



EUROPEAN SCIENTIFIC DIVING PANEL

Terms of Reference

Marsnetwork - European Scientific Diving Panel

1. Background

The European Scientific Diving Panel (ESDP) was first constituted as the European Scientific Diving Committee in 2007, and accepted as a European Marine Board (EMB) Panel in 2008, and this until April 2017. Since October 2017, becoming a Panel of the Marsnetwork, the ESDP still acts as an operational platform to advance underwater scientific excellence and to promote and implement a practical support framework for scientific diving related activities. The ESDP rely on the organizational support provided by the Marsnetwork Secretariat and the visibility and profile that the link with MARS provides.

2. Mission and objectives

2.1 Mission Statement

To advance the use of scientific diving as a key research tool in Europe

2.2 Definition and rationale for Scientific Diving

Scientific Diving (SD) is diving that is science-led and is needed to support professional research and education and for the protection, conservation and monitoring of the natural and cultural environment. It is not recreational nor commercial diving. SD exists in a health and safety framework that involves certified scientific divers, diving officers, hyperbaric physicians, scientific project leaders, heads of laboratories, administrators and legislators.

SD is a highly productive, cost-effective “*in situ*” research tool that supports and advances marine research through providing efficient, innovative and targeted techniques and methodologies for selective and efficient sampling and complex experimental work underwater. This is particularly effective for undertaking science in coastal or restricted/remote environments *e.g.* polar regions and under ice where SD can offer an



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accurate and reliable method for deploying, maintaining and retrieving equipment in remote locations. SD can be used to research global scientific questions including climate change, ocean acidification, seafloor ecosystem functioning, paleoclimate reconstruction.

Scientific Diving is becoming increasingly important as a relevant monitoring tool in support of policy needs, more particularly to address the monitoring requirements and other programmes of measures set out by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

Scientific diving is also consistent with the international demand for a responsible, resource-conserving, and sustainable research methodology in Europe.

2.3 ESDP Objectives

The MARS European Scientific Diving Panel is a focused and technical Panel which acts as an operational platform for Scientific Diving in Europe in order to:

Promote safety in scientific diving across Europe through:

- Facilitating the existing pan-European framework to **promote the secure practice of SD** through best practice in scientific diving operational and safety issues;
- Promoting and supporting the establishment of **national scientific diving committees** (NSDCs) where they don't exist;
- Developing and maintaining a **European database of scientific diving activities**;

Advance underwater science excellence in Europe through:

- Promoting SD as a highly productive, cost-effective "*in situ*" research **tool for interdisciplinary efficient research in the marine environment**;
- Facilitating a pan-European framework for networking and exchange of knowledge to encourage best practice in **observation and monitoring of the littoral and coastal environment**¹ and foster advances in dive technologies and procedures;
- Promoting the calibration and standardization of the **necessary methods** and the **management of the collected data**;
- **Advancing the scope of science delivery** through the adoption of common methodologies/protocols across pan-European gradients and/or the development of new techniques;

¹ Note that blue water diving begins to be open to SD



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- **Facilitating conferences, workshops, courses and publications** where scientific diving is promoted as a tool for scientific research and management;
- **Encouraging coordinated training** on specific scientific and technological issues;
- **Encouraging and supporting European funded research networks** that employ scientific diving;
- **Initiating and developing synergies and interactions with other relevant** marine networks
- **Promoting links with industry** (*e.g.* sensors, real time communication for field data transfer, underwater positioning, etc.);
- Promoting SD as a **relevant monitoring tool in support of policy needs** *e.g.* as a contribution to monitoring for the MSFD.

Encourage international mobility in the European scientific diving community through the implementation of a practical support framework by:

- **Becoming established as the recognized European Body** with responsibility to provide advice and guidance on the acceptance of existing standards within national and international legislative processes for occupational scientific diving;
- Promoting the widespread recognition of the existing **European Scientific Diver and Advanced European Scientific Diver (ESD and AESD) standards** as the minimum standards for scientific diving by ensuring their acceptance as the primary qualifications for scientific diving in Europe;
- Facilitating, promoting and maintaining **communication with and between present national scientific diving organisations and the National Scientific Diving Committees**;
- **Fostering links with the international Scientific Diving initiatives** *e.g.* American Academy for Underwater Sciences (AAUS).

3. Membership

3.1. Membership categories (*approved on 2019, May 19th*)

- **Candidate member:** Creating a NSDC; on the way to implement ESD and AESD as minimum initial training standards [Requirement: Updated list of members and involved institutions, quality control of the initial training]
- **Member:** Having in place a NSDC in contact with a national authority that has responsibility for vocational SD and having already implemented the ESD and AESD



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qualifications as the primary standards [Supplementary requirement: Published statutes, minutes of meetings and/or newsletter, name of the national certification, authority issuing certification]

- **Statutory member:** SD and NSDC recognized by law, as well as ESD and AESD [Supplementary requirement: Legal texts, official list of the agreed formation centres]

(cf. the annexed updated list)

3.2 Membership of the ESDP should be:

The official delegate (or nominated representative/alternate) for Scientific Diving in a European country. Members must comply with the national legal regulations, like but not limitative, for Health and Safety at Work (if these exist). Where possible that person should be able to prove that he/she has support for representing their country or National Scientific Diving Committee (if they exist). The basis of his/her representation needs to be documented in the minutes of the ESDP meeting where it is first accepted.

The representative should:

- Be involved with a NSDC or establishing a NSDC that is representing relevant research institutes, universities, museums etc. that have a scientific diving program;
- Demonstrate a link with a national regulatory body that has influence over scientific diving;
- Be aware of the ESDP minimum standards for scientific diving (ESD and AESD qualifications) and to be working toward full reciprocal recognition of these primary standards for SD in their country;
- Be actively involved with the ESDP (e.g. sending details of their national meetings).
- Inform the ESDP of any change in the number or composition of their NSDC. He/she should produce at least an annual update.
- Statutory members must ensure that a representative attends each meeting

Experts on specialized fields and additional Member State representatives may be invited to the meetings/workshops on an *ad hoc* basis.

Where possible, only one person (official delegate or nominated representative) per country is eligible for statutory membership (with voting rights) of the ESDP. Communication should be fixed with the official delegate; but that delegate can nominate an alternate or other colleagues to attend meetings as appropriate. However, cases where more than one delegate



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per country could add value should be presented for consideration by the ESDP; additional delegates would not have voting rights (see § 4).

3.3 Role of ESDP members:

- Prepare for and attend ESDP meetings;
- Submit intellectual inputs (e.g. ideas for new activities) and contribute to activities as appropriate including concrete outputs in the form of European scientific diving standards and consultation documents;
- Provide updates on Scientific Diving developments and regulatory changes at the National level, at the latest one month after the decision has been taken and before the end of November and before the end of November of the year concerned; and
- Channel relevant information from the organizations they represent and their respective national scientific communities to the ESDP, and *vice versa*.

3.4. ESDP Deliverables/Instruments

- ESDP meeting reports;
- ESDP updates by MARS in annual reports;
- ESDP self-evaluation report during the review process (see section 4.6)

ESDP (led by members) also delivers concrete outputs in the form of European scientific diving standards and consultation documents, focusing on:

- Operational and safety issues related to scientific diving.
- Diving as a tool for scientific research.

4. Governance

The ESDP has no legal status and operates according to the structure described below:

4.1. ESDP Chair

The ESDP Chair is selected amongst the ESDP members. The ESDP Chair's role is to:



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- Chair the ESDP meetings;
- Oversee the progress of ESDP activities, and initiate new ones;
- Liaise with the MARS Secretariat on priorities to be addressed;
- Take into account the recommendations of periodic reviews implemented by the MARSnetwork;
- Report (every 18 to 24 months) to the MARS Directors meetings and provide brief written update (one per year) for the MARS Board;
- Review reports of the meetings;
- Act in the best interest of the ESDP and its objectives.

4.2. Duration of the Chairmanship

The position of ESDP Chair is a position elected by statutory members according to the ESDP voting procedures. The elected Chair term is 4 years.

4.3. Voting Quorum

Each nominated national representative has the right to vote in core decisions of the ESDP and only one vote per Member State will be accepted (completed by official delegate or nominated representative).

Voting should be done in person at an ESDP meeting. However remote voting may in some cases be possible upon approval of the sitting chair.

Votes in writing (including e-mail) will be accepted where 28 days notice has been provided. When written votes are accepted, the identified voter can be counted toward the quorum.

4.4. MARS Network Secretariat support to the ESDP

The MARS Network Secretariat actively supports the ESDP and assigns a Science officer as ESDP facilitator whose main tasks include:

- Maintain the contact between the MARS and the ESDP;
- Assist and advise on the Organization of ESDP meetings, when possible;
- Update a dedicated ESDP webpage on the MARS website; on the understanding that the ESDP develops its own website;



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- Report on ESDP activities to the MARSnetwork and ensure inclusion of information provided by ESDP in the MARS Newsletters and MARS Annual Report;
- Update ESDP on MARS activities, future Position Papers or events;
- Invite nomination to the ESDP from MARS Delegates;
- Provide guidance on MARS governance and facilitate voting as required;

As a MARS Panel, the ESDP benefits from the profile and support of the Network to facilitate the growth of the ESDP into a full European platform for scientific diving.

What ESDP can expect as a Panel of the MARSnetwork?

- To provide a **European platform** to publish and distribute vision and strategy papers developed by the ESDP;
- To **enhance the visibility of SD within Europe as an important scientific tool**;
- To increase the efficiency of the work of the ESDP by **being recognized as “THE” European Panel for SD across Europe**;
- To **stimulate as much as possible national SD boards** to join the ESDP in order to significantly improve the SD method for European research by joining forces;
- To also encourage its member institutions to actively seek collaboration with the National Scientific Diving Committees.
- To facilitate networking opportunities for ESDP with MARS activities and Member Organizations and with other relevant networks;
- To get an **OFFICIAL STATUS** in order the ESDP can approach other organizations for funding.

4.5. ESDP Meetings

The ESDP normally meets twice a year. Additional meetings, if required, may be proposed by the Chair.

The two core meetings take place at approximately 6 month intervals in the following format:



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- The Spring meeting (February/March) can be open to the full membership and associated countries/interested parties, with a stronger scientific focus and ideally hosted by an emerging member.
- The Autumn meeting (October/November) is focused more on core activities and strategic actions of the Panel.

If necessary, relatively short videoconferences can be scheduled on specific topics, defined during the main meetings, or at the request of the members.

4.6 Review by the Marsnetwork steering committee

The ESDP is subject to periodic review by the Marsnetwork which provides feedback and recommendations on Panel activities based on the ESDP Self Evaluation Report (see section 3.3. above) and interview with the Panel Chair or nominated representative.

Acronyms list

AESD - Advanced European Scientific Diver

ESD - European Scientific Diver

ESDP - European Scientific Diving Panel

MARS - The European Network of marine research Institutes and Stations (Marsnetwork)

NSDC - National Scientific Diving Committee

SD - Scientific Diving



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Annexe to the Terms of References

Membership (*The list is updated as and when changes of situation are declared*)

Date: 2020, October 22nd

Candidate members: Greece, Poland, Slovenia

Members: Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Portugal

Statutory members: Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom

Contacts: *Austria, Cyprus, Gibraltar, Monaco, Spain²*

² *Spain has published a Royal Decree 550/2020 of 2 June, determining the safety conditions for diving activities*