



Open session

Public-Private Partnerships for the Exploration of the Sea

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With climate change, biodiversity loss, and still large unknowns about life in the oceans, the research community is faced by important societal challenges at a time when public research suffers from budget restrictions. ICES has not coordinated an international research exploratory programme for many years. Yet, important amounts of money are concentrated in the private sector. Private actors may be willing to fund the exploration of the seas and oceans with innovative techniques to address the social challenges of our times. But for that they need to partner with academia and public institutes, where recognized scientific knowledge lies. This session aimed to explore alternate ways to fund scientific surveys and possible role of ICES in partnerships during a one-hour open session, which was attended by 30 participants.

One very recent and successful example was presented by Stéphane Pesant (University Bremen) at this open session - the Tara Oceans project. Following the presentation, the group had a lively discussion, drawing on additional examples and challenges of public-private partnerships, and different ways to partner. One challenge is the exploration of biodiversity, a new frontier in science, which will require extra sampling efforts. Partnerships do not necessarily need to be financial – for example, fishing vessels could help to collect data across a greater spatial area. The group identified the need to approach oceanic survey work with a holistic ecosystem approach, recognizing limitations due to temporal and spatial restrictions of cruise surveys. It was suggested that partnering activities should include goals that are of interest to all involved parties in order to be successful. One possible activity for ICES engagement could be to coordinate student training on research vessels. The discussions indicated an interest to make better use of existing survey data – a future workshop or theme session could be held to share data and generate new ideas about how that could be used to answer new questions.