

Other major views

Views and priorities of funding agencies

Session 2

Views and priorities of European Commission

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The debate on the Future Maritime Policy of the European Union was launched two years ago by President José Manuel Barroso and Commissioner Joe Borg. Since the beginning of this process, marine science and research have been considered as a key component of the future Maritime Policy. This is recognized both in the Green Paper and in the overall strategic objectives for 2005-2009 where the Commission notes that an "all-encompassing maritime policy should be supported by excellence in marine scientific research, technology and innovation". The 10th of October 2007, the Commission adopted a set of measures supporting the future EU Maritime Policy. The main element of this package is a communication on an integrated maritime policy for the European Union, often referred to as the "Blue Book on Maritime Policy". The blue book addresses a wide range of R&D issues in the marine sector that are relevant to the Mediterranean Sea. The green paper, the following consultation process and the blue book on maritime policy will be recalled in the first part of the presentation. The 7th Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstrations activities (RTD), in particular the cooperation specific programme, will then be reviewed, with an emphasis on its relevance to the Mediterranean Sea.

R&D issues relevant to the European Maritime policy range from policy (climate change, biodiversity) to business innovation (Lisbon strategy). The feedback on the ideas put forward in the Green Paper provided strong support for RTD in the marine sector. There was a general agreement among the responses received, including the collective response synthesized in the Aberdeen Declaration, that the fragility of the seas and oceans and the lack of knowledge on their complex nature and dynamics must be recognized. Because many "protagonists" already exist at both national, European, and international level, the need to strengthen existing systems and improve collaboration between them was emphasized. A number of actions were proposed, many of them relevant to the Mediterranean Sea like the creation of the European Monitoring and Observation Data Network (EMODNet) and a reinforcement of the cooperation with neighbouring countries. In the blue book, the European Commission commits to foster partnerships and supports the establishment in 2008 of an EU strategy for marine and maritime research linking political and research priorities. The ecosystem approach appears as a central principle to address environmental issues in the marine domain.



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The implementation of FP7 provides an opportunity to set the first steps towards an ambitious maritime strategy, by mobilising resources and making the best possible use of a whole range of RTD instruments. The Cooperation Specific Programme provides the bulk of European funding in the marine domain, across a whole range of themes. Among these themes, the environment theme fosters a knowledge-based approach towards informed policy-making to address current environmental issues in the ocean, issues to which the Mediterranean Sea is particularly vulnerable. In the 2007 call for proposals, a number of research topics were dedicated to marine environments, as well as to the monitoring of the sea. In 2008, a special effort will be carried out to take forward the ecosystem approach in the marine domain and to develop sustainable strategies put forward in the blue book like Spatially Managed Areas. In the longer term, FP7 will take up the challenges that lie ahead to contribute to the implementation of the Blue book objectives.

A number of tools are available to tackle the issues being faced by the Mediterranean countries, including international cooperation and coordination of RTD activities. With a clear commitment from European Member States and Mediterranean countries, time is ripe for substantial achievements in RTD devoted to the Mediterranean Sea.