



## Committee of the Regions

NAT-V-024

99th plenary session, 31 January-1 February 2013

### OPINION

#### Marine knowledge 2020

##### THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- considers that marine knowledge is crucial especially in order to achieve sustainable growth and healthy and productive oceans, and to improve understanding of marine ecosystems and the consequences of human activities on them;
- believes that it is important to have centralised data about maritime activities in order to achieve a better understanding and prediction of potential interactions;
- points out that, in addition to their own budgets for data collection, Member States should also be able to use European funds for data collection and research;
- considers that although some progress has been made, particularly the completion of the first phase of EMODnet, a number of challenges have yet to be overcome in order for the Commission to meet the objectives set in 2010;
- believes that there is a need to develop streamlined and effective planning application and evaluation procedures in order to process applications efficiently;
- emphasises the importance of pursuing the work already conducted, particularly on EMODnet, and of publicising the latter widely once it becomes operational (in 2014), so that it attracts the contributions it needs and is brought to the attention of its intended target audiences (the public and private sectors and the general public).

Rapporteur:

Councillor Arnold Hatch (UK/NI), Craigavon Council (Northern Ireland)

Reference document

Green Paper – Marine Knowledge 2020 – from seabed mapping to ocean forecasting  
COM(2012) 473 final

## Opinion of the Committee of the Regions – Marine knowledge 2020

### I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

#### THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

##### *Introduction*

1. Considers that marine knowledge is crucial especially in order to achieve sustainable growth and healthy and productive oceans, and to improve understanding of marine ecosystems and the consequences of human activities on them. Notes that the data that is currently available is fragmented and held in separate databases by the public authorities, research centres and the private sector, and the data that is collected transcends national borders. Believes that it is important to have centralised data about maritime activities in order to achieve a better understanding and prediction of potential interactions: for example, deep sea exploration (mining, oil and gas exploitation) is a particularly high-risk activity that is currently managed completed separately from fisheries activities.
2. Believing that the fragmented nature of the data is a brake on the economic and sustainable development of the maritime domain, considers that the objective should be to improve access to data, reduce costs to users, stimulate innovation and reduce the uncertainty about the nature of our seas. Databases should be user-friendly with a local contact point to assist users, and linked to an open website that could be designed to encourage the public to participate in large-scale online surveys.
3. Recalls that it has already expressed its views on the issue of marine knowledge in its opinion of January 2011<sup>1</sup>, which covered both the Communication on marine knowledge<sup>2</sup> and a Proposal for a Regulation on an integrated maritime policy<sup>3</sup>. The Green Paper follows on from this earlier communication, and a number of the key points made in the 2011 opinion, remain valid.
4. Recalls that the 2010 communication on marine knowledge was itself a follow-up to the call for a more coordinated approach to the collection and compilation of marine data included in the Council conclusions on the integrated maritime policy of 16 November 2009<sup>4</sup>. The challenges identified in the Commission documents include: the sustainability of the EU's key initiatives in this area, especially EMODnet and the European Earth Monitoring Programme

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<sup>1</sup> CdR 339/2010 fin *The development of an integrated maritime policy and marine knowledge 2020*.

<sup>2</sup> COM(2010)461 final *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – Marine Knowledge 2020 marine data and observation for smart and sustainable growth*.

<sup>3</sup> COM(2010)494 final *Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a Programme to support the further development of an Integrated Maritime Policy*.

<sup>4</sup> *Council conclusions on integrated maritime policy*, 2973rd meeting of the General Affairs Council, Brussels, 16.11.2009.

(GMES), beyond 2014; the financial crisis and judicious use of Member States' budgets in this area and access to fisheries data.

5. Considers that although some progress has been made, particularly the completion of the first phase of EMODnet, a number of challenges have yet to be overcome in order for the Commission to meet the objectives set in 2010.
6. Welcomes therefore the Green Paper from the European Commission.

*Comments on the Green Paper*

7. Draws attention to the fact that knowledge of the marine environment and its ecosystems is an absolute prerequisite for developing the full potential of the "blue economy", which represents the maritime dimension of the Europe 2020 strategy.
8. Stresses that the blue economy needs to be sustainable and must generate jobs in the marine, maritime and fisheries sectors by improving the competitiveness and efficiency of industry, the public authorities and the research community. According to the estimates provided by the European Commission, the benefits of creating an integrated network to replace the current fragmented system of marine observation could amount to 300 million Euros per annum.
9. Reiterates its support for the concept of a European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet) and its contribution towards creating a more integrated Europe-wide network for marine knowledge.
10. Emphasises the importance of pursuing the work already conducted, particularly on EMODnet, and of publicising the latter widely once it becomes operational (in 2014), so that it attracts the contributions it needs and is brought to the attention of its intended target audiences (the public and private sectors and the general public). Accordingly, the Committee supports the introduction of a continuous, integrated process after 2014.
11. Draws attention to the importance of more precise information and data on marine biodiversity, on how various marine ecosystems function and on how they interact with human activity; furthermore, believes that there is a need to develop streamlined and effective planning application and evaluation procedures in order to process applications efficiently.
12. Stresses that knowledge about the state of fish stocks is crucial in order to design an ambitious, realistic reform of the common fisheries policy, and reiterates its call for adequate funding to be set aside for data collection in the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) that is currently under discussion.

13. Points out that, in addition to their own budgets for data collection, Member States should also be able to use European funds for data collection and research, particularly in the EMFF and Horizon 2020.
14. Calls for a more structured approach to marine observations in order to deliver more accurate indicators of local changes in climatic parameters such as sea-level rise and ocean acidification to the CLIMATE-ADAPT platform and therefore help the process of adapting to climate change.

*Subsidiarity*

15. Recalls that, for reasons of subsidiarity, responsibility for data collection falls mainly to the Member States. Given the need to ensure consistency between the Member States and the different communities of users, the EU could provide added value in the data compilation phase. National data do not tell us all we need to know about the seas as a global system connected by shifting winds, seasonal currents and migrating species. Moreover, these variables transcend national borders and the information collected therefore needs to be coordinated and linked in order to achieve the desired results.
16. Believes therefore that analysis at European level is therefore essential and EU action is fully justified with regard to the principle of subsidiarity.
17. Draws attention however, to the need to comply with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality when future measures are designed following this consultation, and to consider the potential administrative or financial burdens that could arise for local and regional governments.

Brussels, 31 January 2013

The President  
of the Committee of the Regions

Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso

The Secretary-General  
of the Committee of the Regions

Gerhard Stahl

## II. PROCEDURE

<b>Title</b>	Marine knowledge 2020: from seabed mapping to ocean forecasting
<b>Reference(s)</b>	COM(2012) 473
<b>Legal basis</b>	Art. 307(1) TFEU
<b>Procedural basis</b>	Optional Referral
<b>Date of Commission letter</b>	12 October 2012
<b>President's decision</b>	9 November 2012
<b>Commission responsible</b>	Commission for Natural Resources (NAT)
<b>Date adopted by commission</b>	5 December 2012
<b>Result of the vote in commission</b>	Adopted by unanimity
<b>Date adopted in plenary</b>	31 January 2013
<b>Previous Committee opinions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Opinion on <i>European Maritime and Fisheries Fund</i> (EMFF) COM(2011) 804 final, rapporteur Pierre Maille (FR/PES), CdR 34/2012 fin</li><li>– Opinion on <i>Legislative proposals on the reform of the common fisheries policy</i> COM(2011) 416, COM(2011) 417, COM(2011) 418, COM(2011) 424, COM(2011) 425, rapporteur: Mieczysław Struk (PL/EPP), CdR 239/2011 fin</li><li>– Opinion on <i>The development of an Integrated Maritime Policy and Marine Knowledge 2020</i> COM(2010) 494, COM(2010) 461, rapporteur: Noel Formosa (MT/EPP), CdR 339/2010 fin</li><li>– Opinion on <i>an Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union</i>, COM(2007) 575 final, rapporteur: Kalev (EE/UEN-EA), CdR 22/2008 fin</li></ul>