



Diving Deep to Explore New Frontiers of Collaboration and Innovation

Press release: July 2017

Marine related research, policy and industry representatives came together to discuss effective North-South Atlantic Ocean collaboration during a session on “Trans North Atlantic Research and Prospects for South Atlantic Partnership”, which took place immediately before the high-level ministerial and scientific event “A New Era of Blue Enlightenment” on 12 July 2017 in Lisbon, Portugal.

The EU Horizon 2020 project **ATLAS**, along with sister projects SponGES, and MERCES, organised the session hosted by Prof Ricardo Serrão Santos, a Member of the European Parliament (MEP). The session reconfirmed commitment on international marine scientific research efforts, in both the North and South Atlantic. Presentations also noted efforts by regional fisheries management organisations to implement the United Nation’s General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions on managing high seas fisheries to protect and conserve deep-sea ecosystems and species.

ATLAS partner Prof David Johnson, Seascope Consultants, emphasised, “We need to present science messages in a language that decision-makers can understand and use, and take into account different spatial and time scales. Working with relevant industries helps to focus messaging for policy implementation.”

Participants of the session also discussed the need for more knowledge of deep-sea ecosystems and processes to better assess the potential and consequence of exploiting marine resources such as through deep-sea mining. Ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of the deep-sea in a changing climate will assist regulators in building resilience in these ecosystems.

The “Blue Enlightenment” event (13-14 July 2017) celebrated the launch of a South Atlantic Flagship Initiative between the European Union (EU), Brazil and South Africa. The highlight of the event was the signing of “The Belém Statement on Atlantic Research and Innovation Cooperation”, which aims to deepen scientific knowledge of marine ecosystems, specifically the interrelations between oceans and climate change, food and energy systems, as well as the dynamics of the Atlantic Ocean and its interconnected Circulation Systems from Antarctica to the Arctic.

ATLAS partner Matt Gianni, Gianni Consultancy, said, “Recognising the linkages between the North and South Atlantic, the strengthening of cooperation envisioned by the Belém Statement will help provide a better understanding of Atlantic wide dynamics and ecosystem processes. This will help to address challenges such as integrating basin-wide data with the understanding that any changes to ocean circulation patterns related to climate change in the South Atlantic will affect the North Atlantic and vice versa.”

These issues are also currently being considered at the fourth meeting of the Preparatory Committee for ocean biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction established by the General Assembly of the United Nations (UNGA), taking place in New York from 10-21 July 2017. This UN meeting aims to finalise

recommendations for a legally binding instrument on the “conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ)” under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

As a significant percentage of the North and South Atlantic is ABNJ, many of the efforts that were showcased in Lisbon can contribute to the knowledge base upon which regulation and management under the UNCLOS should be built. For example, recent work as part of **ATLAS** has shown that in 20-50 years most of the Area Based Management Tools (ABMTs), currently in place will be affected by climate change. More precise and detailed oceanographic data are needed to determine possible refugia and more research on adaptation and resilience is needed to predict ecosystem response times. Maritime spatial planning requires cooperation and coordination across multiple organisations and bodies and aims to achieve broad objectives and responses to cumulative impacts. Continued dialogue, cooperation and collaboration between projects like **ATLAS**, **MERCES**, **SponGES** and others, will greatly support this process.



CAPTION: The “trans North Atlantic Research and Prospects for South Atlantic Partnership” session speakers, (from left to right): Dr Joana Xavier (SponGES, University of Bergen, Norway), Dr Telmo Morato (MERCES, ATLAS, IMAR-UAz, Portugal), Prof Anthony Grehan (ATLAS, NUI Galway, Ireland), Prof Ricardo Serrão Santos (MEP), Mr Matt Gianni (ATLAS, Gianni Consultants, The Netherlands), Prof David Johnson (ATLAS, Seascope Consultants, United Kingdom)

Notes for editors:

ATLAS 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 €9.1 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. AquaTT (Ireland) is the project dissemination partner.