



Ocean margin research within the European RTD framework programmes

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Research lies at the heart of the European Union's (EU) strategy for becoming the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy by 2010. At the heart of this research strategy lies the EU commitment to building a European Research Area (ERA) that will overcome outdated geographical, institutional, disciplinary and sectoral boundaries. Since 1984, the EU has funded research and technological development through successive Framework Programmes. The current Sixth Framework Programme (2002-2006), known as FP6, has the overall objective of establishing the ERA as a framework for political and practical co-operation within which scientific excellence can flourish and research results can be efficiently applied to address major European priorities. FP6 has therefore been designed to establish a fully functioning European Research Area by promoting coordination, integration, synergy and efficiency.

Integrated research on ecosystems lying in the deeper ocean section, (i.e. the ocean margin), is one of the research topics within the "Global Change and Ecosystems" Priority of FP6. EU funded research in this domain seeks to enhance our understanding of the interactions between deep-water circulation, the biosphere and the geosphere, with a view to assessing the role of deep ocean margin ecosystems processes in global changes and to developing concepts and strategies for the sustainable use of the deep offshore resources. This work builds upon the solid framework of knowledge and European collaboration that has been established in previous RTD Framework Programmes.

This presentation will review the ocean margin research undertaken in successive Framework Programmes, highlighting the degree of integration achieved in this domain by FP6. It will then outline the future research perspectives, in particular with re-

spect to the 7th Framework Programme, whilst emphasising the need for even greater integration and synergy between the programmes of the EU Member States and the EU, if an effective European Research Area in the domain of ocean margin research in Europe is to be maintained and expanded.