

# FRENCH INITIATIVES WITH A MEDITERRANEAN-WIDE PERSPECTIVE FOR EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

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## ABSTRACT

The Mediterranean, a semi-enclosed regional sea with more than twenty riparian states, has its specificities and characteristics from an environmental and societal point of view. It represents a challenging “playground” for all concerned, including actors within the fields of research or decision-making. In the light of this, it also seems necessary to develop strategies and collaborations to educate and outreach on “*Mare nostrum*” and the today’s challenges associated.

In answer to such needs, *i.a.* the initiative DEFISMED has recently been launched. With the objective to disseminate on selected crucial themes (water, biodiversity, food resources and the sea), several approaches are proposed to invite scientific and societal actors to inform about new findings and share ideas and concerns. The OAO (Oceanographic Autonomous Observations) team has been one of the first partners to join this program and contributes to the “oceanic part”. In the context of its research on marine bio-geochemistry and –optics, OAO is undertaking divers dissemination activities addressing a wide range of publics and seeks an active involvement in such networks.



## 1. THE MEDITERRANEAN

The name comes from Latin meaning “in the midst of lands”. It is the world’s largest inland sea, surrounded by Europe, Asia and Africa. Connected with the Atlantic, the Black and the Red Sea, it mainly is divided into the western and eastern basin. Environmentally it is characterized *i.a.* by:

- mountainous shores
- specific climate conditions
- river input e.g. by Ebro, Rhône, Po and Nile
- sea salinity variations in the two basins.

## 2. DEFISMED

This recent initiative has the main objective to disseminate on selected crucial themes: water, biodiversity, food resources and the sea.

As a continued supply of such “natural resources” is vital for the becoming of the regions and their communities, it invites scientific and societal actors to share their views, needs, experiences and questionings. Approaches proposed are, e.g.:

- networking of actors in the “sustainable use domain” with citizens via internet
- valorization and vulgarization of academic know-how
- awareness raising in the school environments around the Mediterranean.



Ancient civilizations flourished around the Mediterranean. It became a “highway” for trading and under the Roman Empire it was called *Mare Nostrum*, our sea. Today “our sea” is submitted to pressures such as:

- tourism and urbanization
- transport and mobility effects
- exploitation of marine resources.

## 3. OCEANOGRAPHIC AUTONOMOUS OBSERVATIONS

The OAO team operates automatic platforms such as gliders and profiling floats and is also strongly implicated in the technological development of their “new generation”. Using such scientific tools for its research on marine bio-geochemistry and –optics, OAO also proposes their use for attractive dissemination activities on oceanographic topics. While intending to reach out to the wider public, a particular effort is made to reach the young audiences. Besides an active involvement in networks such as Defismed, OAO creates, e.g.:

- web interfaces, such as an interactive map
- a scientific mediation program with a national to international perspective for school teachers
- animations *i.a.* at open house opportunities of the “Villefranche Observatory”.



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Image « Mediterranean Sea »: [www.ufm-watzenet.net](http://www.ufm-watzenet.net)  
Images left-hand side: 1/ [www.tidesign.com](http://www.tidesign.com), 2/ IFREMER 3/6/7/8 and 9 OAO team, 4 (logo)/5 Defismed