

Round Table on PRIMO, an International Research Programme in the
Western Mediterranean
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Most of the physical oceanographers interested in the western Mediterranean have the common will to involve all the available observational and theoretical tools during the same period of time in order to get answers as accurate as possible to some basic questions. This is the rationale for PRIMO, the acronym (in the language of most of the riparian countries) standing for "International Research Programme in the Western Mediterranean"; PRIMO is supported by both IOC/UNESCO and ICSEM.

Several meetings were necessary to reach a consensus on the fact that, first of all, we had to get a better understanding of the general circulation of the water masses. More specifically, we decided that the first step should be to focus on the seasonal variability of the circulation; the major reason is that some of us still disagree about the characteristics and driving forces for such a signal which is fundamental since the actual working of the whole sea, i.e. transformation of surface waters into deeper ones, is seasonal too.

Therefore, our strategy for the first step of this programme is to conceive an experiment based on the available observations and theoretical works and aimed i) to specify more accurately the major characteristics of the seasonal variability and ii) to check for all the mechanisms expected to be responsible for such a variability. Next steps will probably focus on mesoscale and/or regional phenomena.

The outline for an action plan, elaborated in June 1990 by a group of experts, will be presented during this round table to the whole community in order to be improved and definitively drawn up.

