

DiadFish Network meeting Report

Brussels, CLORA 23 and 24 October 2002

Introduction

In preparation for the 6th framework programme (FP6), the European Union launched a call for expressions of interest (Eoi) in June 2002. The French government agency CEMAGREF initiated a proposal entitled DIADFISH with the aim to set up a network of research institutes dealing with diadromous fish. This Eoi was supported and submitted by a core group of institutes.

http://eoi.cordis.lu/dsp_details.cfm?ID=31318

As this proposal was judged as interesting by numerous European colleagues, we decided to lay the foundations for such a network regardless of the research priorities that appears in the coming FP6 calls for proposals.

The objectives of the first DiadFish meeting was to review all aspects relevant both to the aims of the network and to its organisation. A preparation document [draft1.doc], which was sent to all diadfish institutes, was been used as a starting point for this meeting. All the DiadFish institutes (list in appendix) were informed of the meeting and were offered the opportunity to attend.

Participants:

Miran APRAHAMIAN, Environment Agency UK
Johan COECK, Institute of Nature Conservation B
Gordon H. COPP, CEFAS UK
Daniel De CHARLEROY, Institute for Forestry and Game Management, B
Willem DEKKER RIVO, NL
Bror JONSSON, NINA N
Frank KIRSCHBAUM, Leibnitz IGB G
Hans LUNDVIST, SLU S
Raoul MILLE, CEMAGREF SREI F
Ion NAVODARU, Danube Delta Institute R
Eric ROCHARD, CEMAGREF RAC F
Mircea STARAS, Danube Delta Institute R
Ralf THIEL, German Oceanographic Museum G
Alain VIDAL, CEMAGREF SREI F (23 Oct. only)
Håkan WICKSTRÖM, Institute of Freshwater Research S

DiadFish background

To introduce the meeting, Eric ROCHARD (ER) briefly summarised the origins of the DiadFish initiative, focusing on the ideas that constituted the network's basis.

- Several changes of scale are included in this proposal :
 - o We consider diadromous species both at the individual and global scales (types or model of diadromous fish) and also as assemblages encountered in drainage basins.
 - o The location of the laboratories of the network enables us to address the entire distribution areas of these species in freshwater and most of their marine distribution (from Black Sea to sea of Norway).

- The network encompasses laboratories of various disciplines, facilitating a multidisciplinary approach.
- The network's structure aims to address both theoretic and applied research.
- It is a first step towards the integration of European research.

At the moment, the DiadFish network consists of 32 institutes throughout Europe, with about 200 researchers and more than 50 PhD students from various fields of expertise. A poster presenting the network has been created and sent to all DiadFish laboratories, a list server is ready to be used and an internet domain name www.diadfish.org has been booked.

Presentation and discussion of funding opportunities

Alain VIDAL (AV) presented a summary of the financial instruments of FP6, in particular the new instruments (integrated projects, IP; networks of excellence, NoE), but also some of classic instruments such as COST, STREPS, and the Human mobility programme. He has summarized the priorities transmitted by EC commission concerning subject area 1.1.6.3 *Global change and ecosystems* and more specifically *Biodiversity and ecosystems*. From his summary, the DiadFish proposal does not appear to match well the priorities identified by the EC. Briefly, the DiadFish proposal did not appear relevant enough to the assessors with respect to "ecosystem" and "ocean" and thus was not reflected in the priorities. From an organisational point of view, DiadFish is not yet sufficiently structured nor known and has yet to demonstrate its efficiency. Thus, although we could set up an excellent network, it does not yet correspond to a network of excellence (see also attached files: FP6Fish.doc and FP6Fish.ppt).

Following the AV presentation, several restructuring and merging possibilities of DiadFish were discussed. These would enable DiadFish to conform with the retained EC priorities. All of these were judged as very far from the line of reasoning that led us to the initial proposal. Institutes are free to reconsider their position individually, but no modest adaptation appears possible without comprehensive repositioning of the network's aims.

Other financial instruments could be used to set up the DiadFish network, in particular COST programmes, which correspond well with the establishment of new networks, and the human mobility programmes, which can serve to strengthen relationships between partners within the network.

Network structure and organisation

Creation of the network will require contractual formalisation of arrangements between the participating institutions. Such a contract would detail what each institution would like to achieve within the network as well as the network's working rules. Eric ROCHARD provided as an example the 'Groupement d'Interêt Scientifique (GIS)' entitled 'GRISAM', which was established to co-ordinate the research activities in France on diadromous species. At the international level, a similar network would be established by memoranda of understanding (MoU).

Aims of the network

Participants had the opportunity to present the priority research of their institutes and to express what they are looking for in the Diadish network. Although interests varied, it appears that the exchange of know-how and experience with scientists who are not in their discipline, species or geographic circles constitutes a common interest. This emphasizes the changes of scale that constitute the basis of DiadFish. Opportunities for funding new research programmes constitute the secondary, but important interest.

Extended discussions examined the role and use of data bases. Laboratories interested in making their existing databases better known could provide a short description of each data set and the contact name for the DiadFish web site. Intellectual property is an important part

of this discussion, and collaborative exploitation of the data appears to be an essential element.

To further the development of the Network's scientific programme, each institution will be asked to identify for a forthcoming workshop the main gaps in knowledge.

Communication tools

By the end of 2002, DiadFish's web site will be established using the layout presented and amended during the meeting. This site will constitute an exchange platform for the network's activities. A description of each institution will be presented using a common template, with links to each institution's own web sites. Fish and lamprey species will be done mainly through links to the FishBase web pages. All the DiadFish documents will be downloadable from a catalogue page, other documents (especially reports) could also be made available in the same manner. A 'jobs' page will present advertisements of PhD and post doctoral grants available in DiadFish partner institutions with links to the major job-searching web sites (e.g. AFS, ASL, www.jobs.co.uk).

The list server will be operational very soon, access to the list server being restricted in the first instance to DiadFish partner institutions.

Decisions

Continuation of the set up of the DiadFish network about diadromous fish, creation of a steering committee of the network to help Eric ROCHARD: Miran APRAHAMIAN and WILLEM Dekker.

Until a more detailed programme is developed, the DiadFish Eol (June 2002) will serve as the scientific basis of the network.

Preparation of a Research training network, Hans LUNDQVIST and Frank KIRSCHBAUM are in charge to co-ordinate a research training network in conjunction with Universities involved in DiadFish. The objective is to be in good position to respond to the first call for proposals (dead line March 2003).

Preparation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will consist of a soft contract between the institutions involved in the network (co-ordination Eric ROCHARD and CEMAGREF International affairs office), dead line early March 2003. Draft issues will be sent by email for editing and improvement.

Preparation of the first DiadFish symposium (late 2004 or early 2005 in France has been suggested). This symposium needs to be co-ordinated with the newly constituted ICES diadromous fish committee to avoid thematic overlap with their annual symposium (co-ordination CEMAGREF and INRA).

DiadFish workshop in March 2003 in Brussels, our Belgian colleagues (Johan COECK et Daniel De CHARLEROY) will undertake the logistic organisation of the first DiadFish workshop. The aim of the workshop will be to finalise the three previous points (first-call proposals to the research training and mobility instruments, submission of the signed MoU, and organisation of the 1st symposium) as well as to further the identification and ranking of scientific themes. Each institution is expected to present a brief summary of itself using a pro forma (a file presenting this pro forma will be sent in the near future and answers will have to be submitted prior to the workshop) with major gaps in knowledge and know-how identified.

We will examine the possibilities to obtain funds from the accompanying measures instrument to help to the participation of institutes from associate or candidates countries. It will be possible to invite short and medium enterprises that have expressed their interest in diadromous fish to attend the symposium with the same rules as the institutes.

Than you very much to all the participants to this meeting which was very interesting and as said one of our colleagues " we are starting to walk".

Acknowledgements

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Eric ROCHARD and Gordon H. COPP