

RESEARCH TRAINING OBJECTIVES AND TARGET AUDIENCE

Aims

A main general objective of the ECO-IMAGINE initiative is to discuss **ICM and GIS issues** in a **Europe-wide perspective** and a **with a multilevel approach to investigation**, that are fundamental because of the various dimensions of the problems to be faced and of the various decisional/ operational levels in which to operate.

In such a context an essential element is the opportunity of sharing experiences, of getting in touch with the real state of art both in the field of ICM and in the field of **Information Technologies (IT)**, of activating collaboration and launching the bases for new projects.

At an overall level, the initiative aims at:

- **collecting** at the international level **the expertise** of scientists and **addressing** it as a support for knowledge and decision, above all, enhancing the cross-sectoral opportunities supplied by GIS
- **supporting decision making** by authorities in charge for planning and control, offering them highly qualified inter-disciplinary scientific assistance, with a proper consideration of geographical knowledge
- **increasing the effective impact** for sectoral projects supporting additional investigations tuned to the decided policies
- **putting together** a 'sound mix' of academics, decision makers and IT experts.
- **disseminating** the work of the participant structures and researcher by means of lectures, demonstrations and field work
- **dealing with trans-boundaries issues**, for which a specific community policy is not defined yet. A meaningful example is the planning and management of trans boundaries landscapes, set as a priority in the European Convention for Landscape.
- creating a favourable environment for the establishment of an **inter disciplinary forum** for enhancing co-operation and helping conflict resolution among different sectors.
- training **cross-cutting operational experts**, able to include an interdisciplinary, science based approach in local management initiatives, by fostering the collaboration and the co-ordination of sectoral skills.

Key Points

At this purpose, ECO-IMAGINE aims to **integrate various thematic research activities related to ICM**, under the paradigms of Geographical Information and coastal landscape, thus creating a comprehensive training environment.

In particular, is to be stressed:

- the **relevance of the coastal landscape**, as unifying element, either as a resource, or as a research field, since the landscape is one of the most sensible evidence of the results of a management intervention
- the **fostering of an interdisciplinary approach** through the integration of the sectoral achievements and the possibility of sharing them in a comprehensive frame. In particular, this objective will be pursued by giving researchers the opportunity of sharing knowledge and experience.
- the **high scientific level** ensured by the participation of international reputation scientists
- the **transfer of knowledge and principles** from intergovernmental organisations and scientific environments to national and local realities
- the **transfer of knowledge and experience from expert scientists to early stage researchers** to help a mutual collaboration among them in a cross-fertilising action open to the users, such as planners, Administrations, Companies, Non-Governmental Organisations, Associations of citizens

Target Audience

The ECO-IMAGINE events will be addressed to:

- **early stage researchers**, that will be able to benefit from the knowledge experience of senior scientists, and directly establish contacts, outside the constraints of academic research relationships. Moreover they will be able to calibrate their expectations on the base of the actual opportunities

- **experienced researchers and scientists**, that will find a good environment for discussing their achievements, also in the perspective of an interdisciplinary approach. As a matter of fact, they will be given the opportunity to discuss together with experts in other different fields about shared themes and address them jointly, that is quite difficult in everyday work conditions
- **Local operators and administrators**, that will be supplied with an opportunity of education according with the state of art, either in GIS or in ICM, of a series of best practice samples and of the possibility of collaboration with some of the best experts in the European panorama
- **Representatives of NGOs and of associations** of citizens that will be able on one hand to have a general overview of the main issues about coastal areas, and on the other hand to interact with decision makers and scientists and to give valid input for future interventions

In particular, the events are conceived to offer the participants good opportunities of getting in touch with group work in an international, multi-disciplinary, operational-oriented environment. In this way the benefits and the difficulties of an interdisciplinary approach will be addressed; among these many important, but generally scarcely considered issues, such as finding a common language that allows scientists coming from different sciences to discuss together, interacting with administrators and stakeholders outside the research environment, elaborating practical solutions for the interoperability of information, coming to a compromise between the quality of an ICM programme, the available technologies, the allocated money and other local constraints. As above said, it is important to notice that the main objective is not to give researchers an omni-comprehensive skill, but to enable them to find out the different issues and the fields to consider for the elaboration of an ICM, the most suitable technologies, and to interact with the respective experts

Such a training environment will be encouraged also to foster interest towards issues and related skills complementary to the traditional scientific and technological disciplines usually found in Academy, with a consequent enlargement and improving of effectiveness for researchers and research groups. GI and ICM are very large fields of investigation with problems and issues common to many branches of science. It is a nonsense for a single research group to try to get a complete knowledge, but this should be built by **sharing existing knowledge and comparing experiences and best practices**.

Such an approach is consistent as well with the current directions, above all for as regards the promotion and strengthening of interagency and inter-sectoral collaboration, the reduction of duplication and overlapping and the monitoring and evaluation of ICM projects and programmes.

The international environment that characterises the ECO-IMAGINE initiative is expected to bring various benefits, among them the sharing of experiences and knowledge, an incentive for further researchers mobility, finally a tighter international co-operation between neighbouring countries.

Footprints of a New Approach

It is also important to underline the ethical aspects of the approach. ICM, as a matter of fact, is recognised as an actual tool for achieving the objective of sustainable development, and people involved can carry on a task effectively useful for common good. Moreover, the **inclusion of social sciences** in a field where natural sciences and economic objectives are traditionally more relevant, helps to maintain the cultural features and values of the coastal areas, that are an important heritage for the future generation. For this reason, the landscape as important unifying element will be considered either from the natural or from the cultural point of view.

Also, the involvement of local administrators, citizens and stakeholders in general, helps to better implement the management intervention on the territory and to act keeping in consideration the actual needs of the users. At this purpose, it is important to underline that most people are aware of the strict duality between the territory where they live with its landscape, and as a consequence their perception of the landscape, in the perspective of an ICM intervention, is as essential as the objective features of the area. Moreover, it can have social consequences that are not to be neglected when planning.

For these reasons, the training of experts able to elaborate effective ICM programmes and actions exploiting advanced technologies such as GIS, and to work in an interdisciplinary environment becomes even more relevant

Moreover, one of the main issues of ICM is the need to **operate locally according with the global principles** and directions expressed by intergovernmental organisations. For this reason, ECO-IMAGINE aims to foster the training of experts that, exploiting the opportunities offered by GI, are able to transfer the official directions into practical actions on the local area. In this perspective, researchers participating to the ECO-IMAGINE initiative are expected to receive a "theoretical" training, essentially by means of lectures given by international renown scientists presenting the rationales, the general principles, the actual needs, the mutual relationships and the international state of art of ICM, landscape management and GI, and to see the practical application of these concepts and statements through case studies, field trips and simulation exercises. Background lectures and practical activities are expected to be presented in a complementary way, in a highly qualified scientific environment, in order to ensure the integration between the two ambits and to stimulate the discussion and the transfer of knowledge.