

4 May 2008

Position Paper of EurOcean

Information Management and Dissemination In support of the European Maritime Policy

In order to avoid any possible misunderstanding regarding the views expressed in this paper, EurOcean recalls the usual definitions of the terms data, metadata and information.

- 1. The term "**Data**" is commonly used for observable and measurable raw "values" that are usually collected systematically and result from research or monitoring activities (including socio-economics). These values can be numerical (as in temperature or salinity measurements) or nominal (as in species lists for a particular region).*
- 2. The "**Metadata**" are descriptors related to data (e.g. by whom, at what time, where and how the results were collected).*
- 3. The term "**Information**" is knowledge obtained from analytical processes of sets of data and facts in a manner suitable for dissemination and communication.*

Background

In its contribution of 29 January 2007 to the Green Paper on a future European Maritime Policy, EurOcean -European Centre for Information on Marine Science and Technology- welcomed the views expressed in the Green Paper, in particular the creation of a European Marine Observatory and Data Network. However EurOcean underlined in its contribution the importance of devoting more attention to better organise the management of information related to marine research, technology and development, in comparison with the oceanographic data centers which are more and more efficiently articulated at national, European and international levels.

EurOcean suggested that a European Marine Information Network, of which marine science and technology would be a key component, should be thoughtfully considered in the perspective of a future European Maritime Policy.

1- Aberdeen Declaration (June 2007)

EurOcean endorses the position taken by the European marine science community at the EurOCEAN 2007 Conference (22nd June 2007, Aberdeen, Scotland) stating among other issues that:

The establishment and resourcing of a European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODN) is essential to managing our on-going relationship with the oceans and seas. This action would see the establishment of permanent, sustained monitoring and observation structures, networks and the underpinning data provision, curation, information management and dissemination needed to support good ocean governance (including risk assessment, modelling and prediction), good science, a better understanding of ocean dynamics (including climate change and geodynamics), improved resource utilisation and the protection of the marine environment. Such data collection and management infrastructures and regimes must be harmonised and their long-term viability (funding) ensured by the European Commission and the Member States. Aberdeen Declaration (2007)

2- Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union

EurOcean shares the views expressed in the EC Communication entitled “An Integrated European Maritime Policy”, 10 October 2007, that a “comprehensive and accessible source of data and information” is necessary for successful integrated and intersectoral maritime policy-making. EurOcean notes with great satisfaction that the Blue Paper has well been taken into account its viewpoints presented in its contribution of 29 January 2007 to the Green Paper. However EurOcean considers that the actions proposed by the European Commission in the Blue Paper regarding **information management would benefit of a more comprehensive approach and should be further elaborated while taking into account the differences and the complementarities between data management and information management.**

EurOcean argues that there is an important need to improve the current situation regarding the collection, the synthesis, the updating and the dissemination of information generated by the marine research and technology community. A major and well-coordinated effort has to be engaged in order that critical information is properly accessible to and shared by the marine stakeholder community at large, including:

- the various science and technology sectors dealing with ocean;
- the diverse actors and users of marine research;
- the different institutions concerned with marine research and its applications, at the national, regional, European and global levels.

EurOcean, building on its experience and its recognition gained since its creation in 2002, considers that services on information management in marine affairs in Europe should:

- be coordinated on a flexible and efficient manner with the providers of data services;
- be operated on a decentralised networking basis;
- be supported by a permanent and small mechanism ensuring long term continuity required for the maintenance, the updating and the dissemination of information;
- rely on the cooperation of all the various actors and institutions involved in ocean affairs in Europe - at the national, regional and European levels.

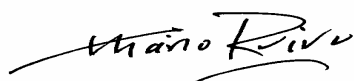
EurOcean strongly encourages the creation of a decentralised **European Marine Information and Dissemination Network** of which some of its main functions would be to:

- facilitate the access to existing information;
- provide quality control and regular updating;
- process qualitative and quantitative information;
- tailor outputs according to the requirements of different categories of end-users;
- develop and operate tools for the dissemination of information.

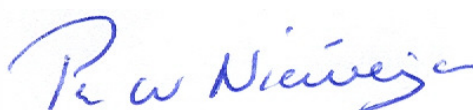
The European Marine Information and Dissemination Network could actively contribute to some of the key actions identified in the Blue Paper such as:

- *"The European Marine Observation and Data Network"*
- *"... a data-base on Community funding available for maritime projects and coastal regions ,..."*
- *"... a European Atlas of the Seas as an educational tool and as a means of highlighting our common maritime heritage..."*

Finally, EurOcean, considering that data and information management are both essential and complementary, would welcome that these interactions be given added value in the framework of the Integrated European Maritime Policy in order that synergies be exploited and duplications be avoided.



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