The Ocean InfoHub Project

The IOC Ocean InfoHub Project (OIH) is a new initiative to streamline access to ocean science data and information for management and sustainable development. Funded by the Government of Flanders (Kingdom of Belgium), the project started in April 2020 and will run for three years. The OIH is coordinated by the IOC Project Office for IODE (Oostende, Belgium), building on its 59-year history of supporting member states in the exchange and management of marine data and information.

The OIH will establish and anchor a network of regional and thematic nodes that will improve online access to and synthesis of existing global, regional and national data, information and knowledge resources. The project will center on an openly accessible web platform designed to support interlinkages and interoperability between distributed resources including existing clearinghouse mechanisms. The OIH will first consolidate IOC-associated online resources - including OceanExpert, OceanDocs, the Ocean Best Practices System, the Ocean Biodiversity Information System (OBIS), the World Ocean Database (WOD) and Ocean Data Portal (ODP) – extended by partnerships with EurOcean, Marinetraining.eu, EMODNET, and other sources in the IOC ODIS Catalogue of Sources (ODIScat). The initial focus of OIH will thus be on (i) experts, (ii) institutions/organizations, (iii) research data and information infrastructures and their capabilities and services offered, (iv) projects, (v) research vessels, (vi) education and training opportunities, (vii) funding programs and other opportunities, (viii) documents and publications, (ix) manuals, guidelines, standards and best practices, (x) metadata catalogue for specific variables and (xi) access to data sets and/or data products relevant to particular program priorities (e.g. the SDGs and Essential Ocean Variables).

The project will benefit marine and coastal stakeholders across the globe, but its initial focus will be on responding to requests for data products and services from three regions: IOCAFRICA, LAC and the Pacific SIDS to meet their unique user community (thematic and language) requirements. The initial priorities for the Project will be to develop communities of practice for the three pilot regions, as well as to formalize partnerships with other UN agencies and key international partners. A global ODIS (Ocean Data and Information System) architecture will be developed to enable scalable development and interoperability with local, regional and thematic infrastructures. Through these actions, the OIH will enable a digital ecosystem where users, from any entry point, can discover content and services that they require, while also having opportunities to become content creators themselves.

Matchmaking services would be an additional function of the OIH, particularly in support of the IOC Capacity Development strategy. Services would allow study and training or vessel survey opportunities to be identified, a peer-to-peer service would support scientific collaboration, and an automated/self-serve service would allow the search for specific human or institutional expertise. The project will also focus on the transfer of local knowledge, on supporting early career scientists, and on remedying gender disparity by increasing access to information, technologies and opportunities, in line with the IOC’s Capacity Development strategy.

Ultimately, the OIH intends to meet the knowledge needs of national and regional requirements for sourcing marine data and information, as well as to assist countries in their reporting requirements for the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly goals 4, 9, 14 and 17), contribute to key aims of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for disaster Risk Reduction and Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction. The OIH will also assist IOC member states to report on ocean science capacities through the Global Ocean Science Report (GOSR).

For more information:
Ocean InfoHub Project: https://www.iode.org/oih
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