



An Argo float being deployed from a light boat.

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# 10 A UNIQUE COMMUNITY TRANSCENDING BORDERS AND GENERATIONS

The Argo programme has been built on a unique collaborative and problem-solving culture. These values are being passed on to young experts joining the programme today.



A Euro-Argo float deployed by the Blue Observer crew.

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The Argo programme was born from the impassioned will of a handful of scientists to promote climate forecasting and to provide prediction services for people all around the world. To reach this goal, the scientists were convinced that the data produced by the Argo floats had to be shared freely and as fast as possible. In the world of science research where competition and hoarded information are the dominant norms, it was and it still is a paradigm shift. “There was a culture of collaboration and problem-solving established right from the beginning,” recalls Susan Wijffels, a senior scientist at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and one of the co-founders who launched Argo 24 years ago. “And we have been able to maintain this culture as new people come on board today.”

For Susan Wijffels, this culture of global collaboration is at the roots of Argo’s success. “One of the best things about working in the Argo world is this won-

derful international peer group of very dedicated people that are determined to see Argo succeed,” she says. Different countries or groups of scientists do their share in different ways. “Euro-Argo, for instance has done incredible work investing in the Argo data management system, while other members have lent their expertise in improving other components, from deployments to technologies,” Susan Wijffels explains.

## WHAT IS ARGO?

Argo is an international programme that collects information from inside the ocean using a fleet of robotic instruments that drift with the ocean currents and move up and down between the surface and down to 6 000 metres deep. Each instrument, called float, spends almost all its lifetime below the surface.



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The international Argo community gathered in Brussels at the 7<sup>th</sup> Argo Science Workshop to discuss the latest scientific achievements, October 2022.

## Collaboration has always been an implied rule.

Ingrid Angel-Benavides  
Argo Germany/Euro-Argo ERIC

At a European level, Euro-Argo has been cultivating the Argo spirit since 2014. “There is a very strong mindset in the Euro-Argo community to share all the information we have so we can build upon each other’s work instead of redoing the same things or making the same mistakes,” says Ingrid Angel-Benavides, an ocean scientist for Argo Germany – a member of Euro-Argo, who has worked on Argo for four years. “Collaboration has always been an implied rule, but through the Euro-Argo RISE\* (Research Infrastructure Sustainability and Enhancement) project which aimed at further developing the Euro-Argo infrastructure, putting our efforts together has officially become one of the main objectives.”

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The international Argo programme was created more than 20 years ago and many of the researchers from that time are now retiring, and they are all ready to pass the torch to the new generation,” says Sylvie Pouliquen, Euro-Argo former Programme Manager. “When a newcomer starts working on Argo, it can be a bit overwhelming,” shares Ingrid Angel-Benavides. “There are so many places to seek out information about the programme and you have to understand all the different structures involved.”

Fortunately, the collaborative mindset embedded in Argo’s community means that knowledge and experience are smoothly shared between veteran scientists and young experts. Since Ingrid Angel-Benavides entered the Argo programme, she has been working with Birgit Klein, an oceanographer operating in the same German institute (BSH) and who has been part of the Argo world for 18 years. “Birgit insists that I take part in all the major international Argo meetings – such as the steering team meetings or the Euro-Argo board meetings – and that I observe the personal dynamics in these gatherings,” Ingrid Angel-Benavides says. “Beyond transferring knowledge, there’s also a focus on transferring the way we do things in Argo, how we collaborate within an international community and how we manage our relationships with other members.”

*There was a culture of collaboration and problem-solving established right from the beginning.*

Susan Wijffels  
WHOI/member of Euro-Argo Scientific and Technical Advisory Group

With the Covid-19 pandemic, most of the meetings were virtual. As a benefit, a lot more people could participate. Young scientists from all around the world that might be interested in getting into an Argo group can attend the meetings and get all the information they need. “We also encourage each national group to bring along a young expert and to partner them with a more senior scientist,” tells Susan Wijffels.

With OneArgo, a United Nations endorsed set of actions to create a global and multidisciplinary Ocean Observing array, the Argo programme is now at a turning point. And these new objectives will be undertaken by a new generation of scientists. With this in mind, Euro-Argo organises every two years science meetings to share the state-of-the art knowledge about Argo and to connect veteran and young researchers.

### FIND OUT MORE

- Video “Euro-Argo: Transforming Global Ocean Observation »: <https://youtu.be/im4HVIK4hVU>
- International Argo Programme: [argo.ucsd.edu](http://argo.ucsd.edu)
- Euro-Argo: [www.euro-argo.eu](http://www.euro-argo.eu)
- Euro-Argo RISE project: <https://www.euro-argo.eu/EU-Projects/Euro-Argo-RISE-2019-2022>
- OneArgo: Owens et al. (2022) “OneArgo: A New Paradigm for Observing the Global Ocean”, *Marine Technology Society Journal*, <https://doi.org/10.4031/MTSJ.56.3.8>, 2022

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<https://www.eu4oceanobs.eu/oceanobserving-awareness/ocean-observing-awareness-euro-argo/>



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