

Comprehensive online resource launched to improve freshwater management

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While numerous EU-funded freshwater management projects have generated websites, tools and databases, many of these have not been maintained after project completion. Moreover, information and results tend to be dispersed across several project websites, which can prove challenging to researchers, managers and policy makers looking for an overview of the current situation.

Building upon previous work carried out by the EU-funded BIOFRESH project, the MARS project has made this freshwater biodiversity information and data available in a clearly arranged and easily navigable way. The scope of coverage takes in a range of freshwater ecology, management and research topics, now all accessible from one single platform, the Freshwater Information Platform.

Targeted specifically at water managers tasked with assessing and restoring rivers and lakes and [policy makers](#) involved in drafting and implementing policies related to water, The Freshwater Information Platform is a key initial result of MARS. It enables information exchange and open-access publishing of maps and data, and aims to stimulate cutting-edge research and collaborations in the field.

The new platform will play a key role in helping to improve how freshwater ecosystems are sustainably managed. Scientists, policy makers, consultants, activists and interested citizens now have direct access to databases, distribution maps, articles and training manuals.

The Global Freshwater Biodiversity Atlas for example is a collection of published and open access freshwater biodiversity maps, and offers geographical information and spatial data at different scales. Online maps are accompanied by short articles with background information, along with links to publications and data sources related to freshwater biodiversity at the global, continental and local scale.

In addition, the platform welcomes contributions from other projects and has invited scientists, students and other interested persons from all over the world to add data, maps or other [information](#). In this way, the resource will live on long after the MARS project is completed in 2018. Encouraging several projects to join forces in order to effectively disseminate their results is also an efficient way of increasing the visibility of [freshwater](#) research to the public.

Meanwhile, the project has continued to investigate key stress factors that can affect rivers, lakes and estuaries. While organic pollution and acidification have played a major role in degrading [freshwater ecosystems](#) in the past, new threats from urban and agricultural land use, water power generation and climate change have emerged. The project's first paper was published in early 2015.

The project is currently carrying out field experiments to assess the effect of extreme climate events such as heavy rainfall, heatwaves and [water scarcity](#). A total of 16 river basins throughout Europe will be used to assess the effects of water scarcity and flow alterations (Southern Europe); hydrology, morphology and nutrient stress (Central Europe); and hydrology and temperature alterations (Northern Europe). The end result will be the development of new tools for more effective river basin management.

More information: For further information, please visit the MARS project website: www.mars-project.eu/

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