Dear xxxxxxx,

I am writing to apply for the PhD position at xxxx Institute (Paris, France), for the subject « What shapes planktonic biodiversity hotspots in the open ocean?»

In 2008, I graduated from the University of Padova in Italy with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology, with a curriculum of Marine Biology. Following my first degree, I remained at the same university, where in October I am abut to receive a Master Degree in Evolutionary Biology. Through my years of studying, I became fascinated with marine environment, and marine ecology especially. I still remember with great emotion my first boat trip in the lagoon of Chioggia (VE) where we were taught how to conduct an oceanographic campaign, how to take oceanographic chemical and physical data as well as biological samples, and how to use technical tools onboard. During university years, I also had the opportunity to take a diving license, thank to whom I could discover by myself for the first time that amazing underwater world I previously could see just in marine documentaries. Living in such an anthropogenically-modified environment, what I most like about marine world is the fact that, in spite of his often-dramatic effects, man has not already managed to put his "footprint". From just a curiosity, marine environment and its preservation became my goal.

In the meantime, I attended a two-year Master Course in Science Communication at ISAS (International School for Advanced Studies), Trieste. This experience not only provided me the opportunity to practice different forms of scientific communication (newspapers, radio, multimedia, museums) and to deal with the overall of scientific subjects, but also developed my capacity of interacting with different actors: public, scientists, journalists, scientific and governmental institutions.

I am currently in an Erasmus exchange program at the University of Paris XI, where I chose to conduct my Master thesis project in the field of ecological modelling, at the Department of Ecology, Biodiversity and Evolution. There I had the opportunity to work with interesting people from all over Europe coming from different research experiences, who kindled my enthusiasm about prosecuting my studies with an international context. Furthermore, I could develop new skills in statistical analysis and software programming. I work especially in R software environment on a negative binomial model, readjusting the model by optimization search of new equation parameters with a maximum likelihood method. I could not say it was easy at the beginning, I did not know the language at all, and was be able to do hardly anything. But with a little help to start, I studied the language by myself, searched courses to attend, and become able to manipulate a script in order to act autonomously on it and provide original improvement.

I decided to pursue my career with a PhD in a foreign UE country, in order to acquire a high-level international profile. I find working in a collaboration with three prestigious institutions

like University Pierre et Marie Curie, Ecole Normale Superieur and MIT extremely challenging and as additional motivation for me. Moreover, this project would provide me the rare opportunity to join two different study fields: on one side, marine ecology, which still represent my strongest subject of interest; on the other side, statistical ecological modelling, a scientific approach which, even if difficult and not intuitive, I consider really satisfying for a science like biology, still in search of rigorous methodologies to deal with the complexity of living systems.

My academic curriculum provided me a solid knowledge of the different theoretical subjects implied in the research project: physical and chemical ocean dynamics, ecological processes, as well as marine organisms physiology are among the subjects I enjoyed and in whom I succeeded the most. My studies were characterized by great heterogeneity, but, far from being a defect, I consider it my best quality. In a project that aims to compare and integrate satellite data, virtual simulation, field and molecular data in a wide international cooperation, a person who is used to switch among different subjects and interact among different professionals could be undoubtedly of help. Finally, even if I could not say to be an expert of software programming at the moment, my master stage experienced proofed my strong motivation and tenaciousness, which allowed me to acquire autonomously new working skills, and the will to learn even more.

Given my record of good academic achievement and strong interest in your research program, I am certain that, if given the opportunity, I will enjoy working on the topics that ignite my curiosity the most. In addition to my academic qualifications, I am confident that my interdisciplinary and international background will meet your research school expectations.

Thank you for considering my application.

Yours faithfully,