

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **The Mediterranean and Black Seas: how to get them clean, healthy and productive by 2020?**

This is the main question that the EU-funded project called 'PERSEUS' is attempting to answer. PERSEUS stands for 'Policy-oriented marine Environmental Research in the Southern European Seas' and is a large-scale research project funded by the European Commission's 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Research Programme (FP7).

From 22nd to 25th January, the Faculty of Geology of the University of Barcelona (UB) and the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya • BarcelonaTech (UPC) will host the general assembly meeting and the umbrella workshop of PERSEUS (Policy-orientated marine Environmental Research for the Southern European Seas), the largest marine environmental research project covering both the Mediterranean and Black Sea funded by the European Union at present.

Why is it so important to get our seas 'healthy'? The seas play a vital role in our lives, as they: generate most of the oxygen we breathe, help feed us, regulate our climate, offer us a host of potential medicines, give us energy sources and provide us recreation and tourism as well as immeasurable inspiration!

So, what's the problem? The Mediterranean and Black Seas are more vulnerable than other seas in that they are almost completely enclosed, which, for example, makes water cycles move slowly causing pollutants to accumulate. Coastal discharges from industry and cities could result in high concentrations of mercury, cadmium, zinc, lead and untreated sewage. Ships discharge large amounts of crude oil each year as a result of the day-to-day shipping business; this is further exacerbated by oil, gas and mineral exploration and exploitation as well as oil spills. Fish stocks in these waters are out of balance – mainly as a result of over-fishing. Combining these human pressures with increasing negative impacts from climate change and other natural hazards, the seas are being served a toxic mix resulting in serious, and maybe soon, irreversible threats to our seas.

The PERSEUS Project Coordinator, Dr. Evangelos Papathanassiou, from the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research says: "The difference between the PERSEUS project and other research projects is that, based on scientific knowledge, it specifically aims at translating the scientific findings into clear, practical policy recommendations that target solutions to the most urgent environmental challenges faced by our seas today."

By merging natural and socio-economic sciences, PERSEUS will fill the knowledge gaps and design an effective and innovative governance framework, based on sound scientific knowledge, to help achieve 'Good Environmental Status', in line with objectives and principles of the EU's Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Following the demands of the MSFD and the work done by the Regional Conventions, PERSEUS targets strengthened regional cooperation between EU and non-EU countries surrounding these two seas. The PERSEUS project brings together over 300 scientists from 53 partners organisations in 21 countries for four years between 2012 and 2015. The overall cost of the project is over 17 MEUR with an EC funding of 13 MEUR.

Prof. Miquel Canals, UB organizer of this week meetings, says «For the Faculty of Geology and UB it is a pleasure and a great honor to host during almost a week a so large number of distinguished researchers and managers from so many countries from the EC and beyond». Within PERSEUS, UB and other Spanish partners are in charge of highly relevant work for the objectives of the project, specially in the Western Mediterranean Sea with the aim to better understand its functioning and the stressors acting on it with the aim to provide clues for its governance.

Prof. Rosa Mari Darbra Roman, UPC organizer, says “PERSEUS project is an opportunity for European and non-European researchers to exchange knowledge on maritime topics and conduct research for the improvement of the environmental situation of Mediterranean and Black Seas. For the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC), it is of high relevance to have the chance to participate in this project”. The expertise of the UPC is represented in this project by three research groups Centre d'Estudis del Risc Tecnològic (CERTEC), Laboratori d'Enginyeria Marítima (LIM) and Laboratori d'Aplicacions Bioacústiques (LAB), dealing with different aspects related to the maritime activities.

Visit the PERSEUS Website [www.perseus-net.eu](http://www.perseus-net.eu) for the latest information on the PERSEUS project's activities, findings and useful tools. For more information on PERSEUS, please contact:

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