

## **The CIESM Blog on marine bioprospecting-**

*A case study of impacts of different promotional strategies*

*by*

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# 1. Rationale

The web Blog reflects the CIESM engagement, supported by the MARCOM+ EU FP7 project, to help enhance dialogue between marine research, the maritime industry and civil society so as to proceed towards innovative, effective solutions. The CIESM Blog has been conceived as “test-case” to survey the way different stakeholders perceive some urgent problems related to the governance of marine biological resources. It was built around some conceptual issues, related to the sampling of marine genetic resources.

The screenshot shows the home page of the CIESM Blog, specifically the 'BLUE BIOTECH' section. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for HOME, BLUE BIOTECH, FISHERY, ABOUT, MEMBERS, and REGISTRATION. A login form is also present with fields for 'User' and 'Password' and a 'LOGIN' button. The main content area features a post titled 'BLUE BIOTECH' with a sub-header 'The exploitation of MGRs has the potential to sustainably deliver considerable wealth and business opportunities...' and a 'Blue Biotech documents download area' with a download icon. Below the text are two video thumbnails. The first video is titled 'Enter the debate on marine genetic resources' by CIESM Forum with 12 comments. The second video is titled 'Stealing from a Community Garden?' by CIESM Forum with 1 comment. At the bottom, there is a 'Blue Biotech download area' with three links: '20110412 Blue Biotech - France - CIESM Meeting - LA SPEZIA', 'UNEP/CBD/WG - contribution to the negotiation process', and 'Benchmarking of public biotechnology policy - Final Report April 2005'.

Figure 1. Home page of the Blog on Marine Governance related to Blue Biotechnology

## 2. Methodology

Detailed information is provided here on the availability of the CIESM e-Blog on 'Access to Marine Genetic Resources (MGRs), and the sharing of benefits deriving from their use' - an issue of growing importance for the governance and development of marine biotechnology.

Questions on the number and diversity of the Blog visitors as a function of different web promotional channels will be of interest to any agency wishing to integrate social networks in its communication strategy.

### 2.1 Blog conception and design

The CIESM Blog was designed to address a broad diversified audience. For this reason, it included simple texts associated with visuals and short films, aiming to draw attention and intrigue the public while transferring key concepts.

A significant effort was devoted to the design of the home page (see **Fig. 1** above), which was carried out in concertation with an Agency (PAN Advertising) specialised in web communication.

The front page title (*'Marine Biotech – HELP Research, STOP Biopiracy!'*) played with a deliberately controversial tone in order to better solicit the debate. The title was further developed on the second page (*'Stealing from a Community Garden? – Enter the debate on Marine Genetic Resources'*). On these introductory pages, brief paragraphs did summarize the issue in simple terms for a non-specialized audience (Box I) while successive links guided the visitor through a complex cognitive path that became gradually enriched with concrete information. In particular, a series of short films illustrating a recent visio-conference on national and regional perspectives in marine biotechnologies served to inform about the global scene, and on the challenges accompanying investments on marine natural products, from research to market. A number of refereed articles were provided for free download, encouraging the interested reader to learn more.

#### Box I: Short explanatory text (Webpage 2)

*The exploitation of MGRs has the potential to sustainably deliver considerable wealth and business opportunities. The inability of governments to reach agreement would present a very real threat to the pursuit of current international activities aimed at conserving and utilizing MGRs. This Blog responds to growing concerns over insufficient or interrupted international negotiations on marine genetic resources (MGRs). CIESM will act to help and influence the current policy debates on MGRs. Your contribution to this Blog can make a change. Let's discuss the reasons of this paralysis and let us find together the best way to raise the interest of decision makers.*

## 2.2 Content of the debate (summary)

The first intervention was posted a few days after the launching of the Blog (end of M25) by a Canadian researcher who strongly questioned the usefulness of a regime regulating 'access to Marine Genetic Resources and the sharing of benefits deriving by their use (ABS), which would 'discourage' research. This radical perspective provoked in turn a good number of replies, that tackled the issue from various angles, from purely ethical points of view to more scientific or legal oriented interventions. Particularly of note, a few participants indicated success stories in the management of terrestrial genetic resources (*i.e.* INBio<sup>1</sup> - an agreement that has been in existence for ten years in Costa Rica, for the benefit of both research and industry), which may provide good examples for implementing 'ocean-oriented models' (*i.e.* the Nagoya protocol, produced by CBD). A form of 'general consensus' on the need to make progress with the ABS regime prevailed over the initial argument in favor of unregulated access.

Besides this clear confrontation of views, some contributors introduced the need to implement geographic maps showing the distribution of marine organisms with high potential for the blue biotech industry. Such tools, taking advantage of newly available, high throughput molecular tools (*i.e.* bar code analyses), could help valuing the organisms so as to develop 'site-specific' agreements/strategies.

## 2.3 Associated promotional strategy

After recruiting specialized scientists from various sectors as moderators overseeing the animation of the debates (see **Table 1**), three complementary promotional strategies were tested (in successive sequences) to investigate their relative efficacy in terms of number and geographic coverage of the responsive public. Those are summarized below following the chronological order:

- 1. Strategy N.1: E-mailing** to individuals. **T<sub>0</sub>**: A promotional text inviting people to join the Blog was sent to a selected list of e-mail addresses (about 1,000 in total) targeting experts from various sectors (research, policy and the maritime industry) with merging interest on ABS related issues.
- 2. Strategy N.2: E-mailing** through pre-existing targeted Networks. **T<sub>0</sub> + 1 day** Various Networks were encouraged to relay and broadly circulate the text across their networks (*i.e.* MARCOM+, through its partners institutions; the programs MicroB3, Marine Biotech, EuropaBIO, BIO.ECON); **T<sub>0</sub> + 15dd**: the whole CIESM research network *i.e.*, 4200 experts of various marine research disciplines (geology, oceanography, marine biology, coastal management etc.). A reminder was sent about 10 days later.
- 3. Strategy N.3: Promotion based on Social Networks. T<sub>0</sub> + 20dd**: Two social media channels were used as additional promotional tools, namely Facebook and LinkedIn, the latter by means of *Maritime Network* (28,225 Members), and *Maritime Knowhow* (928 Members). **T<sub>0</sub> + 30dd**: Two LinkedIn promotional campaigns (targeting 6,482,996 potentially interested persons) were launched for one month, using a '50\$ daily budget' option and two slightly different



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<sup>1</sup> www.inbio.cr

**Table 1: Blog Moderators**

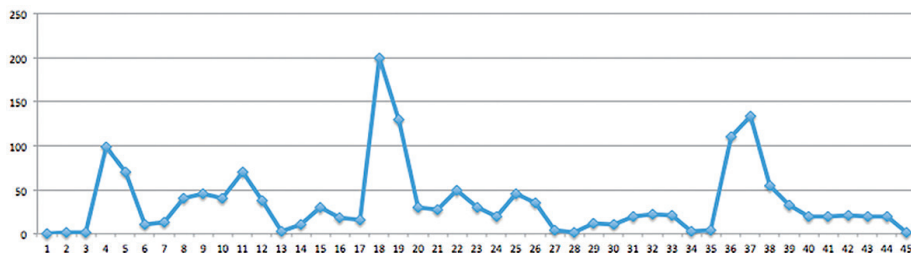
NAME	email	Affiliation	Sector
Arnaud-Haond, Sophie	Sophie.Arnaud@ifremer.fr	Univ. Montpellier II, France	Mar. Biotech. Res
Gutnick, David	DavidG@tauex.tau.ac.il	Univ. Tel-Aviv, Israel	Microb. Biotech. Res
Nicholls, Henry	henry@henrynicholls.com	Freelance, London UK	Science Press
Nunes, Paulo	pnunes@ciesm.org	CIESM	Environm. Economy
Onofri, Laura	lonofri@unive.it	Univ. Venice, Italy	PI related legacy
Papanicolopulu, Irini	irini.papanicolopulu@law.ox.ac.uk	Univ. Oxford, UK	Law of the Sea
Pardo, Daniel	daniel.pardo@wanadoo.fr	CNRS Aix-Marseille II, France	Res. & Industry
Penca, Jerneja		Univ, (EUI) Italy	Environm. Law

**Table 2: LinkedIn Advertising settings**

Target Audience	6,482,996	Ad Variations
<b>Industry:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fishery</li> <li>Research</li> <li>Higher Education</li> <li>Political Organization</li> <li>Government</li> <li>Relations</li> <li>Public Policy</li> <li>International Affairs</li> <li>Biotechnology</li> <li>Intern Trade and Devlpmn.</li> <li>Maritime</li> </ul>	<div style="border: 1px solid blue; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Campaign 1</b></p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div> <p><b>A Forum to help the sea</b> Join and help boosting negotiations on sustainable use of marine resource</p> <p>From: Laura Giuliano Go to URL: <a href="http://www.ciesmseasforum.org">http://www.ciesmseasforum.org</a></p> </div> </div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid blue; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Campaign 1</b></p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div> <p><b>A Forum to help the sea</b> Dialogue among users of marine resources is at stake: help to relaunch it!</p> <p>From: Laura Giuliano Go to URL: <a href="http://www.ciesmseasforum.org">http://www.ciesmseasforum.org</a></p> </div> </div> </div>
<b>Geography:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Europe</li> <li>Africa</li> <li>Latin America</li> <li>Asia</li> <li>Middle East</li> <li>Oceania</li> <li>North America</li> </ul>	
<b>Budget/Bid Show:</b>	Continuously	
<b>Daily Budget:</b>	\$50.00	
<b>Bid Type:</b>	Pay Per Click	
<b>Maximum Bid:</b>	\$3.00 per Click (CPC)	

### 3. Results (Analytical Data)

#### 3.1: Temporal distribution of the Blog visitors



S: 16Jan

E: 26Feb



S: start date; E: end date

1: e-mail to the targeted, pre-set list (group1);

2: promotion throughout various research networks;

3: promotion through CIESM network; Ibis: relaunching group1;

4: LinkedIn (free);

5: LinkedIn Ads

(lasting for about 1 week)

#### STATISTICS

1,601 Visits

1,014 Unique visitors

5,763 Pageviews

3.06 Pages/visit (00:03:15 Avg. Time on site)

57,89% Returning Visitors

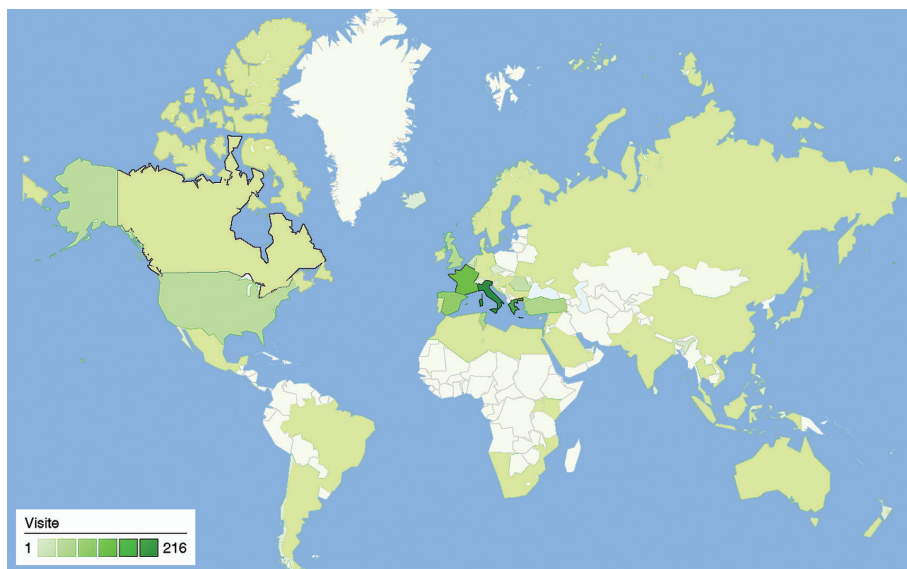
#### 3.2: Impact of LinkedIn Campaign

**Total recruited visitors attracted over one week: 169**

**Avg Number: 20 per day**

**Campaign 1 (the most successful)= 81.67%**

### 3.3: Geographic distribution of Blog Visitors



#### TOP 10 Countries

Country	Visits	Pages/Visits	Avg time on site
Italy	316	3.24	00:03:16
Greece	211	2.24	00:03:19
France	149	3.98	00:04:59
Spain	140	3.98	00:04:59
Tunisia	92	3.08	00:02:34
Turkey	61	3.69	00:03:20
United Kingdom	61	3.69	00:03:20
United States	53	2.89	00:02:58
Germany	44	2.41	00:01:40
Romania	36	2.56	00:00:51

10 out of 72

## 4. Conclusions (impact of the Blog)

On average, the one-month duration of our Blog was too short in relation to the average for standard promotional web blogs. Further, the moderators- all working on a voluntary basis- could not dedicate more than a fraction of their time each day to oversee the exchanges on our web site. On these premises, the ratio effort:obtained participation of our Blog was highly successful. The attractiveness of the Blog subject was attested in terms of a- number of participants (1,014 visitors, of which more than half revisited the Blog) and b- geographic coverage (72 countries, with Top ten countries from three different continents, namely Europe, Africa and USA) (see § 3.3).

### 4.1 Effectiveness of the adopted promotional strategies

The targeted audience was very responsive to the promotional solicitations (latent time less than one day). The CIESM Network mass mailing strategy proved to be the most successful promotional action in terms of reaction values (> 200 visitors in a single day). This confirms the position of trust that CIESM has consolidated for many years in its network. Compared to the CIESM mass mailing reaction values, the other promotional strategies each reached around 50% success (see § 3.1).

While strategies 1 and 3 (see 2.3 for details) produced a comparable number of visitors, they did not produce comparative results in terms of geographic coverage. Strategy 3, with emphasis on the LinkedIn channel, was particularly successful in terms of geographic coverage of the recruited participants (see § 3.3). An additional indicator of success for Strategy 3 was attributed to the high professional skills of the attracted visitors all around the world. This was measurable by means of the charged (not for free) 'LinkedIn Ads' option, which was therefore particularly useful to analyse the 'quality' of the response. The relatively low number of visitors recruited by means of 'LinkedIn Ads' (around 20 per day, with little oscillations within a week) was probably due to the rather restrictive setting parameters which were applied (maximum daily budget: 50 \$).

Considering the substantial in kind effort that was dedicated to set up a targeted list of emails prior starting with the promotion of the e-Blog, we can reliably conclude that is worth profiting of already existing social media rather than engaging efforts in the set up of NEW targeted lists.

### 4.2 Advances toward the debated issue

The large-scale promotion of a debate on 'ABS related to marine bioprospecting activities' (i.e. governance items associated to the development of Marine Biotechnology) was most challenging since the selected issue targeted only very highly specialised sectors. The design of the web page and the associated promotional strategy required therefore hard work (see § 2.1 and § 2.3).

As a result, numerous visitors from 72 Countries were intrigued enough to enter the pages once (more than thousand) or more (half of them) to follow the progress. Those who reacted to the LinkedIn Ads campaign mostly originated from highly professional policy sectors, including those directly linked with Ministries (i.e. India, Lybia, Tunisia).

While most of the attracted visitors displayed targeted professional skills, only a few of them got actively engaged into the debate. The hypotheses based on 'lack of time' or 'faith in the usefulness of the initiative' were rapidly out-sided by a third, more defensible one, attributing the lack of active engagement to a kind of 'camera-shy' general attitude, probably characteristic of highly professionalised sectors. Most of visitors, indeed, engaged significant efforts in private discussions beyond the official blog (via direct email exchanges with the organisers) while skipping public, visible contribution to the debate.

The few of them who 'crossed the doorstep' contributed with sophisticated arguments, displaying in depth engagement.



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