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'CoralWarm' European project for study on coral reefs and global warming

Officially launches this week with over €3 million funding by European Union

The European Research Council (ERC), an agency supporting cutting-edge research in the EU, has awarded a grant of more than three million Euros to conduct a study on corals and global warming to Zvy Dubinsky, a leading researcher of aquatic photosynthesis at Bar-Ilan University's Mina and Everard Goodman Faculty of Life Sciences, and coral biologist Stefano Goffredo and Guiseppe Falini, an expert in bio-mineralization, of Italy's University of Bologna, as well as a team of scientists including Luca Pasquini, of the University of Bologna, and Oren Levy, a molecular biologist at Bar-Ilan.

Palestinian scientists and students from Al-Quds University will also collaborate on the project.

The project, entitled "Corals and global warming: the Mediterranean versus the Red Sea (CoralWarm)", will be carried out over a period of five years. The main goal of the project is to create a mathematical model which will enable scientists to foresee how Mediterranean and tropical coral reefs will change over the next 50-100 years, following temperature and acidity increase, as forecasted by IPCC, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Scientists involved in the project will collect data about Mediterranean and Red Sea key coral species. All the data collected from the stations during Scuba dives will then be analyzed from different approaches: the chemical, bio-molecular, physiological and morphological aspects. Additional data will be collected via corals raised in aquaria at Bar-Ilan University. All of the data will help understand how coral populations will change in relation to solar radiation and pH variations.

Corals are major bio-constructors on earth. They build tri-dimensional habitats, which then host the rest of the food chain actors. That's why a coral reef reduction or deterioration will cause major effects not only on the environment, but also to the economy. The negative effects will affect fishery, tourism and also the protection of coastlines that is now guaranteed by tropical coral reef.

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