



**TO PROTECT AND DEVELOP MARITIME RESOURCES
TOWARDS EUROPEAN MARINE RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES
MINUTES OF MEETING ON 29 MARCH 2011**

Participants:

- Lowri Evans, Director General, Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, European Commission
- Antoine Dosdat, Head of International and European Division, IFREMER
- Jan-Stefan Fritz, Head of Brussels Office, KDM, German Marine Research Consortium
- Rudy Herman, Senior Researcher, Department of Economy, Science and innovation, Flemish Government
- Kostas Nittis, Hellenic Centre for Marine Research, Oceanography
- Iain Shepherd, Policy Officer, Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

OPENING DISCUSSION: Marine research contribution to healthy marine environment

Corinne LEPAGE, Chairperson of the Seas and Coastal Areas Intergroup opened the discussions with a few introductory words and welcomed **Lowri EVANS** to the meeting, her first opportunity to address the Seas and Coastal Areas Intergroup since taking up her post last year.

Lowri EVANS focused her comments on DG MARE's strong support for research infrastructures (RIs) and concrete initiatives in this area in recent months.

Please see the following link for details of the speech:

http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/news_and_events/speeches/20110329_en.pdf

Antoine DOSDAT focused attention on how marine research contributed to maintaining a healthy marine environment. In his slide presentation he demonstrated the contribution made by marine resources to European growth. Yet they remained vulnerable to many factors such as climate change which was causing an increasing rise in sea levels as well as global warming. The impact of human activities too, was having a huge impact on marine resources.

In conclusion **Mr DOSDAT** underlined how marine environments were facing growing challenges and that better knowledge was needed to assess how best to confront these challenges. Marine research was essential to provide data which would help us to learn how to manage our seas and oceans in a more sustainable way. Furthermore, it was important to increase funding for marine observation, if efforts to confront environmental challenges were to be adequately addressed. Marine element of funding in the Framework programmes represented 3% of the total amount of funding available within this programme and this needed to change.

Details of this slide presentation can be found at the following website link:

<http://www.mersetzonescotieres.eu/uploads/presentations-29-03-2011/Parlement%20marine%20research%20priorities%20dosdat%2029-03-11.pdf>

CONCRETE INITIATIVES

Nadia PINARDI presented the GMEs initiative for oceans and seas and the MyOcean project, a practical demonstration of the GMEs Marine Core service. The MyOcean project was financed under the 7th Framework programme for R&D and the current phase of the project was set for the period 2009-2012.

Ms PINARDI explained the objective of the Marine Core Service to deliver regular and systematic information on the state of oceans and regional seas. The service was being used to provide benefits across several areas including protecting marine and coastal environments and in the field of marine safety. Since being set up 18 months ago, the MyOcean network had grown and currently it extended to users from 39 different countries, 35% of which were from outside Europe.

According to **Ms PINARDI**, a major problem that required tackling was that of gaps in data collection. It was crucial to push forward plans for a marine research infrastructure initiative to secure more data collection at the European level which would be better coordinated and harmonized for quality and scope. This, concluded Ms PINARDI, would in turn enhance European competitiveness in innovation technology.

Details of this presentation can be found at the following website link:

http://www.mersetzonescotieres.eu/uploads/presentations-29-03-2011/NPinardi_MyOcean-Eu-Hearing-2.pdf

In his presentation, **Rudy HERMAN**, explained the development of the Joint Programming Initiative for the Ocean (JPI), a project that had evolved from early discussions by the European Commission for an Integrated EU Maritime Policy. **Mr HERMAN** explained that the key objectives of the JPI were to support the marine research community and to bring about greater integration in the data available on marine RIs. He detailed progress made by the JPI to date and the fact that its activities extended to all European sea basins.

2010 had been a key year for the advancing the ambitions of the JPI, in particular, following a number of EurOcean conferences that were organized under the Spanish Presidency and the Belgian Presidency. The JPI supports strong involvement of stakeholders and has done much to foster these

activities, underlined **Mr HERMAN**. There are various initiatives planned during the coming months to continue to drive forward the JPI's agenda, he concluded.

The presentation slides used by **Mr HERMAN** can be accessed through the following link.

http://www.mersetzonescotieres.eu/uploads/presentations-29-03-2011/RHerman_JPI%20OCEANS%20EP_MRI_29%2003%202011.pdf

FINANCING AND MANAGEMENT OF MARITIME RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES

The presentation of **Jan-Stefan FRITZ** focused on the marine research infrastructures (RIs) and the role of the regions. He began his presentation by defining research infrastructures and went on to present a number of examples that currently existed in Europe. **Mr FRITZ** stressed that RIs were an essential tool for understanding, exploiting and protecting the sea at global, European, national and regional level.

RIs were expensive and therefore, explained **Mr FRITZ**, it was important to find adequate funding to support them. Partnerships between all levels of government provided a vital source of funding for RIs and furthermore, it was important to add value by promoting cooperation between RIs and the private sector. He highlighted how the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) was working together with its Member regions on proposals for strengthening links between the structural funds, regional competitiveness initiatives and investment in RIs. These efforts boosted the development of regionally driven RIs which in turn took account of regional specificities.

Finally, **Mr FRITZ** presented a proposal that had been submitted to the European Institute of Innovation and Technology by KDM in consortium with other partners, to include the theme 'Resources from the Sea' as a theme in the next call for KICs (Knowledge and Innovation Communities). The project proposal was currently under consideration. According to **Mr FRITZ**, the European Commission and European Parliament both played key roles in helping to identify topics for the next KICs and it was crucial marine research be covered in the next call.

The presentation slides used by given by **Mr FRITZ** can be found at the following link.

<http://www.mersetzonescotieres.eu/uploads/presentations-29-03-2011/2011%2003%2029%20Fritz%20EP.pdf>

Kostas NITTIS, presented the case for an Integrated European Ocean Observing System which he believed could be a major driver for boosting the blue economy, protecting the health of the marine environment and mitigating against the effects of climate change.

Mr Nittis acknowledged that many observation systems were already in place. However, the existence of serious gaps in the available information meant that there was much still to be done to achieve the goal of an integrated long-term European Ocean Observation system. **Mr Nittis** concluded by summarizing a number of initiatives that were underway to confront these issues.

The presentation slides used by **Mr NITTIS** are available at the following link:

<http://www.mersetzonescotieres.eu/uploads/presentations-29-03-2011/EP-EOOS-Nittis-1.pdf>

Iain SHEPHERD presented the European Commission's Marine Knowledge 2020 communication which was adopted in September 2010. This communication focused on tools to integrate and bring together marine data that was collected from national data centres across Europe. He explained that the Commission was focusing its efforts on a number of sea-basin checkpoints and during the period 2011-2013, attention would focus on the North Sea Mediterranean and the Baltic.

The presentation slides used by **Mr SHEPHERD** can be accessed at the following link.

<http://www.mersetzonescotieres.eu/uploads/presentations-29-03-2011/shepherd-parliament29march.pdf>

QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q1: Currently sources of funding for initiatives in the field of maritime activities are divided between the Common Fisheries Fund and the Integrated Maritime Policy. How is this likely to evolve in the next Financial Perspectives? Are there plans by the Commission to merge the two funding streams?

A1: It is impossible to give any clear indications on this issue as the commission is still engaged in its internal discussions which are due to become public towards the end of June. It is however, possible to provide some general pointers. All proposals for EU spending will have to be based on clear economic rationale and will need to demonstrate that this expenditure will in turn generate additional revenue. Budget discussions that will have major implications for future integrated maritime policy are those linked to DG Regio proposals and DG Research proposals.

It is important to try and move away from a discussion purely about territorial considerations but to extend this to include the sea and maritime concerns. It is crucial that we get agreement for the small amount of money that is proposed by the draft Financial Regulation to further support the integrated maritime policy. In addition, we will need more joined up thinking in future on how to take forward this policy.

Q2: How can the regions address the issues of marine research in a more coordinated manner and how can the project proposal for a maritime KIC submitted to the EIT support this aim? Can we show that expenditure in marine RIs by regions represents real added value?

A2: Expenditure in the field of marine RIs is a specific area of funding and the recent bid that has been submitted to the EIT for a maritime KIC represents a concerted effort to mobilize interests of a broad spectrum of partner active in this field and who are concerned to boost support for funding RIs. This proposal will be judged alongside other bids and the aim is to demonstrate that a KIC focusing on maritime concerns has just as much societal value as proposals that deal with other issues, for example, bids to promote cancer research.

In her concluding remarks, **Corinne LEPAGE** stressed the key role to be played by the European Parliament in the forthcoming debate on the nature and amount of support that Europe should provide to marine and maritime research. The current Framework Programme for Research and Development only allocates a tiny proportion of funding to research actions in the maritime field, highlighted **Ms LEPAGE**, whereas the EU nevertheless has a real added value in this area. Research facilities are essential for improving our knowledge of the marine environment and hence better protecting it, as well as for supporting the development of marine energies and anticipating ecological disasters. She thanked the audience for their participation and closed the meeting.