

Reports of Symposia and Workshops

MEDSALT Symposium

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The COST Action CA15103 Uncovering the Mediterranean salt giant - MEDSALT <https://medsalt.eu> - has established an international scientific network to address the causes, timing, emplacement mechanisms, and consequences at local and planetary scale of the largest and most recent 'salt giant' on Earth: the late Miocene (Messinian) salt layer in the Mediterranean basin. The origin of the salt giant is linked to an extraordinary event in the geological history of the Mediterranean region, commonly referred to as the Messinian Salinity Crisis.

A MEDSALT Symposium, co-organised with the French ANR MEDSALT project, was held in Sicily from 24 to 28 October 2016, hosted by the University of Palermo. A two-day field excursion, attended by about 100 scientists from 26 countries helped stimulated discussion on scientific questions addressing:

- the causes, processes, and timing of the Messinian Salinity Crisis;

- the influence of salt deposition in the deep basin in terms of deformation and fluid migration;
- the abundance and diversity of microbial life associated with deep, hyper-saline, possibly high-temperature environments;
- the consequences of base-level change on river behavior, erosion, supply, transport of sediment, and landscape-relief resulting from salt giant deposition.

Scientific drilling is the final goal of the network. With the Multiphase Drilling (MDP) Proposal "Uncovering a Salt Giant" (Proposal 857 MDP2) endorsed by IODP, the assessment of the project is in progress through Pre-proposal 857B Deep-sea Record of Mediterranean Messinian Events (DREAM).

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MEDSALT Symposium participants visiting the Italkali salt mine of Realmonte in Sicily (photo Luca Mariani).