

THE EUROPEAN REGISTER FOR MARINE SPECIES REVIVED

Vanden Berghe Edward and Ward Appeltans

Vlaams Instituut voor de Zee
Vismijn, Pakhuizen 45-52, B-8400 Oostende, Belgium
E-mail: wardvdb@vliz.be

Within the recently approved network of excellence on marine biodiversity and ecosystem functioning (MARBEF) under EU 6FP, the Flanders Marine Data and Information Centre (VMDC) will have a major task in terms of data integration and management. The IT core facility will be a MARBEF portal to improve the quality of integration of data and information from several sources. The European Register for Marine Species (ERMS) will be used as a central register of taxonomic names of all marine species known to occur in European waters. ERMS, initially compiled by a EU project started in 1998 (Costello, 2000), was published as a book (Costello, *et al.*, 2001) and a series of static web pages. The VMDC has now put this information in a relational database with a fully searchable version on the web (www.vliz.be/vmdcdata/erms). The original ERMS did not contain higher classification. This was added using higher ranks from Aphia (for information on Aphia see topic demonstrations in this volume). ERMS holds some 47,000 taxa with nearly 30,000 valid species names. ERMS is not complete yet, though. A quick comparison between Aphia and ERMS revealed that for sea cucumbers and for polyplacophorans, the two test groups we used, Aphia can still add 10-15% to the number of valid species. Soon after the official launch of MARBEF (March 2004), ERMS will be revised by a consortium of leading experts in taxonomy and mechanisms will be developed to keep the ERMS up-to-date and synchronous with major other data contributors. In other words, ERMS is revived and ready to play a major role in integrating biogeographic data from the large number of research teams involved in MARBEF.

References

- Costello M.J. 2000. Developing species information systems: the European Register of Marine Species (ERMS). *Oceanography* 13(3):48-55.
- Costello M.J., C. Emblow and R. White (Eds). 2001. European register of marine species: a check-list of the marine species in Europe and a bibliography of guides to their identification. Collection Patrimoines Naturels 50. Muséum national d'Histoire Naturelle: Paris, France. ISBN 2-85653-538-0. 463p.