**Table S1.** Detailed information on the sampling sites of the study. The numbers in the last column (Benthic group) indicate the type of data we used from each station. 1: major metazoan meiofauna taxa; 2: nematode genera; 3 microbial species.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Station** | **Project/Expedition** | **Date of sampling** | **Latitude (N)** | **Longitude (E)** | **Depth (m)** | **Area** | **Habitat** | **Benthic group** |
| AD-1 | ADIOS | Apr-01 | 35o08.40 | 20o50.62 | 2786 | Central Mediterranean | Basin | 1, 2 |
| AD-2 | ADIOS | Apr-01 | 35o03.96 | 20o30.15 | 2799 | Central Mediterranean | Basin | 1, 2 |
| AD-3 | ADIOS | Apr-01 | 34o52.75 | 20o48.77 | 2837 | Central Mediterranean | Basin | 1, 2 |
| BD-1 | BIODEEP | Sep-01 | 35o18.08 | 21o23.96 | 3281 | Central Mediterranean | Basin | 1 |
| BD-2 | BIODEEP | Sep-01 | 35o17.99 | 21o23.03 | 3334 | Central Mediterranean | Basin | 1 |
| BD-3 | BIODEEP | Sep-01 | 34o15.79 | 19o59.79 | 3080 | Central Mediterranean | Basin | 1 |
| BD-4 | BIODEEP | Sep-01 | 35o16.94 | 21o41.32 | 3424 | Central Mediterranean | Basin | 1 |
| BD-5 | BIODEEP | Sep-01 | 35o13.95 | 21o30.60 | 3301 | Central Mediterranean | Basin | 1 |
| BF-2 | BIOFUN | Jun-09 | 36o11.92 | 16o21.15 | 3335 | Central Mediterranean | Basin | 1, 2 |
| TMC-5 | MATER/TransMed | Jun-99 | 35o42.38 | 20o08.80 | 3200 | Central Mediterranean | Basin | 1, 2 |
| BF-1 | BIOFUN | Jun-09 | 37o39.23 | 16o33.35 | 2011 | Central Mediterranean | Slope | 1, 2 |
| MET-8 | METEOR 40 | Dec-97 | 35o49.01 | 25o15.97 | 1840 | Cretan Sea | Basin | 1 |
| MET-9 | METEOR 40 | Dec-97 | 35o50.52 | 25o15.99 | 1840 | Cretan Sea | Basin | 1 |
| MTS-1 | MATER | Mar-98 | 36o04.50 | 25o17.00 | 1772 | Cretan Sea | Basin | 1, 2 |
| MTS-2 | MATER | Mar-98 | 35o44.70 | 25o06.00 | 1580 | Cretan Sea | Basin | 1, 2 |
| MTS-3 | MATER | Mar-98 | 36o00.00 | 23o53.60 | 1194 | Cretan Sea | Basin | 1, 2 |
| MTS-4 | MATER | Mar-97 | 36o15.01 | 24o06.38 | 914 | Cretan Sea | Basin | 1 |
| MTS-6 | MATER | Mar-98 | 35o59.82 | 25o42.42 | 1284 | Cretan Sea | Basin | 1 |
| MTS-7 | MATER | Sep-97 | 35o39.99 | 26o13.02 | 2273 | Cretan Sea | Basin | 1 |
| HER-9 | HERMES | May-06 | 35o40.26 | 24o07.67 | 1898 | Cretan Sea | Slope | 1, 2 |
| RED-4 | HERMIONE & REDECO | May-10 | 35o45.72 | 25o05.99 | 1619 | Cretan Sea | Slope | 1, 3 |
| RED-5 | HERMIONE & REDECO | May-10 | 35o40.67 | 25o06.00 | 1049 | Cretan Sea | Slope | 1, 3 |
| ER-12 | HERMIONE | Jan-10 | 33o37.79 | 32o18.01 | 1966 | Levantine Sea | Basin | 1 |
| ER-13 | HERMIONE | Jan-10 | 33o39.02 | 31o31.58 | 2419 | Levantine Sea | Basin | 1 |
| ER-3 | HERMIONE | Jan-10 | 33o35.59 | 32o59.00 | 2043 | Levantine Sea | Basin | 1, 3 |
| ER-6 | HERMIONE | Jan-10 | 34o01.99 | 32o53.40 | 2239 | Levantine Sea | Basin | 1, 3 |
| ER-9 | HERMIONE | Jan-10 | 33o13.56 | 32o32.24 | 2017 | Levantine Sea | Basin | 1 |
| HER-5 | HERMES | May-06 | 35o05.08 | 28o33.16 | 3544 | Levantine Sea | Basin | 1 |
| TMC-1 | MATER/TransMed | Jun-99 | 35o46.29 | 28o43.15 | 3870 | Levantine Sea | Basin | 1, 2 |
| TMC-3 | MATER/TransMed | Jun-99 | 33o23.18 | 28o19.04 | 3055 | Levantine Sea | Basin | 1, 2 |
| ER-1 | HERMIONE | Jan-10 | 33o37.48 | 32o46.53 | 874 | Levantine Sea | Slope | 1 |
| ER-10 | HERMIONE | Jan-10 | 33o38.11 | 32o32.62 | 942 | Levantine Sea | Slope | 1 |
| ER-11 | HERMIONE | Jan-10 | 33o37.70 | 32o23.10 | 1529 | Levantine Sea | Slope | 1 |
| ER-2 | HERMIONE | Jan-10 | 33o36.58 | 32o51.51 | 1465 | Levantine Sea | Slope | 1 |
| ER-4 | HERMIONE | Jan-10 | 33o49.83 | 32o47.82 | 990 | Levantine Sea | Slope | 1 |
| ER-5 | HERMIONE | Jan-10 | 33o54.64 | 32o50.31 | 1482 | Levantine Sea | Slope | 1 |
| ER-7 | HERMIONE | Jan-10 | 33o33.62 | 32o38.05 | 897 | Levantine Sea | Slope | 1 |
| ER-8 | HERMIONE | Jan-10 | 33o23.50 | 32o34.40 | 1499 | Levantine Sea | Slope | 1 |
| LEV-4 | METEOR 71 | Dec-06 | 30 o17.30 | 35.27.99 | 1544 | Levantine Sea | Slope | 3 |
| BF-5 | BIOFUN | Jun-09 | 34o08.75 | 25o34.17 | 2845 | Libyan Sea | Basin | 1, 2, 3 |
| HER-10 | HERMES | May-06 | 34o36.19 | 24o08.55 | 3589 | Libyan Sea | Basin | 1, 2 |
| HER-3 | HERMES | May-06 | 35o03.14 | 23o29.53 | 3603 | Libyan Sea | Basin | 1 |
| LEV-1 | METEOR 71 | Jan-07 | 34o30.30 | 26o11.51 | 4323 | Libyan Sea | Basin | 3 |
| LEV-2 | METEOR 71 | Jan-07 | 34o24.93 | 26o6.981 | 4392 | Libyan Sea | Basin | 3 |
| LEV-3 | METEOR 71 | Jan-07 | 34o21.50 | 25o58.50 | 4138 | Libyan Sea | Basin | 3 |
| MET-4 | METEOR 40 | Dec-97 | 34o26.01 | 26o03.99 | 4157 | Libyan Sea | Basin | 1 |
| MET-5 | METEOR 40 | Dec-97 | 34o25.00 | 26o04.00 | 4260 | Libyan Sea | Basin | 1 |
| MET-6 | METEOR 40 | Dec-97 | 34o24.54 | 26o04.52 | 4261 | Libyan Sea | Basin | 1 |
| RED-1\_1 | HERMIONE & REDECO | May-11 | 34o24.08 | 26o15.19 | 3564 | Libyan Sea | Basin | 1, 3 |
| RED-2 | HERMIONE & REDECO | May-10 | 33o44.58 | 26o08.40 | 2707 | Libyan Sea | Basin | 1 |
| RED-2\_1 | HERMIONE & REDECO | May-10 | 33o43.00 | 26o20.66 | 2720 | Libyan Sea | Basin | 1, 3 |
| RED-3\_1 | HERMIONE & REDECO | May-10 | 35o18.12 | 23o18.96 | 3315 | Libyan Sea | Basin | 1, 3 |
| RED-7 | HERMIONE & REDECO | May-10 | 34o36.11 | 24o08.72 | 3607 | Libyan Sea | Basin | 1, 3 |
| TMC-4 | MATER/TransMed | Jun-99 | 34o52.91 | 22o31.97 | 2950 | Libyan Sea | Basin | 1, 2 |
| BF-3 | BIOFUN | Jun-09 | 34o30.37 | 25o45.54 | 1204 | Libyan Sea | Slope | 1, 2, 3 |
| BF-4 | BIOFUN | Jun-09 | 34o28.60 | 25o52.14 | 2015 | Libyan Sea | Slope | 1, 2, 3 |
| HER-1 | HERMES | May-06 | 34o43.46 | 24o07.68 | 508 | Libyan Sea | Slope | 1 |
| HER-2 | HERMES | May-06 | 34o52.99 | 24o32.87 | 2670 | Libyan Sea | Slope | 1 |
| HER-4 | HERMES | May-06 | 35o01.69 | 23o36.86 | 1910 | Libyan Sea | Slope | 1 |
| HER-6 | HERMES | May-06 | 35o00.68 | 23o41.82 | 1079 | Libyan Sea | Slope | 1 |
| HER-7 | HERMES | May-06 | 34o59.01 | 23o48.57 | 520 | Libyan Sea | Slope | 1 |
| HER-8 | HERMES | May-06 | 34o41.91 | 24o06.53 | 1086 | Libyan Sea | Slope | 1, 2 |
| RED-3 | HERMIONE & REDECO | May-10 | 35o24.21 | 23o24.18 | 2980 | Libyan Sea | Slope | 1, 3 |
| MET-1 | METEOR 40 | Dec-97 | 39o16.53 | 23o42.46 | 1250 | Northern Aegean Sea | Basin | 1 |
| MET-2 | METEOR 40 | Dec-97 | 39o15.50 | 23o42.48 | 1221 | Northern Aegean Sea | Basin | 1 |
| MET-3 | METEOR 40 | Dec-97 | 39o14.97 | 23o42.55 | 1224 | Northern Aegean Sea | Basin | 1 |
| MTN-1 | MATER | Mar-98 | 40o15.00 | 25o12.00 | 1271 | Northern Aegean Sea | Basin | 1, 2 |
| MTN-2 | MATER | Mar-98 | 40o03.76 | 24o36.25 | 965 | Northern Aegean Sea | Basin | 1 |
| MTN-3 | MATER | Mar-97 | 39o13.24 | 24o58.81 | 805 | Northern Aegean Sea | Basin | 1 |
| MTN-4 | MATER | Mar-98 | 39o47.02 | 25o31.43 | 115 | Northern Aegean Sea | Basin | 1 |
| MTN-6 | MATER | Mar-98 | 40o34.70 | 25o08.00 | 153 | Northern Aegean Sea | Slope | 1, 2 |
| MTN-8 | MATER | Mar-98 | 40o25.61 | 25o09.80 | 340 | Northern Aegean Sea | Slope | 1, 2 |
| MTN-9 | MATER | Mar-98 | 40o18.73 | 25o10.12 | 675 | Northern Aegean Sea | Slope | 1, 2 |