



Press Release 01/16
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Launching SponGES - Bergen, 19-21 April 2016

WHEN AND WHERE?

SponGES - the EU project about deep-sea sponge grounds of the North Atlantic - will be launched in Bergen on the 19-21 of April 2016. The **SponGES Kickoff Meeting** will be held at the Radisson Blu Royal Hotel, and **its first session (Tuesday 19, 9 am - 1 pm) will be open to the public and the media.**

WHAT?

SponGES is a research and innovation project funded under the **H2020 Blue Growth BG1 call** aimed at "Improving the preservation and sustainable exploitation of Atlantic marine ecosystems". Its overarching goal is to **develop an integrated ecosystem-based approach to preserve and sustainably use deep-sea sponge ecosystems of the North Atlantic**. These are among the most diverse, ecologically and biologically important and vulnerable marine ecosystems of the deep-sea, yet have received very little research and conservation attention to date.

HOW?

SponGES is based on the **international and interdisciplinary collaboration** of research institutions, environmental non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations. The project will:

- ➔ **Strengthen the knowledge-base** on North Atlantic sponge ground ecosystems by investigating their distribution, diversity, biogeography, function and dynamics;
- ➔ **Improve innovation and industrial application** by unlocking the biotechnological potential of these ecosystems;
- ➔ **Improve the capacity to model, understand and predict** threats and impacts and future anthropogenic and climate-driven changes to these ecosystems;
- ➔ **Advance the science-policy interface** and developing tools for improved **resource management** and good governance of these ecosystems from regional to international levels across the North Atlantic.

WHY?

SponGES will contribute to the implementation of **major strategic instruments** such as the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), EU Maritime Strategy for the Atlantic Ocean Area, the Galway Statement on Atlantic Ocean Cooperation, as well as **international agreements** established to conserve Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) and Ecologically or Biologically Sensitive Areas (EBSAs).

WHO?

Coordinator: University of Bergen, Norway (Prof. Hans Tore Rapp).

Co-coordinators: Florida Atlantic University, USA (Prof. Shirley Pomponi) and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (Prof. Ellen Kenchington)

Consortium: 18 EU, USA and Canadian partners

Timeframe: 4 years (March 2016 – February 2020)

Budget: ca. 10 M€

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