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EU-Funded *BioProtect* Initiative Launches to Restore & Protect Marine Biodiversity in the Atlantic & Arctic Oceans

New EU Mission Restore Our Ocean and Waters project is kicking off next week

Reykjavík, Iceland - May 15th, 2024

In response to the pressing challenges posed by human activities and climate change on marine ecosystems, *BioProtect*, a newly-funded EU project, has been officially launched. Coordinated by MATIS in Iceland, the 8 million EUR bring together 18 partners from 8 countries. Over the next four years, these partners will collaborate to develop innovative, adaptable, and scalable ecosystem-centered solutions aimed at safeguarding and restoring biodiversity across European seas, from the Arctic to the Atlantic Ocean.

The project will consolidate these solutions into an Area-Based Management Decision Support Framework (ABM-DSF), which will be demonstrated at five different study sites across Europe, including Norway, Iceland, Ireland, the Azores, and Portugal. *BioProtect* will actively engage with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure the effective implementation and utilisation of its solutions by end-users. By raising awareness and enabling stakeholders and citizens to participate in the decision-making process, *BioProtect* empowers them to protect and restore marine ecosystems and biodiversity.

Sophie Jensen, Coordinator of *BioProtect*, highlights the project's potential impact: "*BioProtect* is an innovative project poised to address the urgent need for comprehensive and sustainable solutions to mitigate the effects of human-induced pressures and climate change on marine ecosystems. Through collaborative research, innovation, and strategic partnerships, we aim to deliver a framework that not only preserves but also restores marine biodiversity."

The project's diverse consortium will convene on May 22-23, 2024, in Copenhagen, Denmark, for the Kick-off Meeting. This event will bring together all project partners in a collaborative effort to plan the project's next steps and start delivering impact-driven solutions that effectively address biodiversity loss and climate change.

With its robust framework and collaborative approach, the *BioProtect* project holds promise and potential for introducing a new era of marine biodiversity conservation and restoration in European seas.

MATIS is a governmentally owned non-profit company based in Reykjavík, Iceland. MATIS is coordinating the BioProtect project. The Icelandic Marine and Freshwater Research Institute is also a key partner in the projects' administration as Julian M. Burgos is the Scientific leader of BioProtect.

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