, please see http://wcmb2018.org/

For more information on the 'Galway Declaration', please see https://www.atlanticresource.org/aora