



European initiatives to develop information systems in oceanography

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Various initiatives are currently in preparation or ongoing at the European level to improve information systems in Earth Sciences and oceanographic systems are at the forefront of these efforts.

Europe is playing a leading role in the Group on Earth Observation (GEO) that aims to implement the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). The GEO Architecture and Data Committee, oversees the development of the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI) which consists of a web-based portal, a clearinghouse for searching data, information and services, registries containing information about GEOSS components and associated standards and best practices. This development is detailed in the various tasks of the GEO Work Plan. Several European projects in the marine domain funded under the research framework program participate in the development of the GEOSS.

EMODNET is another initiative to develop a system that will allow a better identification and access to marine data that are being collected, that will permit the identification of data gaps and that will shape a data collection and monitoring infrastructure directly suited to multiple applications. A number of measures have already been taken at EU level - the INSPIRE Directive obliges Member States to facilitate discovery of data holdings, the Environmental Information Directive requires them to release the data when asked, the Public Sector Information Directive facilitates the re-use of public data and the revised Data Collection Regulation has improved the availability of fisheries data. Moreover, prototype marine data catalogues and quality procedures for measurement laboratories have been developed through successive EU research programmes. EMODNET is complementary to other EU initiatives in the marine domain. Parameters made available through EMODNET will facilitate the GMES marine core service which aims to deliver both short term and seasonal forecasts, hindcasts, nowcasts, and time series and climate change scenario simulations. EMODNET will provide the access to raw and processed data necessary to calculate the indicators that Member States are obliged to provide through WISE-Marine to meet the requirements of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

Moving to the definitive EMODNET will require significant funding. Given that EMODNET is very much focused on a sea-basin scale and given the impetus accorded to territorial cohesion by the EU maritime policy, discussions will begin to determine whether cohesion funding could support the initiative. At the same time moves will begin to integrate EMODNET with initiatives under the EU's research infrastructure programmes and the Common Fisheries Policy Data Collection Regulation.

The objective is to achieve by 2014 an operational and sustainable EMODNET with earmarked funding and an agreed governance structure.