



# CTA-189-Marine Ecosystems

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## Researchers to help protect some of the world's most vulnerable marine ecosystems

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Researchers from the University of Portsmouth will be part of an international project to help protect vulnerable marine ecosystems from climate change and human induced impacts, such as habitat destruction and pollution.

The MOVE-ON project, starting in 2020, will bring together global experts in marine conservation with policy and decision makers as part of the European Union's MAES (Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystem Services) initiative.

The aim is to produce sustainable development and **ecosystem management models for the benefit of biodiversity** and people in the European Union overseas territories in the Caribbean and in the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific oceans.

Changes in ecosystem conditions affect the ability of ecosystems to maintain functions that are needed to deliver ecosystem services. The EU overseas territories offer the best opportunity to assess the most pristine ecological conditions of marine ecosystems in the three oceans (for instance in French Polynesia, French Guiana, the Caribbean, or the Falklands islands in the South Atlantic Ocean).

In this project, Pierre Failler, Cindy Cornet and Ewan Trégarot from the University of Portsmouth will investigate the ecological conditions and develop conceptual models of ecosystem services provision according to the quality of marine ecosystems. Identifying the economic benefits of protecting and improving the condition of marine ecosystems is essential for a region to mitigate and adapt from the effects of climate change.

This will help decision makers in the regions to develop biodiversity strategies, good practice guidance and policy recommendations. A set of guidelines and frameworks will be produced, in partnership with decision makers from

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each region, to implement environmental protection and conservation initiatives at a local level and into wider EU and international projects.

Professor Pierre Failler, Director of the Centre for Blue Governance at the University of Portsmouth, said: "Our knowledge on ecosystem conditions is limited, but this information is crucial when it comes to understanding the trends in ecosystem services changes over time. Climate change and human-led pressures on coastal ecosystems have globally led to a decline in ecosystems' quality, so we need to understand what indicators can be used to describe an ideal ecosystem and its optimum functioning."

Focusing on the EU overseas territories is consistent with their importance on the global scale. In total, the 25 special territories of the European Union cover an area of 4.4 million km<sup>2</sup>, equivalent in size to continental Europe, and the maritime territory reaches over 15 million km<sup>2</sup>, the largest in the world. The biodiversity and the ecosystems in those territories are exceptional and still well preserved in some places.

The three-year MOVE-ON project has received 1.5 million euros funding as a continuation of the European Union's MAES project.

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