

Europe's deep-ocean observatories plan their next decade: EMSO EVOLVE holds its kick-off meeting in Rome

Nineteen partner organisations from ten countries meet in Rome from 6 to 8 October to launch a four-year Horizon Europe project that will prepare Europe's deep-ocean observing infrastructure for the decade ahead.

Rome, 7 October 2026. EMSO EVOLVE, a four-year project funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe programme, holds its kick-off meeting in Rome this week. EMSO EVOLVE is coordinated by EMSO ERIC, the legal entity settled as European Research Infrastructure Consortium, with office in Rome and that operates the European Multidisciplinary Seafloor and water column Observatory, the project brings together 19 partner organisations from 10 countries to position EMSO as Europe's leading long-term ocean observing infrastructure by 2035.

This initiative addresses a major blind spot in ocean science. While the ocean plays a vital role in regulating Earth's climate and absorbing human-made heat and carbon dioxide, it also drives major natural hazards, including underwater earthquakes, tsunamis, and landslides. Yet the deep sea and water column remain among the least observed environments on Earth. Satellites see the surface; only in-situ observatories can track what happens from the seafloor to the surface, year after year. EMSO EVOLVE is built to fill this gap across four challenges where long time series matter most: climate and ocean variability; geohazards; biodiversity loss; and the deep-ocean carbon cycle, warming, and acidification.

The project builds on infrastructure that EMSO ERIC has operated since 2016: 14 Regional Facilities across 21 sites, from the Nordic Seas to the Black Sea and out into the Atlantic, delivering around 125 in-situ variables from the seabed to the sea surface. EMSO data are freely accessible online, and researchers can apply for physical access to the observatories themselves. Over the next four years, EMSO EVOLVE will strengthen EMSO's governance and membership, redesign its observing system to work at the scale of ocean sub-basins, modernise its data and digital services to be FAIR and interoperable with European initiatives such as Copernicus, EMODnet and the Digital Twin of the Ocean, and establish the EMSO Academy as a permanent training and capacity-building programme.

Over three days in Rome, the consortium will appoint the project's governance bodies, hear the European Commission's expectations for the project, walk through every work package's objectives, deliverables and milestones, and agree the action plan for the first year.

*“EMSO EVOLVE is the project where our country members were expecting to reinforce our ocean observation strategy in collaboration with other key players in Europe. It will support the implementation of the EU OceanEye initiative thanks to joint design of regional observations, cost and governance analyses, data harmonisation and joint training. Integration and collaboration are the two keys”, **Ingrid Puillat**, Director General, EMSO ERIC and Coordinator of the project.*

About EMSO EVOLVE. EMSO EVOLVE (European VisiOn for Long-term ocean observations and enVironmEntal sustainability) is a four-year project funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe programme to position EMSO as Europe's leading long-term ocean observing infrastructure by 2035, moving from observation at individual sites to sub-basin scale observation and service-oriented operations.

Partners	19 organisations from 10 countries
Coordinator	EMSO ERIC (Rome, Italy)
Duration	48 months, 1 September 2026 to 31 August 2030
Total budget	€4.99 million, with an EU contribution of €3.99 million
Programme	Horizon Europe, call HORIZON-INFRA-2025-01 (Research Infrastructures), Grant Agreement No 101292761

About EMSO ERIC. EMSO ERIC is the European Research Infrastructure Consortium that operates the European Multidisciplinary Seafloor and water column Observatory: a distributed network of seafloor and water column observatories delivering continuous measurements of essential ocean variables across European seas and the open ocean.

The consortium. Coordinator: EMSO ERIC (Rome, Italy). Italy: OGS, INGV, CNR. France: Ifremer; CNRS, with Aix-Marseille University as affiliated entity; IEEE France Section. Portugal: CCMAR, IPMA. Greece: HCMR, AUEB-RC. Spain: UPC, PLOCAN. Romania: GeoEcoMar. Ireland: Marine Institute (MI). Ukraine: IMEER NASU. United Kingdom: Blue Lobster IT Limited. Norway: Institute of Marine Research (IMR).

More information:

- Website: <https://emso.eu>
- More on the project: <https://emso.eu/emso-evolve/>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/european-multidisciplinary-seafloor-and-water-column-observatory>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/emso.eu/>
- YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCN4E-Yx9Qot4LJ5Z9iJi78g>

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