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EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT (EUR-OPA)

**Project for a Specialised European Centre
on Coastal Risks**

Biarritz, France

54th Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents

**NETWORK OF SPECIALISED EURO-MEDITERRANEAN CENTRES
OF THE MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT**



Since 2003 the Basque Coast Marine Centre, founded as an association under the French 1901 law, has been a real interface between the scientific world and the general public in the field of marine biology. It uses the Biarritz Maritime Museum as its base, to carry out initiatives such as:

- a. Educational and awareness-raising activities in partnership with upper and lower secondary schools, primary schools and leisure centres;
- b. Events: conferences, exhibitions, field trips etc, for schoolchildren and the general public. These are organised with partners such as Bayonne Natural History Museum, permanent environmental initiative centres, CIEP international centre for pedagogical studies etc
- c. An Environmental programme on marine habitats in the Aquitaine region (ERMMA) which, in partnership with the National Natural History Museum, Pau Pays de l'Adour University, the Customs authorities, the Maritime Affairs authorities, the French Meteorological agency etc, runs biological monitoring exercises. The resulting data are incorporated into a metabase and made it possible to monitor changes in marine biodiversity in the Aquitaine region. Analysis of this information is useful for understanding the causes and mechanisms of these changes, drawing a distinction between the impact of oceano-climatic changes and human activity (spatial development, various forms of pollution etc)
- d. Initiatives geared to environmental education, in different languages and using various multimedia tools, produced in partnership with the Saint Sebastian Aquarium, European institutions and local authorities.
- e. Initiatives focusing on coastal risks such as:
 - i. **publishing a report** featuring the scientific lectures given at the coastal risk study days (Bordeaux 18 and 19 May 2006)
 - ii. **preparation of a Masters in coastal risks** in conjunction with Bordeaux 1 university, the European Federation of Scientific and Technical Cooperation and the Océan association (a body making environmental sciences and history more accessible to the public).

Resources

The Basque Coast Marine Centre has offices, a meeting room, a library and all the necessary office equipment provided at the Biarritz Maritime Museum.

Staff

There is currently one salaried employee (PhD researcher) working full-time, and management is handled by Françoise PAUTRIZEL, Doctor of Oceanography, director of the Biarritz Maritime Museum.

It is planned to recruit a coastal civil engineer/researcher.

One Masters 2 trainee

Partnerships with various scientific and technical bodies on specific topics give entitlement to certain services. (National Natural History Museum, Pau Pays de l'Adour University, French institute for exploitation of the sea (IFREMER), Institute of Aquatic Environments etc)

Financing

The budget of the Basque Coast Marine Centre for 2006 was as follows:

Total income generated 90 148 €

Total outgoings 82 843 €

Funding for initiatives comes from

- European institutions (Interreg programme)
- the Regional Council of Aquitaine
- the Departmental Council of the Pyrénées Atlantiques department
- the Departmental Council of the Landes department
- the Biarritz Maritime Museum

Location

The Marine Centre is housed in the Biarritz Maritime Museum, Plateau de l'Atalaye
F- 64200 BIARRITZ. Tel +33 (0) 5 59 22 33 34

DEVELOPMENT AND OVERALL AIM

Given the variety of littoral areas in Aquitaine and their fragile balance resulting from numerous sources of pressure, including strong urban development, and the desire of Biarritz town council to create a Biarritz Océan pole of expertise, the Marine Centre has decided to put forward a scheme for a Centre on Coastal Risks within the framework of the European Major Hazards Agreement.

Within the Biarritz Océan pole of expertise it is planned to create an Ocean and Surf complex in Biarritz. The complex will be an ideal setting to focus on a number of ocean-related themes, and in particular to explain to a wide target audience how the Ocean works, how fragile it is and what impact it has on littoral areas.

The Marine Centre will therefore branch out to take on a role of interface in the understanding of oceans and coastal risks with a view to providing managers with tools for preventing risks and managing them where necessary.

Its fields of action will be:

- Biology of the littoral area
- Coastal geomorphology and tectonics
- Coastal geology and dynamics
- Ocean geology and sedimentology

Its objectives

The Atlantic seaboard, from Ireland to Morocco, is an area that is particularly appropriate for the setting up of a network of focal points for data on coastal characteristics and changes in them, linked in turn to thematic networks. An arrangement of this kind would encourage the development of teams for researching and managing coastal risks, facilitating exchange and training of specialists. The objective is to gain a fuller picture of coastal systems and thereby a better understanding of the nature of the risks to which they might be subject.

There should be stock-taking of knowledge of coastal areas with a view to facilitating sustainable management incorporating prevention in respect of risk processes:

- risks dependent on rises in sea level;
- risks dependent on the effect of tides, swell, currents etc which modify the coastline;
- exceptional risks arising from the juxtaposition of rare combinations of circumstances of an atmospheric, marine, climatic and possibly geophysical nature;
- risks coming from the mainland;
- risks for the biological matter of the littoral area;
- risks linked to human activities.

Its tasks

1- To identify and structure scientific and technical cooperation networks (existing or new ones), with a view to:

- creating a database: oceanography and coastal risks;
- proposing networking of European structures;
- forging international cooperation.

2- To participate in the passing on of technical and scientific information to schoolchildren and the general public

Why coastal risks? What information to pass on?

The teaching approach will be guided by the philosophy: "informing to better prevent risks, and so reduce vulnerability".

Lectures, exhibitions, colloquies, congresses etc.

3- To serve as a resource centre where any manager can find information comprehensible to them in scientific terms.

Tailoring of database information to the needs of local authorities: need for information for "balanced" protection from natural coastal risks, for any introduction of high-quality integrated management.

Structure of information, concentration and dissemination of existing data.

4- To reinforce international cooperation

Coastal zones are a factor in international cooperation between countries with recognised know-how and those which do not yet have adequate potential for action. Awareness of "coastal risk" is a factor conducive to exchange and training and entailing considerable economic benefits. Coastal risk could be a key vector for international cooperation, particularly in Latin America.

This pole of expertise on coastal risks will be supported by a Scientific committee:

Michel VIGNEAUX, National Academy of Science, Letters and Arts of Bordeaux and President of the FER (*European Federation of Scientific and Technical Cooperation*), France

Jean Claude NAPIAS Director of BRGM, vulnerability, hydrology, France

Marc SCHVOERER, President of PACT, FER, physical methods applied to heritage problems, France

Jean Pierre VERNET, honorary professor, Geneva University, water geochemist, Switzerland

Jean Pierre MASSUE, President of the REMIFOR association providing a public service aimed at pooling and disseminating knowledge in risk management, France

Philippe BERTRAND, Director of Research at the CNRS national scientific research centre in Bordeaux, and Director of EPOC (*Laboratory Ocean environments and paleoenvironments at Bordeaux 1*), France

Jérôme de La NOE, Director of Research at the CNRS national scientific research centre at the Aquitaine Universe Sciences Observatory, France

Frank D'AMICO, Manager of the Masters 2 in "*Aquatic Ecosystems Dynamics*"

Pau & Pays de l'Adour University, UFR Science & Technology university, Basque coast, France

Mr LABORDERIE, Director of LASAGEC (laboratory of sciences applied to coastal civil engineering) of Pau and pays de l'Adour University, France

Françoise PAUTRIZEL, Doctor of Oceanography, Director of Biarritz Maritime Museum, France