

Understanding the current capabilities and future needs for Research Vessels

Research vessels are essential in supporting marine science data collection and ocean observation activities, and hence research. Given the critical role of the ocean in addressing many of the global challenges facing society, vessels will continue to be important in supporting future research.

The current European research vessel fleet is highly capable and is able to provide excellent support to marine and wider scientific research in European and globally. However:

- The European fleet is aging and longer-term investment plans are needed;
- Ability to operate in specialized areas such as the deep sea and Polar regions will need to be expanded to meet growing needs;
- Equipment numbers, especially autonomous systems, have grown but resources are not always shared;
- Vessels are critical in supporting ocean observations and this should be taken fully into account;
- There is a shortage of dedicated training for crew and technicians;
- Access to ship-time varies by country and can be difficult to achieve.

THE FLEET IN FIGURES

99
VESSELS

Operated by 62 operators
in 23 different European countries.
6 countries own more
than 5 vessels



25
YEARS

Average age of the fleet is 25 years.
The fleet is split equally into 1/3 Local
and Coastal Class, Regional Class, and
Ocean and Global Class

8
DEEP-SEA
VESSELS

that can deploy a full set of
deep-sea equipment and
a total of 16 vessels that can
conduct some research
in the deep sea



9
POLAR
VESSELS

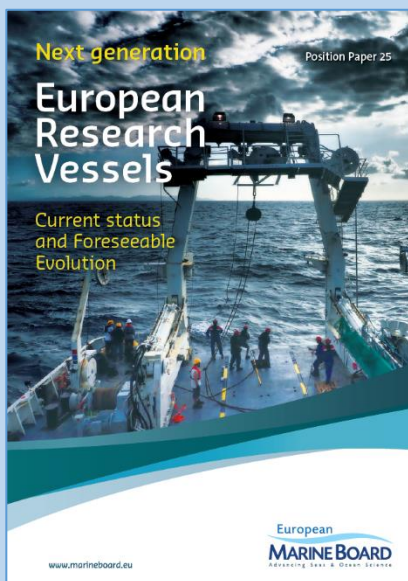
with ice-breaking capability
and a total of 24 vessels that have
some ice-going capability



Recommendations

The overarching recommendations of this Position Paper are to:

- Continue to modernize and renew the European research vessel fleet to ensure it remains capable;
- Ensure periodic collection and updating of research vessel fleet and equipment information;
- Look towards future scientific needs and incorporate support for emerging technologies onboard vessels;
- Strive for greater collaboration between operators including for equipment, resources and training;
- Expand the use of transnational access mechanisms based on excellent science to widen access;
- Establish a prominent role for research vessel operators in the European Ocean Observing System (EOOS) initiative.



More information in the EMB Position Paper 25 “Next Generation European Research Vessels: Current Status and Foreseeable Evolution”, free to download at:

<http://www.marineboard.eu/science-strategy-publications>

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