



La Spezia and the research network for outreach and education in marine sciences.

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La Spezia is a small town located in the southeastern corner of the Liguria Region (Italy). The close relationship with the sea conditioned the ancient and recent activities of the town that embraces the namesake gulf. The Gulf of La Spezia overlooks on the Liguria Sea which is characterized by a high biodiversity, due to the heritage of coastal habitats, where numerous interesting species to preserve live, often a priority for the EC Directives. Therefore, along the Liguria arc, five coastal Marine Protected Areas have been instituted, two of them insist in La Spezia Province: the Marine Protected Areas of Cinque Terre National Park and Porto Venere Regional Park, both included in the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Moreover, the importance of the cetacean communities in the Ligurian Sea led to the establishment of the Cetacean Sanctuary.

Resulting from a positive geographic coincidence, six Research Institutions are located in La Spezia: CMRE-NATO (Centre for Maritime Research and Experimentation, formerly NURC-NATO Undersea Research Centre), CNR (National Research Council), CSSN (Naval Experimentation and Support Centre - Navy), ENEA (Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development), INGV (National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology), Polo Universitario Marconi (University of Genoa – seat of La Spezia). These Institutions share a long time experience of work at sea and in coastal environments according to their different scientific interests (biology, engineering, geology, physic, and oceanography). Moreover, in 2009 the Liguria Region promoted the institution of the Liguria Cluster of Marine Technologies (Distretto Ligure delle Tecnologie Marine), whose core target is the regional development of marine technologies and science.

This unique concentration of Research Institutes, Marine Protected Areas and sea activities (civil and military) brought to implement a collaborative network among the scientific and territorial institutions, resulting in a wealth of knowledge ready to be shared with the territory to increase economy competitiveness and raise society awareness.

Marine science is a general interest topic suitable to be spread in the schools: it is multi-disciplinary and offers technological and social arguments. The Research Institutions of La Spezia deal with different fields of investigation which are complementary and integrated in a complete and effective education proposal. Results are improved by the cooperation with LABTER (Laboratorio Territoriale di Educazione Ambientale – Territory Laboratory of Environmental Education) afferent to La Spezia Municipality.

This panel intends to show the activities carried out from 2009 to 2012 and resulting from the cooperation among the Research Institutions and Local Authorities to improve the education and information effectiveness in the field of marine science.

Considering all the above mentioned assumptions, La Spezia is, finally, a "cultural hotspot" for marine science issues.