



## **COLUMBUS – Navigating Towards Impactful Knowledge Transfer**

**Press Release:** March 2016

On 2 March 2016, 57 participants from 36 organisations and 11 countries converged in Brussels, Belgium, for the European Commission (EC) Horizon 2020 funded [COLUMBUS](#) project's first Annual Blue Society Knowledge Transfer Conference.

Representing the EC's most substantial investment in Knowledge Transfer to date, **COLUMBUS** aims to measurably increase uptake and application of outputs arising from publicly-funded marine research projects by different end-users, such as industry, policy makers, and society in general.

This event was the first of three annual international conferences to be hosted by **COLUMBUS** with the common objective of bringing together project partners, knowledge generators and end users, as well as Knowledge Transfer specialists, to discuss on-going **COLUMBUS** Knowledge Transfer. Bringing these specialists together and highlighting success stories in this way will allow the Knowledge Transfer process that is implemented within **COLUMBUS** to be fine-tuned and ensure that **COLUMBUS** best practices in marine Knowledge Transfer become well-known by relevant stakeholders.

Opened by Dr Ricardo Serrão Santos MEP and Ms Sigi Gruber (Head of Marine Unit for DG Research and Innovation), the conference stimulated lively discussion. The attendees, including representatives from all 26 **COLUMBUS** partner organisations, explored external Knowledge Transfer initiatives to draw lessons from within the marine and maritime sector which could inform and improve **COLUMBUS'** existing five-step Knowledge Transfer methodology.

Georgia Bayliss-Brown, Senior Knowledge Transfer Officer at AquaTT (Dublin, Ireland) who manages the application of the **COLUMBUS** Knowledge Transfer methodology, said, "We really are sitting on the crest of a wave and exploring new horizons under the **COLUMBUS** project. As public spending on research and development continues to grow; funding providers need to see a return on their investment. In **COLUMBUS**, we use a tried-and-tested methodology to maximise the potential of knowledge to have real, quantifiable impacts on policy, industry, science and society."

Hosted by some of **COLUMBUS'** External Advisory Board members – invited from AZTI Tecnalia, the German Marine Research Consortium (KDM), Marcom Defence, Nord University, Researchfish, the Southampton Marine and Maritime Institute and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) - the afternoon's enthusiastic and participatory expert panel discussions looked at the definition of impact and the associated barriers to achieving it, e.g. organisational, linguistic, educational and cross-cultural obstacles.

“The sheer extent of interest that the European Commission and high-level experts have displayed by continuously engaging with **COLUMBUS** and participating so actively in the conference is not only gratifying, and a proud moment for the project, but it signifies the importance of Knowledge Transfer, Blue Growth and achieving impact across a vast range of sectors,” said Cliona Ní Cheallacháin, **COLUMBUS** Project Manager, “Not only is it exciting to imagine the potential reach and impact that **COLUMBUS**’ work is likely to have in the next two years, but the capacity that we are building, in transferring knowledge successfully, will also be an invaluable contribution to research culture and future methodologies.”

In its first year, **COLUMBUS** has already established a “Knowledge Fellowship”, a network of nine full-time Knowledge Transfer Fellows whose role it is to carry out Knowledge Transfer, each with a specific focus area. Trained in the **COLUMBUS** Knowledge Transfer methodology, developed by AquaTT, this remote team has identified knowledge gaps relating to Blue Growth within their nodal areas and is proactively collecting knowledge from EU-funded research projects which have the potential to fulfil, or contribute towards filling, these gaps.

With more than 600 Knowledge Outputs collected to date, the scale of **COLUMBUS** can be easily recognised. All Knowledge Outputs, defined as units of knowledge generated by or through research, will be made publicly available through the Marine Knowledge Gate ([www.kg.eurocean.org](http://www.kg.eurocean.org)) and the soon to be launched EU Marine Information Sharing Platform ([http://cordis.europa.eu/packs/marine-information-platform\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/packs/marine-information-platform_en.html)).

If you would like to know more about the **COLUMBUS** project or would like to receive regular updates on its progress, please visit [www.columbusproject.eu](http://www.columbusproject.eu) or contact its Project Manager, Cliona Ní Cheallacháin (email: [cliona@aquatt.ie](mailto:cliona@aquatt.ie) or tel: 0035316449008). Presentations from the conference are available on the project website.

[Ends – Notes for Editors follow]

## Notes for Editors

The **COLUMBUS** project has received funding under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 652690. The project will run for three years from 2015 to 2018, with a total budget of €4 million.

AquaTT, a Dublin-based SME ([www.aquatt.ie](http://www.aquatt.ie)), is the **COLUMBUS** project manager and Strategic and Operational Leader. The project is coordinated by Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) ([www.bim.ie](http://www.bim.ie)), the Irish sea fisheries board. The **COLUMBUS** Consortium is made up of 26 Partners across 14 countries and has been specifically designed to address the call topic and achieve the intended impacts. The consortium is a balanced, multidisciplinary partnership, containing Pan-European organisations which represent a broad constituency of stakeholders in the marine and maritime areas.

AquaTT defines **Knowledge Transfer** as the overall process of moving knowledge between knowledge sources to the potential users of knowledge. Knowledge Transfer consists of a range of activities which aim to capture,

organise, assess and transmit knowledge, skills and competence from those who generate them to those who will utilise them.

#### **COLUMBUS External Advisory Board Members**

1. *Angel Borja, AZTI Tecnalia, Spain*
2. *Darius Campbell, OSPAR Commission, UK*
3. *Jan-Stefan Fritz, European Marine Board and KDM, Germany*
4. *Simon Gerrard, Southampton Marine and Maritime Institute, UK*
5. *Virginie Hart, UNEP-MAP, Greece*
6. *Reid Hole, Nord University, Norway*
7. *Mario Lopes dos Santos, European Fisheries Control Agency, Spain*
8. *Tara McCarthy, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, Ireland*
9. *Ricardo Serrão Santos MEP, European Parliament, Portugal*
10. *Iain Shepherd MBE, MARCOM Defence, UK*
11. *Bev Sherbon, Researchfish, UK*
12. *Stéphane Alain Riou, Pôle Mer Bretagne Atlantique, France*
13. *Fiona Regan, Dublin City University, Ireland*
14. *Jacqueline Wood, JPI-Oceans, Belgium*