



Terms of Reference

Marsnetwork – European (Occupational) Scientific Diving Panel

1. Background

The European Scientific Diving Panel (**ESDP**) was first constituted as the European Scientific Diving Committee in 2007 and endorsed as a European Marine Board (EMB) Panel in 2008, and this until April 2017. Since October 2017, becoming a panel of the MARSnetwork, the ESDP still acts as an operational platform to advance underwater scientific excellence and to promote and implement a practical support framework for occupational scientific diving related activities. The ESDP relies on the organizational support provided by the MARSnetwork, including secretariat and visibility provided by this link .

2. Mission and objectives

2.1. Mission Statement

To advance the use of scientific diving as a key research tool in Europe

2.2. Definition and rationale for Occupational Scientific Diving (OSD)

OSD is science-led diving and is needed to support professional research and education. OSD protects, conserves, and monitors the natural and cultural heritage environment. It is not recreational nor commercial diving. OSD exists in a health and safety framework that involves certified occupational scientific divers, diving officers, hyperbaric physicians, scientific project leaders, heads of laboratories, administrators, and legislators. OSD is a highly productive, cost-effective *in situ* research tool that supports and advances marine research through providing efficient, innovative, and targeted techniques and methodologies. OSD operates selective and efficient sampling as well as complex experimental work underwater. This is particularly effective for undertaking science in coastal or restricted/remote environments, e.g., polar regions and under ice where OSD can offer an accurate and reliable method for deploying, maintaining, and retrieving equipment. OSD can be used to research global scientific questions including climate change, ocean acidification, seafloor ecosystem functioning, paleoclimate reconstruction, mapping of ancient topographies more or less recently submerged due to sea level rise due to local seismic events or broader continental-scale climate change. OSD is becoming increasingly important as a relevant monitoring tool in support of policy needs, more particularly to address the monitoring requirements and other programmes of measures set out by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Scientific diving is also consistent with the international demand for a responsible, resource-conserving, and sustainable research methodology in Europe.

2.3. ESDP Objectives

The MARS European (Occupational) Scientific Diving Panel is a focused and technical panel which acts as an operational platform for OSD in Europe in order:

To promote safety in occupational scientific diving across Europe through:

- Facilitating the existing pan-European framework to **promote the secure practice of OSD** through best practice in science diving operational and safety issues.



- Promoting and supporting the establishment of **national scientific diving committees** (NSDCs) where they don't exist.
- Developing and maintaining a **European database of occupational scientific diving activities**.

To advance underwater science excellence in Europe through:

- Promoting OSD as a highly productive, cost-effective *in situ* research **tool for interdisciplinary efficient research in the marine environment**.
- Facilitating a pan-European framework for networking and exchanging of knowledge to encourage best practice in **observation and monitoring of the littoral and coastal environment^[1] and of the underwater cultural heritage** fostering advances in dive technologies and procedures.
- Promoting the calibration and standardization of the necessary methods and the management of the collected data.
- **Advancing the scope of science delivery** through the adoption of common methodologies / protocols across pan-European gradients and / or the development of new techniques.
- **Facilitating conferences, workshops, courses, and publications where OSD** is promoted as a tool for scientific research and management.
- **Encouraging coordinated training** on specific scientific and technological issues.
- **Encouraging and supporting European funded research networks** that employ OSD.
- **Initiating and developing synergies and interactions with other relevant aquatic networks**
- **Promoting links with industry** (e.g., sensors, real time communication for field data transfer, underwater positioning, etc.).
- Promoting OSD as a **relevant monitoring tool in support of policy needs**, e.g., as a contribution to monitoring for the MSFD.

To encourage international mobility in the European occupational scientific diving community through the implementation of a practical support framework by:

- **Becoming established as the recognized European Body** with responsibility to provide advice and guidance on the acceptance of existing standards within national and international legislative processes for occupational scientific diving.
- Promoting the widespread recognition of the current **European Scientific Diver and Advanced European Scientific Diver (ESD and AESD) standards** as the minimum competency levels for scientific diving at work by ensuring their acceptance as the primary competency levels for OSD in Europe.
- Establishing an equivalency system between EU member states Nationally delivered OSD certification based on the minimum competencies levels ESD and AESD and on the quality verification of their delivery.
- Facilitating, promoting, and maintaining **communication with and between present national scientific diving organizations and the National Scientific Diving Committees**.
- **Fostering links with the international relevant Occupational Scientific Diving initiatives**.

3. Membership

3.1. Membership categories (approved on 2019, May 19th)^[2]

- **Candidate member:** Creating a **NSDC**; on the way to implement ESDP's ESD and AESD as minimum initial training standards



[Initial requirement: Updated list of members and involved institutions, quality control of the initial training and of competence certificate issuing]

- **Member:** Having in place a **NSDC** in contact with a national authority that has responsibility for **OSD** and having already implemented the ESD and AESD qualifications as the primary standards on a documented pathway including the description of the quality control process

[Supplementary requirement: Published statutes, minutes of meetings and/or newsletter, name of the national certification, authority issuing certification, annually updated statistics of the national OSD activity (number of divers, dives, including incidents or accidents, given §2.3 - recommended)]

- **Statutory member: OSD and NSDC recognized by law**, as well as ESD and AESD competencies levels

[Supplementary requirement: Legal texts, official list of the agreed formation centers, annually updated statistics of the OSD national activity (number of divers, dives, including incidents or accidents, given §2.3 - compulsory)]

3.2 Membership of the ESDP should be the official delegate (or nominated representative / alternate) for OSD in a European country.

Members must comply with the national legal regulations, like but not limitative, for Health and Safety at Work (if these exist). Where possible that person should be able to prove that he / she has support for representing their country or National Scientific Diving Committee-**NSDC** (if they exist). The basis of his / her representation needs to be documented in the minutes of the ESDP meeting where it is first accepted.

The representative should:

- Be involved with a NSDC or establishing a NSDC that is representing relevant research institutes, universities, museums, etc. that have an occupational scientific diving program,
 - Demonstrate a link with a national regulatory body that has legal influence over occupational scientific diving,
 - Be aware of the ESDP minimum competencies levels for scientific diving at work (ESD and AESD qualifications) and to be working toward full reciprocal recognition of these primary standards for OSD in their country,
 - Be actively involved with the ESDP (e.g. sending details of their national meetings),
 - Inform the ESDP of any change in the number or composition of their NSDC. He / she should produce at least an annual update,
 - Statutory members must ensure that a representative attends each meeting.
- Experts on specialized fields and additional Member State representatives may be invited to the meetings / workshops on an *ad hoc* basis.

Where possible, only one person (official delegate or nominated representative) per country is eligible for statutory membership (with voting rights) of the ESDP. Communication should be fixed with the official delegate; but that delegate can nominate an alternate or other colleagues to attend meetings as appropriate. However, cases where more than one delegate per country could add value should be presented for consideration by the ESDP; additional delegates would not have voting rights (see § 4).

3.3 Role of ESDP members:

- Prepare for and attend ESDP meetings,
- Submit intellectual inputs (e.g. ideas for new activities/initiatives) and contribute to activities as appropriate including concrete outputs in the form of European scientific diving standards and consultation documents,



- Provide updates on OSD developments and regulatory changes at the National level, at the latest one month after the decision has been taken and before the end of November of the year concerned, and
- Channel relevant information from the organizations they represent and their respective national occupational scientific communities to the ESDP, and *vice versa*.

3.4. ESDP Deliverables/Instruments

- ESDP meeting reports,
 - ESDP updates by MARS in annual reports,
 - ESDP self-evaluation report during the review process (see § 4.6).
- ESDP (led by members) also delivers concrete outputs in the form of European occupational scientific diving standards and consultation documents, focusing on:
- Operational and safety issues related to scientific diving.
 - Diving as a tool for vocational scientific research.

4. Governance

The ESDP has no legal status and operates according to the structure described below:

4.1. ESDP Chair

The ESDP Chair is selected amongst the ESDP statutory members. The ESDP Chair's role is to:

- Chair the ESDP meetings,
- Oversee the progress of ESDP activities, and initiate new ones,
- Liaise with the MARS Secretariat on priorities to be addressed,
- Consider the recommendations of periodic reviews implemented by the MARSnetwork,
- Report (every 18 to 24 months) to the MARS Directors meetings and provide brief written update (one per year) for the MARS Board,
- Review reports of the meetings,
- Act in the best interest of the ESDP and its objectives.

4.2. Duration of the Chairmanship

ESDP Chair is a position elected by statutory members according to the ESDP voting procedures. The elected Chair term is 4 years.

4.3. Voting Quorum

Each nominated national representative has the right to vote in core decisions of the ESDP and only one vote per Member State will be accepted (completed by official delegate or nominated representative).

Voting should be done in person at an ESDP meeting. However remote voting may in some cases be possible upon approval of the sitting chair.

Votes in writing (including e-mail) will be accepted where 28 days' notice has been provided. When written votes are accepted, the identified voter can be counted toward the quorum.

4.4. MARSnetwork Secretariat support to the ESDP

The MARS Network Secretariat actively supports the ESDP and assigns a Science officer as ESDP facilitator whose main tasks include:

- To maintain the contact between the MARS and the ESDP,
- To assist and advise on the Organization of ESDP meetings, when possible,
- To update a dedicated ESDP webpage on the MARS website; on the understanding that the ESDP develops its own website,



- To report on ESDP activities to the MARSnetwork and ensure inclusion of information provided by ESDP in the MARS Newsletters and MARS Annual Report,
 - To update ESDP on MARS activities, future Position Papers or events,
 - To invite nomination to the ESDP from MARS Delegates,
 - To provide guidance on MARS governance and facilitate voting as required,
- As a MARS panel, the ESDP benefits from the profile and support of the Network to facilitate the growth of the ESDP into a full European platform for Occupational Scientific Diving.

What ESDP can expect as a Panel of the MARSnetwork?

- *To provide a European platform to publish and distribute vision and strategy papers developed by the ESDP,*
- *To enhance the visibility of OSD within Europe as an important and efficient scientific tool, for research, monitoring and education,*
- *To increase the efficiency of the ESDP's work by being recognized as "THE" European Panel for OSD across Europe,*
- *To stimulate as much as possible national OSD boards to join the ESDP in order to significantly improve the OSD method for European research by joining forces,*
- *To encourage its member institutions to actively seek collaboration with the National Occupational Scientific Diving Committees,*
- *To facilitate networking opportunities for ESDP with MARS activities and Member Organizations and with other relevant networks,*
- *To get an OFFICIAL STATUS in order the ESDP can approach other organizations for funding.*

4.5. ESDP Meetings

The ESDP normally meets twice a year. Additional meetings, if required, may be proposed by the Chair.

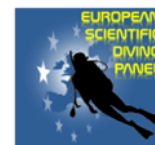
The two core meetings take place at approximately 6-month intervals in the following format:

- The Spring meeting (February/March) can be open to the full membership and associated countries/interested parties, with a stronger scientific focus and ideally hosted by an emerging member.
- The Autumn meeting (October/November) is focused more on core activities and strategic actions of the Panel.

If necessary, relatively short video conferences can be scheduled on specific topics, defined during the main meetings, or at the request of the members.

4.6 Review by the Marsnetwork steering committee

The ESDP is subject to periodic review by the Marsnetwork which provides feedback and recommendations on Panel activities based on the ESDP Self Evaluation Report (see § 3.3.) and interview with the Panel Chair or nominated representative.



Annex to the ESDP's Terms of References

Membership (*The list is updated as and when changes of situation are declared*)

Date: 2023, May 19th

Candidate members: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland, Gibraltar, Greece, Portugal, Slovenia, Netherlands ^[3]

Members: Italy, Poland

Statutory members: Belgium, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom

Contacts: Austria, Monaco, Spain ^[4]

National (Occupational) Scientific Diving Committee - NSDC

To join the ESDP, each country must establish a National (Occupational) Scientific Diving Committee (NSDC). This committee must be representative of the entire OSD activity of the Member State. It is constituted in accordance with the law of each country. If it is initially ad hoc, it must then be recognized by law under the supervision of a competent legal authority, generally a ministry (labour, research, or culture, etc.), or even the Navy. Its composition must allow it to be aware of all OSD activity existing at the national level, all disciplines included. It must be aware of the evolution of regulations and underwater techniques at National level. It appoints one of its members as the representative in the ESDP. It makes the minutes of its meetings available to the ESDP, and/or publishes them on its website. Setting up and efficient updating frequency are strongly recommended. NSDC promulgates, applies, and enforces the European competencies levels for scientific diving at work (ESD and AESD). It publishes the updated list of its members and involved institutions. It also publishes its statutes, the minutes of meetings, the name of the national certification and of the issuing authority. The country becomes a statutory member when occupational scientific diving is recognized by law, as well as ESD and AESD competence levels. Publication of the legal texts and of the official list of the agreed formation centres are also required. The NSDC ensure a documented quality control on the training and certification of OSD in the concerned member state.

Only national certificates can be issued by the competent authority of the member state concerned. No European certificates are issued due to the lack of a legal framework. The ESDP equivalence system based on the minimum competency level for scientific diving at work (ESD & AESD) is available to its members to ensure the mobility of the OSD community. Moreover, the principle of equivalence is governed by the Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications.

Acronyms list

AESD - Advanced European Scientific Diver standard

ESD - European Scientific Diver standard

ESDP - European Occupational Scientific Diving Panel

MARS - The European Network of marine research Institutes and Stations (MARSnetwork)

NSDC - National Scientific Diving Committee

OSD - Occupational Scientific Diving

[1] Note that blue water diving begins to be open to OSD

[2] cf. the annexed updated list

[3] Faced with difficulties in getting OSD legally recognized at a national level, Croatia unilaterally requested to no longer appear among the ESDP's members.

[4] Spain has published a Royal Decree 550/2020 of 2 June, determining the safety conditions for diving activities.