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EU project to monitor Harmful Algal Blooms from space

The *Interreg France Channel England Programme* (FCE) has today (09 May) announced that it will fund 2.6 million euros towards an environmental project led by Plymouth Marine Laboratory that will use the latest satellite technology to improve the way water quality and harmful algal blooms (HABS) are monitored in the English Channel.

Harmful Algal Blooms are caused by excessive growth of marine algae which release harmful toxins into the water that can kill fish, shellfish and even humans when they consume contaminated fish. As a result they can have an extremely damaging effect on the fishing and tourism industries. In the EU the annual cost of HABS to these industries is estimated to be in excess of 918 million euros.

The project, known as S-3 EUROHAB, will use data from the recently launched European satellite, Copernicus Sentinel 3, to track the growth and spread of harmful algal blooms in the Channel. This data will then be used to create a web based alert system, the first of its kind in Europe, to alert marine managers and fishing industries of the growth of potentially damaging algal blooms. The alert system will result in much faster response times that will help stop the spread of HABS, reducing the millions of pounds lost each year as a result of HABS in both France and the UK. Data will also be gathered to help better understand why, how and when HABS occur.

Current methods of tracking HABS are inefficient and expensive, costing 2 million euros annually to monitor just 6% of the Channel area. S3 - EUROHAB's methods will not only cost significantly less, just 42,000 euros annually, but will also cover the whole Channel area.

Dr Gavin Tilstone Principal Investigator of the project from Plymouth Marine Laboratory, commented: *'Current monitoring methods for harmful algal blooms could be improved using satellite ocean colour data, especially with the latest technological advancements and recent launch of the European Copernicus Satellites. The project will use this satellite data to create a web based HAB and water quality alert system that will be designed with marine managers and industry end users to enhance the marine monitoring of HAB's in the Channel region'*.

The project budget will total 3.7 million euros with 69% funded by the Interreg France (Channel) England programme, representing a European Regional Development Fund budget of 2.6 million euros. The project is made up of nine organisations, five from France and four from the UK, and is expected to last four years.

-Ends-

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Notes to Editors

1. The Interreg FCE Programme is a European Territorial Cooperation programme that aims to fund high quality cooperation projects in the Channel border region between France and England. It focuses on a range of specific objectives including supporting innovation, improving the attractiveness of the FCE area and developing low carbon technologies. The Programme has a total of €223 million of ERDF funds to distribute by 2023 and is managed by Managing Authority Norfolk County Council.
2. Project approval is subject to the Grant Offer Letter being signed.
3. Project Partners:
 - Lead partner: Plymouth Marine Laboratory (UK)
 - L'Institut Français de Recherche pour l'Exploitation de la Mer – Brest (France)
 - University of Southampton (UK)
 - Environment Agency (UK)
 - L'Institut Français de Recherche pour l'Exploitation de la Mer – Boulogne (France)
 - Comité Régional des Pêches Normandie (France)
 - Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (UK)
 - L'Institut Français de Recherche pour l'Exploitation de la Mer (Ifremer) – Port-en-Bessin (France)
 - Université de Bretagne Occidentale (France)
4. The Programme operates within a clearly defined eligible area, covering the South and East Coasts of England from Cornwall to Norfolk, and the North Coast of France from Finistère to Pas-de-Calais. The programme area can be found [here](#).
5. More information about the Programme can be found at <https://interreg5a-fce.eu/>.