

Press-release: Marine Board-ESF Inauguration and Forum in May 2008

Leading Experts on Data Collection and Data Policy to attend the 1st Marine Board Forum “Marine Data Challenges: from Observation to Information” and related exhibition - 15 May 2008 Ostend, Belgium.

On the 15th of May, the Marine Board brings together representatives of major European marine organizations and projects to discuss the importance of marine data and observation collection, management and processing in the frame of the ongoing debate about the creation of the **European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODNET)** and its links to various initiatives, such as ESONET, EMSO, MerSEA, ECOOP, Euro-ARGO, EuroSITES, SeaDataNet, etc.

“It is essential at this moment to address such a topic” said Mr. Lars Horn, the Chair of the Marine Board *“especially as many European and national policy makers do not have a vision of the value and structure of systems such as EMODNET for which the European Commission will establish a roadmap in 2008 and an action plan in 2009.”*

The relevance of measurement and sampling at sea, and the need to disseminate the results as widely and in as user-friendly a manner as possible, cannot be overestimated. More services and products useful to industry, the general public and policy makers, could, and should, be extracted from databases. There are many applications of data-management that relate to climate and weather, safety at sea and along the coast, fisheries, offshore activities, management of the seas, etc.

Currently responsibility for collecting data in Europe's seas and oceans is shared between a fragmented patchwork of regional, national, public and private organisations. Assembling this data into a coherent framework is a fundamental first step in planning new economic activities on the sea or monitoring ecosystem health. As a result many valuable data are now inaccessible because of how, why and by whom they were collected and how and where they are now held. These datasets need to be unlocked and made easily accessible so that they can be used in new ways.

The 1st Marine Board Forum coincides with the official Inauguration of the Marine Board's new facilities in Ostend, Belgium, part of the InnovOcean site. The inauguration will be held on 14 May immediately prior to the Forum and related exhibition. The InnovOcean site is becoming an expanding node of synergies housing amongst others the Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ), UNESCO/IOC's project office for International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange (IODE) and the secretariat of the European Fisheries and Aquaculture Research Organisation (EFARO). This unique co-location of marine science institutes and international organisations facilitates interactions across different marine science fields, exchanges of dedicated information and specific expertise and synergies along with the development of joint activities at different levels (regional, national, European and international). On 17 May the InnovOcean site will be open to the public at large from 10.00 to 18.00.

Journalists who wish to attend the forum please contact:

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