

ARE WE REALISING THE VISION AND STRATEGY FOR EUROPEAN MARINE BIOTECHNOLOGY RESEARCH?

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Marine biotechnology has been recognized as a strategic field of activity to prepare the transition from an oil-based economy to a bio-based economy by most of the leading countries in the world, from EU countries to the US, Japan, China, etc. Considering the trends that were observed during the first decade of this century in Europe, several initiatives have been developed in recent years. Marine biotechnology opportunities and challenges were thoroughly discussed within several Working Groups and initiatives (EU Collaborative Working Group on Marine Biotechnology, ESF-Marine Board Working Group on Marine Biotechnology, and of course the ongoing CSA MarineBiotech). A new vision and an appropriate strategy were adopted and key recommendations proposed as major guidelines for future policies (Marine Board Position Paper 15 on Marine Biotechnology, CWG-MB final report).

Since the publication of the ESF-MB PP15, different programmes and projects have been launched. Several of these projects are in perfect agreement with the recommendations or directly inspired by the conclusions of the ESF-MB PP15. The current initiative to implement a Marine Biotech ERA-NET is also an important step forward. Nevertheless, considering the economic and social crisis in EU, and notably the North-South gradient in the ability to fund national RTD projects, an ERA-NET is a necessary component of the future policy but might not be sufficient to keep national policies aligned during the next decade. Additional mechanisms should be discussed and the EC should keep a direct support to marine biotechnology research projects, in relation with health, food, energy and environmental policies.