



Seas and Coastal Areas Intergroup

MARINE AND MARITIME RESEARCH: A DRIVER OF BLUE GROWTH

19th February 2014 - 10.00 - 13.00

European Parliament - Room P5B001 - Translation EN/FR

Minutes

Opening: The Blue Growth Potential in European Coastal Regions

Gesine MEISSNER, MEP, Member of the Seas and Coastal Areas Intergroup, stressed that the integrated maritime policy has great potential for growth, with 40% of GDP currently coming from coastal regions. The strategy for blue growth is the maritime pillar of the 2020 strategy for growth and jobs. Maritime transport will continue to increase in the coming years, and so it is important to prepare the instruments that will help to cope with this increase in traffic. The five areas identified as part of blue growth correspond to future opportunities for Europe's blue economy. To meet the increasing demand and to achieve a more sustainable management of fish stocks at the same time, aquaculture needs to be developed further. Marine energy is set to become an important part of the economy. The use of marine biotechnology is also very promising. In the future, raw materials available on the seabed need to be explored. Much is still hidden in the sea, and it is up to scientists to discover it. Maritime and coastal tourism is also a sector that is due to grow substantially in the coming years.

All these opportunities offer a great chance, but they must be used sustainably, on the basis of a marine spatial planning framework.

Lowri EVANS, Director General, DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, considered that if we did what Ms Meissner said, we can achieve 7 million jobs in maritime activities. There is a big scientific dimension in understanding the marine environment, and the MSFD is the basis that will ensure the sustainability of blue growth. It will help to understand what the marine environment is and constitutes the first step in exploiting it.

This is where there is real European added value. If there is data sharing and exchange of good practice, everything will be easier and costs will be significantly reduced.

One of the priorities is research. European research is currently too dispersed and it is lacking in links. We must now focus on how to orient research towards market needs.

We still lack information on the sea. She also pointed out that these data are not shared enough.

The maritime sector is currently facing a skills shortage; wind energy lacks qualified workers.

The main instrument is Horizon 2020 which has a strong maritime focus. The marine knowledge 2020 initiative is the first step towards sharing and compiling data. The aim would be to draw up a detailed map of the European seas.

She thanked Gesine Meissner and Nikolaos Koletsis for their joint work and supported their efforts to reach an agreement during this legislature.



Nikolaos KOLETISIS, Advisor for JHA – IMP for the Greek Presidency, underlined that Greece is a country that lives from the sea. The sea is part of its identity. It has therefore decided to make the sea one of the cornerstones of its presidency. The top priority of its Presidency is to conclude negotiations on Maritime Spatial Planning. The June Council on maritime policy will extend the Limassol declaration.

The Greek Presidency stresses the need to exchange best practices and strengthen links among research communities.

Eleni MARIANOI, Secretary General, CPMR, highlighted the work on maritime issues in the European Parliament led by the MEPs present. The growth potential of coastal regions is now known and acknowledged.

Allocations of Structural Funds are a great opportunity that should help achieve this possibility for growth. The Operational Programmes must make room for blue growth.

H2020 will enable this relationship between the sea and research. The Common Strategic Framework is the instrument that should allow research to provide a real added value to the growth potential of coastal areas and thus to contribute towards blue growth.

The Intergroup has enabled a cross-cutting approach to maritime issues in all their aspects and must carry on this work during the next legislature.

Session 1: New Exploitation of Living Marine Resources and Biodiversity

Moderator of the session: Isabelle THOMAS, MEP

Isabelle Thomas thanked Gesine Meissner and the CPMR for organising this conference. She recalled that 1.6 million extra jobs in 2020 in maritime activities were at stake. The main challenge of this policy area is to provide solutions to achieve this goal and potential. The sea offers an almost infinite potential but it may remain just a potential. We have used up land-based natural resources.

The range of possibilities at sea is huge: from the various uses of algae and sea worms, to molecules with remarkable properties that could have medical applications.

The first problem research is faced with is investment. Researchers cannot find investors. Outside of public investment, it is difficult to find long-term sources of funding. Basic research underpins applied research.

We must not make the same mistakes at sea as those made on land.

Naomi FOLEY, NIU Galway, presented the Marnet project ([presentation](#)) and stressed that maritime policy requires reliable data. In recent years the need for socio-economic data has been pointed out many times. The availability of viable and reliable maritime socio-economic data is limited in the Atlantic Arc, as it is throughout Europe. Data exist but they are not harmonised from one country to another. Marnet aims to remedy this lack of coordination by enabling economists to work and move forward together and create a network allowing researchers to exchange with decision makers. The project thus complements numerous EU texts, directives and strategies such as the European Strategy for Blue Growth for example, as well as the CFP. The project should also result in an Atlas of the Seas which centralises the collected data.



Fernando DE LA GÁNDARA, Spanish Institute of Oceanography, Coordinator of the SELFDOTT project ([presentation](#)) which has worked on the domestication of bluefin tuna. This stock has been subject to very heavy pressure from fishing that has put it in jeopardy and is leading to the introduction of very strict quotas. The aim of this project was therefore to improve knowledge about the reproduction of tuna and the growth of juveniles. The project helped to obtain a large number of eggs. The technique for domesticating bluefin tuna is still a long way from finalisation, as the survival rate of juveniles is actually very poor.

Joanna PRZEDRZYMIŃSKA, Gdansk Maritime Institute and coordinator of the Submariner project ([presentation](#)) completed in September 2013 and which will be extended in the form of a network as part of the Strategy for the Baltic Sea. The majority of activities covered by the project are still in the experimental stage in the Baltic. It is also necessary to identify activities whose development would be compatible with the fragile ecological balance of the Baltic Sea. The lack of sufficient data is a major obstacle for potential investors in these areas, since the lack of reliable data makes them reticent to engage in these activities. She recalled that the sea offers a huge potential for innovation, new business applications and progress, and it still conceals many species whose properties can be used in medicine for example. However this type of research, which leads to such discoveries, is long, slow and very costly.

Isabelle Thomas highlighted the need for socio-economic data, standardisation of data and the necessary time to go into in-depth research.

Question and answer

Questions

Gesine Meissner wondered what the relationships were between the projects presented and the actors involved in sea basin strategies.

Replies

Naomy Foley explained that **Marnet** has close relations with its actors.

Fernando De La Gandara stressed that **Selfdott** addresses a very specific topic and thus the project has links with specialists.

Joanna Przedrzymirska explained that **Submariner** has close links with the stakeholders involved in the strategy for the Baltic Sea.

Questions

Joanna Przedrzymirska picked up on the interest shown by a private investor in the Selfdott project, and wondered how that came about.

Replies

Fernando de la Gandara explained that it was the leading producer of bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean. The limit of this type of arrangement is that it is impossible to publish some research, but in return, this partnership provides the necessary funds to carry out further research.

Question



Stephan Fritz, KDM, came back to the notion of slow science. At the EP it is important not to make distinctions and not to set researchers against each other. The main thing is to establish a suitable platform which provides an incentive for researchers.

Session 2: Energy & Maritime Technologies

Moderator of the session: Maria DO CÉU PATRAO NEVES, MEP

Maria do Céu Patrão Nevez congratulated the Intergroup on organising this event. Blue growth is the contribution of the IMP towards achieving the 2020 targets. The blue economy currently has real weight in Europe. The Commission's Communication states that this impact can be significantly increased. Blue growth requires adequate marine planning to avoid conflicts between the different sectors and to limit the impact of activities.

Kay-Christian EMEIS, Director, Coastal Research Institute, Helmholtz- Center for Materials and Coastal Research ([presentation](#)), explained that his work aims to develop concepts and methods for coastal research. The North Sea is a very variable space where it is very difficult to make long-term forecasts. It is a hostile environment with many man-made pressures coming into conflict for the use of this space. There is a growing awareness of the links between the sea and what is happening on land, so it there is a strong connection with policy decisions.

It is therefore necessary to develop the observation of this space, and also to establish forecasts of the consequences of a particular use of the area, and finally options and tools that scientists can provide to improve the management of coastal areas.

He stressed the importance of collecting and referencing reliable data to obtain accurate projections and forecasts for understanding the causes of changes observed, and matching data collected by researchers with societal goals.

Maria do Céu Patrão Neves emphasised that there is a lot of information coming from scientists, and decision-makers need to be able to use these data. They must be able to access this information to make appropriate decisions to address realities on the ground.

Paolo LOTTI, Director, ASSONAVE - Italian Association of Shipbuilders and Marine Equipment Manufacturers ([presentation](#)), regretted that the growth of the maritime industry is currently concentrated in Asia. European industry faces competition in terms of cost in particular, and to fight against this competition it must focus on energy efficiency and environmental compatibility.

The setting up of the Public- Private Partnership "Vessels of the Future" will help to strengthen the link between research and the shipbuilding industry. Shipbuilding comes up against many obstacles which were highlighted during the public consultation on this issue. He also presented the ongoing work impacting the European maritime industry and stressed the need to develop a model of coherent and relevant governance in this area.

Maria do Céu Patrão Nevez recalled that shipbuilding is, along with fisheries, one of the oldest activities. Much work lies ahead in order for it to develop and strengthen. We need to build the synergies necessary for the success of the European maritime industry.



Ricardo MARTINS, University of Porto, Underwater Systems and Technologies Laboratory (LSTS), Researcher and Project Leader ([presentation](#)), explained that his laboratory is recent. He is working on optimising costs, stating that this should not be at the expense of the quality of the craft designed by the laboratory. This type of work invariably generates errors, and it is therefore very important that researchers in this field communicate and share their experiences in order to progress. His lab has 12 airplanes and 10 small submarines and collaborates with many institutions for military or scientific purposes.

Maria do Céu Patrão Neves therefore noted that tools exist to develop the scientific knowledge and data that can be used to support blue growth.

Question and answer

Questions

Gesine Meissner put a question to each speaker, asking:

- Kay-Christian Emeis if data exchanges with stakeholders were taking place,
- Paolo Lotti if there are scrubbers in Italy and if the Italian shipbuilding industry produces vessels for offshore operations,
- Ricardo Martins how to avoid the mistakes made by the robots.

Maria do Céu Patrão Neves underlined that synergies with the private sector are needed to achieve the policy objectives related to blue growth. As such, she asked the speakers whether there were any interactions between scientific knowledge and the initiatives being undertaken and the private sector.

Replies

Kay-Christian Emeis explained that a major effort is being made to synchronise data and make them accessible. In Germany, the development of wind energy has led to close cooperation between researchers and engineers who needed information that only scientists were able to provide.

While there are few scrubber producers, **Paolo Lotti** pointed out that in Italy this technology is not yet mature. Vessels for offshore operations are of course designed in Italy. Private stakeholders have a strong involvement in the shipbuilding industry despite the lack of access to public funding.

Ricardo Martins acknowledged that errors are difficult to eradicate, but there are protection mechanisms against these that are based on errors made in the past and which are constantly evolving. His laboratory receives funding from the military sector and associated companies, so there is a good cooperation with the private sector.

Session 3: Public Support for Blue Growth

Moderator of the session: Maria DA GRAÇA CARVALHO, MEP

Maria da Graça Carvalho believed that the main source of funding for blue growth should be through research and innovation. In the past we already had several projects in this sector but they were dispersed. The integrated approach to marine and maritime research developed under Horizon 2020 constitutes a real innovation and progress.

She stressed that many initiatives along these lines are being discussed and developed at international and European level, as well as at Member State level and spurred by the private sector.



Sigi Gruber, Head of Unit, Marine Resources, DG Research and Innovation, thanked the MEPs who had fought for an integrated approach to marine and maritime research.

The adoption of the IMP strategy, and the strategy for the maritime and marine research in 2008, were first steps in this direction, like the “Oceans of tomorrow” calls for proposals. Projects developed in this context, despite the small amount of funding that was allocated to this call, have led to major advances. She recalled that the Commission is organising a conference on 26 March to demonstrate the impacts and the potential of these projects.

Horizon 2020 identifies four main priorities addressing the challenges related to Blue Growth. We can find many aspects that can be related to marine and maritime research in other axes of Horizon 2020.

Ulrich WOLF, Executive Committee, JPI Ocean, pointed out that this initiative had been launched by the European Commission and supported by the European Parliament. Member States finance a large part of the research. Conflicts of interest with many different actors with interests in the sea and marine and maritime-related challenges should be merged, so they can be dealt with as a whole.

On this basis JPI Ocean has three main aims:

- Knowledge-based maritime economy,
- Optimising the response to climate change,
- Good environmental status of the seas.

Ulrich Wolf then went on to describe the structure of JPI Ocean ([presentation](#)). Member States of JPI Ocean have identified three pilot actions: the environmental impact of marine microplastics, the use of monitoring structures, and finally deep-sea mining. The purpose of this last action is to assess the impact of this activity on the marine environment before developing it.

Questions and answers

A participant asked how the themes of the pilot actions are identified within JPI Ocean.

Ulrich Wolf explained that they are suggested by the Member States. The three that were presented had been identified as the most relevant.

A participant asked what the link was between JPI and EraNets.

Ulrich Wolf stressed that EraNets are more focused on a specific issue and have a predefined duration, which is not the case for JPI Ocean.

Summing up by Gesine Meissner, MEP

Mining must be sustainable without destroying the marine environment. Exploitation of the marine environment is an opportunity for growth, employment and scientific progress, but cannot be done at the expense of the health of marine ecosystems.

Finally, she stressed the need to raise public awareness about the importance of the sea.

The intergroup must continue during the next legislature to continue highlighting maritime issues in Europe.