LIFE IN BALLAST TANKS

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Abstract
The abundance and diversity of species in ballast water, a recognised vector for the accidental introduction of nonindigenous organisms, has been examined through many studies around the world over the last 25 years. The results of European research activities are summarised in this contribution by outlining the objectives of some of these studies, and by focusing on the diversity of taxa determined from ballast water and tank sediment samples. In total 1508 samples (1219 ballast water, 289 tank sediment) were collected on 550 ships. A total of 990 taxa were identified during the 14 European shipping studies. The diversity of species found included bacteria, fungi, protozoans, algae, invertebrates of different life stages including resting stages, and fishes with a body length up to 15 cm. Crustacean, molluscan and polychaete invertebrates and algae form the majority of species found.