

YOUNG INVESTIGATOR AWARD



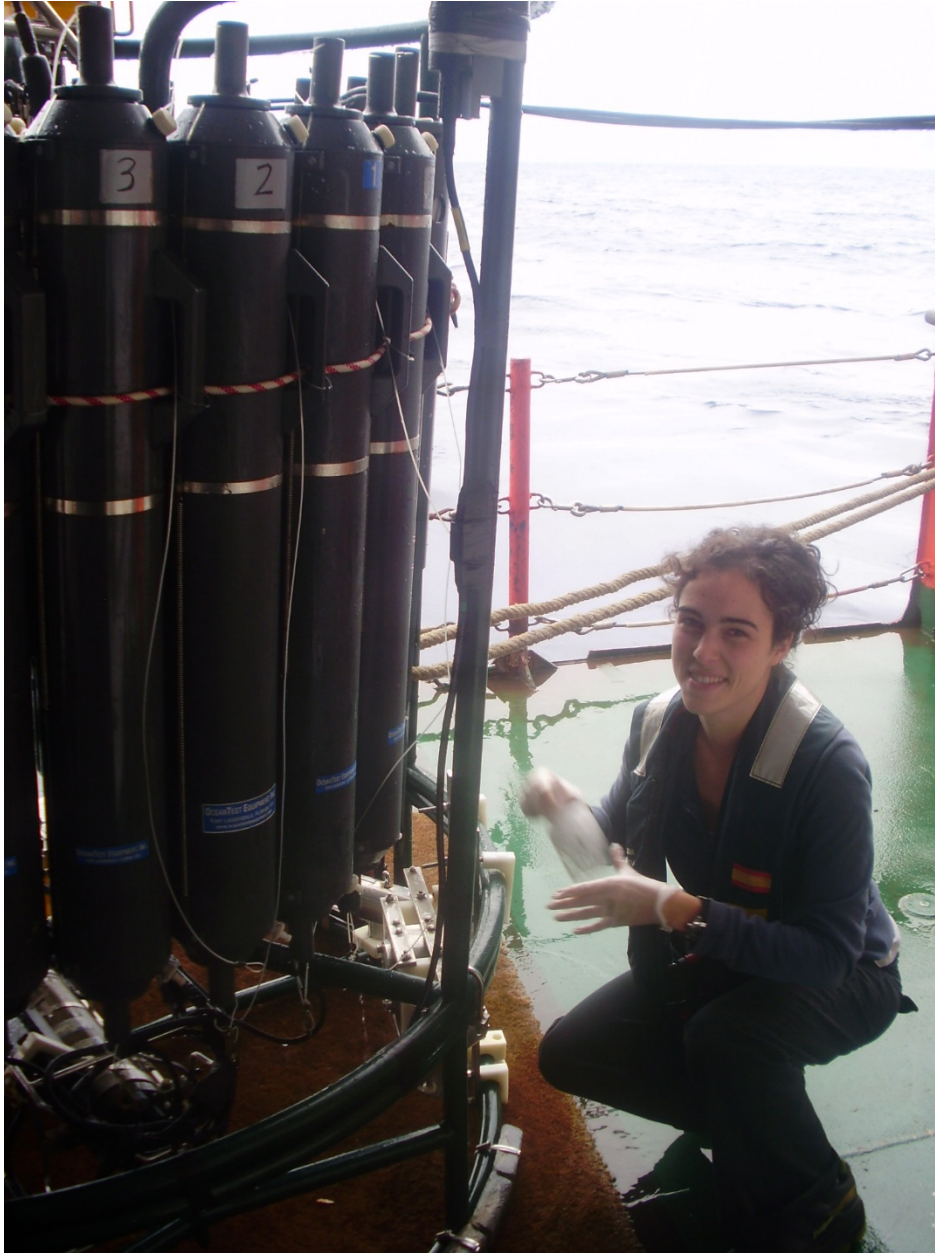
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Could you just explain, what it is you work on and why it is important?

I study one of the largest pools of carbon in the Earth, the oceanic dissolved organic carbon (DOC). DOC is mainly produced by phytoplankton and is the base of the microbial food web. I study the interactions between DOC and microbes. There are 662 Pg of organic carbon dissolved in the ocean. This amount is of the same magnitude than the quantity of carbon in the atmospheric CO₂, so, a little change in the DOC pool will affect the atmospheric CO₂ and the climate. Therefore, it is important to understand the drivers of the DOC pool.

What do you think is your project or paper that you were most proud of? Or most challenging maybe?

I like the project I performed in the University of Vienna about dissolved organic carbon leached from marine plastics and its effects on marine bacteria. It was very interesting and I think the results will be useful to understand an unknown consequence of plastic debris in the marine environment.



Caption: Cristina Romera-Castillo working with samples of organic carbon in the ocean. © Cristina Romera-Castillo

Where do you see yourself in the future?

I just moved to the Instituto de Ciencias del Mar-CSIC in Barcelona (Spain) since I was awarded with a postdoctoral fellowship to return to Spain. In the previous years, I had a great postdoc experience in USA and also in the University of Vienna. However, I had to move from country or institution every 1-2 years in the last 5 years. And it is challenging to arrive to a new place, start from zero and get your research done within the short period that your contract lasts.

Eventually, I would like to get a permanent position as a scientist and lead my own group in biogeochemistry.