



EMODnet BIOLOGY: ALLOWING EASY COUPLING AND VISUALISATION OF INDICATOR SPECIES AND THEIR DOCUMENTED DISTRIBUTION

Leen Vandepitte, Stefanie Dekeyzer, Simon Claus, Wim Decock, Sofie Vranken, Bart Vanhoorne, Francisco Hernandez

Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ), Belgium

The importance to describe species distribution patterns and their underlying processes is essential in determining the current status and predicting the future evolution of marine ecosystems. Until now, the lack of an integrated, standardized system serving this biological information has hampered these large scale functional analyses. Within the Biological Lot of the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet Biology) - and linked with the European Life Watch project - the first steps have been taken to associate the taxonomy and distribution of marine species with their ecological and biological information, with a specific focus on the importance of marine species to society. This is expressed in a thorough documentation of traits such as the protection status species have in legal frameworks (IUCN, CITES), whether a species is introduced or invasive, of fisheries or aquaculture interest (FAO), harmful, or used as an ecological indicator (MSFD). Through the EMODnet Biology Data Portal, such information can now be queried and downloaded. This Portal is combining the World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS) and the European Ocean Biogeographic Information System (EurOBIS) for respectively taxonomy & traits and distribution information. Through the EMODnet Portal, it becomes possible to combine both these data systems and to allow for more complex searches which were previously not easily executable. Next to the freely accessible online EMODnet Biology Data Portal where the selected data can be visualized and further fine-tuned, online tools are being prepared to easily link data from WoRMS and EurOBIS with species traits within the European Life Watch project. In the long run, services will be offered to the scientific community, building support to answer specific ecological questions which are currently hard or nearly impossible to address due to a lack of accessibility, availability, standardization and linking of data.