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Southern European Seas: Assessing and Modelling Ecosystem changes

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE SESAME PROJECT EMBARKS ON ITS FIRST MULTINATIONAL CRUISE TO THE BLACK SEA

Following the previous national cruises under the SESAME project, it is now time for the first multinational cruise, which gets under way this week, from 3-16 October 2007. Departing from the port of Piraeus, in Athens, the Greek research vessel Aegaeo will reach the Black Sea where Greek scientists will meet and work with their colleagues from Bulgaria Romania and Ukraine. Through this multinational cooperation, the SESAME database will be filled with new data, which will shed light on the effects of the Danube River delta on the Black Sea ecosystem. At the same time, the cruise will also act as a building block for SESAME's future education platform. This will be achieved by inviting school classrooms to follow the cruise activities in real time and speak live with the scientific crew during the expedition.

Under SESAME's activities, a team of 16 researchers from the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR) are boarding the HCMR's research vessel (R/V) *Aegaeo* on 3 October to visit designated stations in the Black Sea for data collection purposes.

R/V *Aegaeo* will travel up to the Black Sea to meet scientists from Bulgaria, Romania and the Ukraine, that will board the vessel to start sampling in designated stations. Romanian and Bulgarian scientists onboard their research vessels *Steaua de Mare* and *Akademik* respectively, will simultaneously work side by side with R/V *Aegaeo* at different stations. R/V *Aegaeo* will complete work in Bulgarian, Romanian, and finally, Ukrainian waters, before beginning its journey home on 13 October.

The main sampling activities concern sediment fluxes and geochemistry. They will include, among others, deployment of sediment traps and CTD casts, pH, carbon dioxide, bacterial community structure and primary production.

What happens onboard will also be captured on film, by a professional TV crew that will be joining the researchers. The resulting video will form part of a documentary about SESAME, to be aired on Greek television later in the year. A daily, online cruise diary, and an interactive map on the project website, will allow the public to trace the cruise path. In addition, and as part of SESAME's educational and dissemination activities, the cruise will engage primary school children in a fascinating, yet informative, manner.

More specifically, a primary and a secondary school class, both from Kalamata, Greece, have been chosen to take part in this venture after expressing their interest to participate in the SESAME expeditions. They will both be invited to view some of the sampling while the cruise is in progress, and speak about the on-going work with an allocated scientist, via a telephone connection. The pupils will have the opportunity to experience life onboard a research vessel, ask questions about the expedition and follow the journey the website. Once the cruise has been completed, parts of this activity will be uploaded on the project website.

The 2-week cruise will collect new data for the Black Sea, while simultaneously enhance the cooperation between scientists from different countries, and further encourage the involvement of school children in research activities.

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