



MARITIME FORUM

Fourth meeting of the Marine Observation and Data Expert Group (MODEG)

Event date:

03/03/2009 - 17:00 to 04/03/2009 - 17:00

The fourth meeting of the Marine Observation and Data Expert Group (MODEG) was held on 3-4 March 2009. 19 members of the Group, 8 Commission officials and 11 guests were present.

Expert Group (present)	Commission	Guests
Frederique Blanc	Henrietta Hampel (DG-MARE)	Sigurbergur Björnsson
Jean-François Bourillet	Eddy Hartog (DG-MARE)	Franciscus Colijn
Peter Burkill	Hervé Pero (DG-RTD)	Nathalie Hesketh
Antonio Bode	Iain Shepherd (DG-MARE)	Stephen Hodgson (MRAG)
Gianna Casazza	Lorenza Saracco (DG-RTD)	Hilary Hudson
Hans Dahlin (chairman)	Attila Schönbaum (DG-MARE)	Iain Pollard (MRAG)
Yann-Hervé De Roeck	Mikko Strahlendorff (DG-ENTR)	John Richardson
Robert Gatliff	Anne-France Woestyn (DG-MARE)	Kai Christian Soetje
Lars Hansen		Thora Magnusdottir,
Neil Holdsworth		Gísli Viggósson
Remi Laane		
François Le Corre		
Ilaria Nardello		
Ralph Rayner		
Lesley Rickards		
Dick Schaap		
Henry Vallius		
Christopher Zimmerman (apologised for absence)		
Colpan Beken		
Manfred Reinke		
Anastasios Tselepidis		

All actions from the previous meeting had been carried out.

ROADMAP

Eddy Hartog, for the Commission opened the discussion by emphasising the need to clarify objectives. Marine knowledge is technologically complex but we need to understand the political priorities and pass on a simple message that politicians can convey to their electorate. In a recent meeting scientists had been presenting many analyses of the current state of the Arctic but were unable to answer questions on what the future might bring.

The Commission then presented the current status of the roadmap for a European Marine Observation and

Data Network. An inter-service consultation is underway which gives an opportunity for the different Directorates General to contribute towards a jointly-agreed position. This had resulted in a number of changes to the draft roadmap document. Especially:

1. emphasizing that any definite proposals will follow an impact assessment – especially regarding any financial commitment
2. clarifying the threat to competition policy posed by monopoly providers of information
3. taking due account of EU plans for a research infrastructure

CONSULTATION

As part of the impact assessment the Commission will open the roadmap for an 8-week public consultation. A draft questionnaire has been prepared which the Expert Group commented on. Stakeholders will be able to provide input on behalf of their organizations or in a personal capacity. And, in order to facilitate analysis of the answers, it will largely be multiple-choice. A revised version will be sent to the Expert Group before posting on the Maritime Policy web-site and circulating the information to stakeholders.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Commission then presented its plans for an impact assessment that needs to be submitted by 23 June, 2009. The Commission's Impact assessment board had examined the plans and suggested that the objectives be made more specific- currently the aim is to make marine data more available to researchers, authorities and industry. The options to be assessed also need some reflection. The Group felt that the options to be assessed should be simpler than those proposed by the Commission:

1. Do nothing
2. Let Member States take the initiative
3. Use the Commission's financial and legislative instruments

These are still being discussed. The assessment would aim to quantify the benefits of

1. Doing what we do now more efficiently
2. Reduced uncertainty for sea-level rise (using outputs from study) and climate

It is expected that freer access to data will encourage the growth of a value-added service sector. However it is hard to determine in advance what these services might be or the potential size of the sector.

ECONOMIC STUDY

The impact assessment will be supported by a study that assesses the cost of national data collection programmes, the costs to users of processing that information and the potential benefits of reducing uncertainty in sea-level rise. The contractor, MRAG, provided a brief outline of the study plan. One member of MODEG suggested that it might be interesting to evaluate the cost per mm.

MRAG will contact MODEG members from the study countries in order to fine-tune the questionnaires and identify organizations holding or using data.

PREPARATORY ACTIONS

A preparatory action to prepare broad-scale marine habitat map layers has already been awarded to a consortium led by the Joint Nature Conservancy Council. An award decision on the other four is expected in the week starting 9 March, 2009. The tenderers will be informed of the outcome of their bids immediately afterwards.

A kick-off meeting will be held on 12 May, 2009. Representatives of the marine conventions will be invited. One or two of each of the MODEG subgroups should also attend – if possible those not involved in the project consortia.

NATIONAL INITIATIVES

Iceland

Gísli Viggósson, Director of Research and Development at Icelandic Maritime presented the Weather and Sea State Information System including

1. hourly real-time information updated every hour from 11 offshore wave buoys, 19 automatic weather stations, 11 automatic harbour stations with weather, tide and wave gauges
2. wave- and weather (0.5°) forecast received twice a day via the ECMWF forecasting at 6-hour intervals up to 10 days
3. a numerical Tidal Simulation Model to compute tides, tidal currents and storm surge in North Atlantic for next two days

Viggósson said that fishermen were increasingly reliant on the information for safety but did not like forecasts without accompanied raw data. Wave heights of 25 metres had been recorded. The models matched measurements of wave height rather well but it is difficult to validate measurements of current.

Germany

Kai Christian Soetje summarised the data holdings of the German Bundesamt für Seeschifffahrt und Hydrographie based in Hamburg and Rostock which is Germany's major federal holder of marine data. Some is also held as State level. 4 departments – administration, shipping, hydrography and marine science share a budget of around €60m. 7years ago an effort began to integrate all data which has still not been completed. Soetje reported that the need to provide data in specific formats to ICES, EEA, Eurogoos, GTS, European projects (ECOOP, MyOcean) and the public was creating unnecessary work. He recommended that OGC and INSPIRE standards be adopted wherever possible.

RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES

Hervé Pero presented the Commission's latest considerations on research infrastructures. Databases, as well as telescopes and accelerators, could be considered as such. The European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) was set up in 2002 to develop a long term vision at European level and to bring initiatives and projects to a point where decisions by ministers are possible.

Infrastructures should largely be led by Member States with the EU providing some support where necessary. He outlined ongoing and planned projects as well as the Commission's proposal for a legal framework. They are suggesting a new "European Research Infrastructure" that would include Member States, Third States and intergovernmental organizations although Member states should hold the majority of voting rights.

The Infrastructures need not only be for researchers. Rather, they could also serve the needs of other user communities and could be supported by other Directorates General of the Commission. Clearly this possibility should be considered for EMODNET.

FERRYBOXES

The advantages of ferries or ships of opportunity to collect marine data are obvious - easier maintenance, no ship overhead costs, long transects and frequent sampling. Three presentations were made:

1. an overview of European ferryboxes by Franciscus Colijn
2. an inquiry from Royal Caribbean Cruises Limited, presented by Nathalie Hesketh, as to how they could make use of these devices to contribute towards knowledge of oceans and educate their

passengers

3. the EUMETNET Composite Observing System, presented by Mikko Strahlendorff, showing how EUMETNET equip commercial vessels with atmosphere monitoring instruments

There are other developments: the National Oceanographic Centre of Southampton has very recently signed an agreement with the Passenger Shipping Association; IMarEST will organize a workshop on 24 March on observations from ships of opportunity.

It was concluded that observations from the routes of Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd would indeed be highly interesting to the science community and those involved will get together to work out the best way forward.

Currently oxygen, pH, algal groups and nutrients are measured automatically. Some systems allow sampling that can be later analysed in the laboratory. The Experts thought that the EU's research programmes could profitably look at the development of automatic monitoring sensors that could increase the number of parameters measured by automated devices.

OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY

Ralph Rayner summarized work to convince indirect beneficiaries of marine data (supermarket chains, petroleum distribution networks etc) of the value of marine observations so that they would add their undoubted lobbying power to the cause of a better marine data and observation infrastructure. He thought that the main benefit would be in more accurate weather – both for short-term forecasts and for forecasting the mildness or severity of seasons.

The Experts welcomed this approach and agreed that more accurate climate forecasts could indeed be a benefit of EMODNET. However we should also remember that climate forecasting relies mostly on physical data. The scope of EMODNET is wider so we will need to identify other benefits.

NEXT MEETINGS

The next meetings of MODEG will be 5 June 2009 and 30 September to 1 October 2009.

ACTIONS

Include ECOOP in Roadmap glossary – action for us	Commission
Comment on explanatory diagram of EMODNET by 12 March 2009	MODEG
Ask Geological Survey of Ireland whether PriceWaterhouseCoopers cost-benefit study on marine mapping is available	Commission
Find out whether EU's research programme could support research into sensors for FerryBoxes	Commission
Send national classifications of marine sediments to Commission	MODEG subgroup on geology and hydrography
One or two members of each MODEG subgroup to May 12 meeting on preparatory actions	MODEG (to reply once the outcome of the preparatory action bids is known)
Inform MODEG of outcome of discussions with Royal Caribbean Lines on Ferry Boxes	Commission
Invite presentation of WISE-marine for next meeting	Commission
Invite presentation on Guardians of the Sea initiative for next meeting	Commission
Circulate draft consultation questionnaire to MODEG once ready	Commission
Support MRAG's study on costs and benefits of a better marine infrastructure and provide feedback on questionnaire to be distributed	MODEG

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