



## MaCuMBA Continues to Unlock the Mysteries of Marine Microorganisms

**Press release: January 2014**

The EC-funded MaCuMBA project is now in its second year as it works towards its objective of developing new methods for isolating and screening marine microorganisms using cultivation-dependent strategies. One of the most exciting developments for the project has been the discovery of the smallest aquatic bacterium ever described worldwide.

The discovery was made by the research group led by Prof Rodríguez-Valera (leader of MaCuMBA work package 6) at Universidad Miguel Hernandez, Spain, working in collaboration with researchers at the Cavanilles Institute of Biodiversity and Evolutionary Biology.

This living organism, measuring only 1/5000 mm probably represents the limit of what is possible in terms of containing all components that are necessary for life (such as DNA) within such a tiny package. This exciting discovery shows again how little we know of life in the sea and holds promise for many other discoveries and potential new avenues for biotechnology and pharmacy.

The research results, which have been published in the journal *Nature Scientific Reports*, and acknowledge funding from MaCuMBA, are important in terms of the discovery of a whole new group of bacteria with different genetic characteristics, and the possible ecological significance of this group of bacteria.

In other news for the project, the MaCuMBA Steering Committee will meet from 13-14 February 2014 in Lisbon, Portugal, to undertake a critical review of the progress that has been made by the project so far. The committee will discuss the industry stakeholder meeting planned for November this year, which is being jointly organised with the Micro B3 and PharmaSea projects, and plans for the 2014 and 2015 General Assemblies.

MaCuMBA held its first General Assembly at the end of 2013 in Roscoff, France. The General Assembly was combined with separate progress meetings for the project's work packages; a two-day local sampling event, including laboratory work; and a Steering Committee meeting. MaCuMBA's coordinator, Prof Lucas Stal, said: "The 2013 General Assembly was exceptionally well attended. It was wonderful to see so many colleagues and friends again and to meet new ones. The presentations made by MaCuMBA researchers during the scientific meeting held by the Steering Committee were all of a very high level and quality and, considering the short time the project has been running, showed a remarkable set of new data and results."

The MaCuMBA partners look forward to more exciting results such as this as the project's work continues in 2014. More information about MaCuMBA, including partner profiles, news updates, newsletters, and a project video can be found at [www.macumbaproject.eu](http://www.macumbaproject.eu).



**Photo Caption:** *MaCuMBA project partners at the 2013 General Assembly in Roscoff, France*

#### **Note for Editors**

MaCuMBA (Marine Microorganisms: Cultivation Methods for Improving their Biotechnological Applications) is led by the Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (NIOZ) and is a joint venture of 23 partner institutions from 11 EU countries. MaCuMBA aims to improve the isolation rate and growth efficiency of marine microorganisms from conventional and extreme habitats by applying innovative methods and using automated high-throughput procedures. AquaTT is the communication and dissemination partner for the project.

For more information and press queries, contact Marieke Reuver, AquaTT Programme Manager, E-mail: [marieke@aquatt.ie](mailto:marieke@aquatt.ie)

Detailed partner profiles are available on request.