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NEWSPPOINT

## HARMONY project field surveys kick in

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The HARMONY project, funded under the framework of Interreg V-A Italia-Malta Operational Programme (2014-2020), kicked off its sampling campaign within Maltese waters in the past few weeks. Such a sampling campaign is expected to extend for the next nine months and will involve a range of different methodologies and equipment, including Remotely-Operated Vehicles (ROVs), besides the application of the Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK) protocol. The main aim of these field surveys is to assess and monitor the impact of a number of stressors on priority Mediterranean benthic habitats.

The 30-month-long project brings together a total of seven partners, four from Sicily (University of Palermo, ISPRA, CNRS-IAMC and the Regional Fishing Directorate) and three from Malta (University of Malta, ERA and the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture), under the aegis of the University of Palermo. The main objective of the project is to identify common stressors operating on a number of priority marine habitats within selected Marine Protected Areas in Malta and Sicily, and to streamline and to harmonise as much possible ongoing monitoring efforts conducted in Sicily and in Malta in related to Descriptor 2 and Descriptor 5 of the MSFD. Within the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), Descriptor 2 refers to Non-Indigenous Species (NIS) whilst Descriptor 5 refers to Seafloor Integrity.

The University of Malta is represented in the project by Prof. Alan Deidun and by Dr Adam Gauci, both from the Department of Geosciences. The University of Malta heads Workpackage 2 within the HARMONY project and will thus be responsible for designing and managing the project website, besides contributing to field sampling and analyses efforts being conducted over the next few months.

The next HARMONY project meeting is scheduled to take place in Malta in November 2018. Further information about the project can be gleaned from the [project website \(https://www.harmony-italiamalta.eu\)](https://www.harmony-italiamalta.eu) and from the project's social media profile.

Quicklinks ▼