



Towards a new marine dimension for Europe through research and technological development

This report was prepared by a Working Group set up at the initiative of Portugal and composed of European experts designated by their governments. The report was adopted by the Working Group on 4 May 2000 and was presented by the Portuguese Minister for Research and Technology, José Mariano Gago, to the Research Council of the European Union on 15 June 2000.

Executive Summary

1. A process of consultation with the 15 Member States and the EFTA countries and the European Commission was initiated in 1998 by Portugal with the support of France. The initial objective was to consider the conditions for the eventual establishment of a co-ordinating mechanism such as a European Ocean Agency. Four meetings took place in Lisbon (13-14 July 1998, 23 November 1998, 27 November 1999, 4 May 2000), chaired by Professor Mario Ruivo.
2. Several background documents were prepared on behalf of Portugal's request: *European Research in Marine S&T; A survey of European maritime organisations and programmes; Main scientific and technological challenges in relationship with European marine policies; A European Ocean Agency: situation of European co-operation, rationale for its creation; Elements for the Establishment of a European Ocean Agency.*
3. The discussions of the group were oriented by the concern to identify the gaps in the European area of marine science and technology while making sure that there would not be any duplication of functions or objectives by already existing European institutions and agencies. While the need for the creation of a new Agency was not considered essential, the importance of information, co-ordination and networking of marine sciences and technology was considered paramount.
4. At its last meeting (4 May 2000) the Working Group unanimously approved the report *Towards a New Marine Dimension for Europe through Research and Technological Development.*
5. The main conclusions of the Working Group are:
 - i. Recognition of the timeliness of encouraging networks among existing national and European marine research and technology institutions, programmes and activities.
 - ii. Stimulate concerted actions in marine science and technology.
 - iii. Recognition of the benefit of a focal point for information on marine science and technology which could :
 - facilitate access to relevant data and information;
 - provide access and develop quantitative indicators, including socio-economic data;
 - compile and prepare information on trends on marine S&T;



- help prepare syntheses to decision-makers;
 - facilitate access to information to enhance co-operation between scientific and technological institutions, industry and other stakeholders;
 - contribute to public awareness and educational programmes on marine issues.
6. The working group recognised that more work is needed and stressed the importance of pursuing it, so as not to lose the momentum and the existing encouraging trends regarding European research as a whole.

Background

The 1998 International Year of the Ocean drew the attention of the world to the importance of the oceans for the future well-being of humankind and life on our planet. In this context, the Portuguese Minister for Science and Technology took the initiative of starting informal consultations with his peers on the need for a more cohesive and efficient European co-operation in marine science and technology through improved institutional arrangements, having in mind, among other objectives, better support for the formulation of European marine policies and industrial competitiveness.

Two meetings attended by representatives of European governments took place in Lisbon, 13-14 July and 23 November 1998, to discuss this issue. The views expressed during these meetings showed different perspectives regarding the Portuguese proposal for the creation of a European Ocean Agency. While some countries recognised the value of the proposal, others expressed reservations, while others stated that they did not see a need for such a mechanism. As recommended in the meetings, European organisations involved in marine affairs were consulted. A few responded, reacting in a positive way, while advising that duplication of activities should be avoided.

On the basis of the outcome of this preliminary assessment, the Portuguese Minister for Science and Technology set up a Working Group of European experts (28 June 1999) designated by their governments with the objective to consider a proposal for the creation of a European mechanism focused on marine science and technology. The Working Group should report to Minister Mariano Gago by beginning of May 2000 so that the European Ministers for Science and Technology could discuss a proposal, by June 2000, during the Portuguese presidency of the EU.

At its first meeting (27 November 1999), different views on the Portuguese proposal were expressed. Some countries were in favour, while others had strong reservations regarding the creation of a new body since a number of European and international organisations dealing with marine issues in Europe already existed. The Working Group established a plan of activities including identification of possible existing gaps in European co-operation in marine science and technology and definition of objectives and functions of a new mechanism aiming at overcoming those gaps, as well as its structure, organisation and financial support.

A document entitled *Towards a new maritime dimension for Europe through research and technological development*, dealing with the rationale, objectives and functions of a new mechanism, was discussed at the second meeting of the Working Group (11 February 2000).

A third meeting of the Working Group of Experts took place in Lisbon on 4 May 2000 to conclude the discussions and adopt the present report.

The Working Group was guided in its deliberations by the political initiatives for enhancing European co-operation in marine affairs (see appendix 1) and noted the recent joint meeting (22 March 2000) of the Commission for Science and Technology of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Committee for Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy of the European Parliament on 'Scientific and economic challenges for the exploitation of the seas'.



Rationale

The role of the ocean in world economic and social development, and in the maintenance of the global life support system, has been abundantly demonstrated in recent literature. Ocean transportation has nearly doubled since 1975 and the economic return from activities such as fishing, oil and gas exploration and tourism has increased significantly. The combined effect of economic opportunity and agreeable living conditions in coastal areas has led to an unprecedented increase in population and urbanisation. The ocean's major contribution control of weather and climate conditions is recognised, and the estimated value of ecological services of ocean and coastal ecosystems and resources indicates the decisive role of the marine environment and resources in the global life support system. Irreversible disruption of the ocean and coastal environments and resources may, therefore, have serious consequences for the sustainability of the global system.

In Europe, important scientific and technological challenges in relation to policy development have been identified in preparatory documents (*Main scientific and technological challenges in relationship with European marine policies* and *A European Ocean Agency: situation of European cooperation, rationale for its creation*, November 1998) as having the following common features:

- importance and need for integrated and long term approaches to major ocean issues;
- interplay between scientific, technological and socio-economic dimensions;
- increasing interdependence between science and technological development;
- growing concern about sustainability in exploitation of resources;
- impact of new technologies and industrial development, and the pressures of urban growth on the marine environment;

- adherence to the precautionary principle as an essential instrument for preservation of coastal and marine systems;
- necessity of interaction between scientists, industry, the public and policy-makers (EU, states and local governments).

Considering existing programmes and activities of European institutions and organisations, dealing with marine science and technology and their applications, one may make several observations:

- Europe has a broad competence in almost all specific areas of marine research and technology including relevant issues with a European dimension. There are, however, a number of areas in European marine science and technology which would benefit from a more integrated approach. This would in turn benefit research on sustainable fisheries, aquaculture, marine biotechnology, integrated approaches to coastal management, etc...
- The rich diversity of European institutions and organisations is certainly an asset for Europe that should be preserved and mobilised. It could be further promoted by an information network to give easy access to policy makers and the private sector to relevant expertise, in particular with regard to complex and highly integrated marine issues.
- Socio-economic data, indicators and comprehensive syntheses are lacking at European level. The circulation of information and data on various marine issues remain problematic among European interested parties.

Thus, the present situation in Europe on marine science and technology would benefit from:

- improved convergence of European activities in marine science and technology;
- a more coherent and efficient mobilisation of Europe's potential;
- enhanced synergy and continuity of efforts.



Forward look: a new dimension for European cooperation

The Working Group supported encouraging networks among existing national and European marine research and technology institutions, programmes and activities to stimulate concerted actions. These networks could benefit from a focal point for information on marine science and technology. Such information mechanism is expected to provide data and information products targeted at a wide range of end users (administrations, industry, local authorities, NGOs, etc.) who may experience difficulty in accessing and assessing data and information.

This information mechanism should have the following functions:

- Facilitate the access to consolidated and integrated relevant data and information on research activities and technological development in co-operation with existing national, European and global institutions;
- Provide access to and stimulate the development of quantitative indicators, socio-economic data and any other related data;
- Compile and prepare information on trends on marine research and technology;
- Contribute to the preparation of syntheses requested by decision makers;
- Facilitate access to information to enhance cooperation between scientific and technological institutions, industry and other stakeholders;
- Contribute to public awareness and educational programmes on the importance of marine issues for the future of Europe.

The Working Group recognised that, due to the limited time available, it was not possible to consider the *modus operandi* of the information mechanism. Appropriate functional arrangements to this effect should be considered in due time.

Conclusions

1. The Working Group acknowledges the exploratory work initiated by Portugal with the support of France. It recognises that more work is needed and stresses the importance to pursue it, so as to not to lose the momentum and the existing encouraging trends regarding European research as a whole.
2. The Working Group recommends that, within the framework of the EU Communication *Towards a European Research Area*, a project be considered on advanced cooperation in European marine science and technology, in particular using the FP 5 opportunities.
3. The Working Group recognises the timeliness of encouraging networks among existing national and European marine research and technology institutions, programmes and activities to stimulate concerted actions and recognises that these networks could benefit from a focal point for information on marine science and technology with the functions referred to in the Report. It agrees that it is premature to comment on the detailed structure and *modus operandi* and on the appropriate arrangements of such a mechanism.



Appendix 1

General context

The Council of Europe commissioned several reports on European maritime affairs (environment, fisheries, science and technology, industry) in 1998 and the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe at its meeting on 8-9 September 1999 “supported the initiative of Portugal aiming at creating a European Ocean Agency and that this initiative should be developed by interested States”.

A summary of the Communication of Commissioner Busquin, launched in January 2000, on a ‘European Research Area’ was presented to the 2nd meeting of experts. The Working Group noted that there was a parallel between the ideas expressed in the Communication (networks of excellence, research infrastructures, benchmarking for the implementation of policies and mobility of researchers) and the objectives of the Portuguese initiative for a mechanism to enhance marine cooperation and competitiveness.

At its meeting on 22 March 2000 on the ‘Scientific and economic challenges for the exploitation of the seas’, the Committee for Industry, External Trade, Research and

Energy of the European Parliament met with the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly’s Commission on Science and Technology and the debate pointed out the timeliness of developing a European ocean policy and improving related institutional arrangements.

In the Presidency conclusions of the Lisbon Summit in Lisbon on 23 and 24 March 2000, “the European Council asks the Council and the Commission, together with the Member States where appropriate, to take the necessary steps as part of the establishment of a European Research Area to:

- develop appropriate mechanisms for networking national and joint research programmes on a voluntary basis around freely chosen objectives, in order to take greater advantage of the concerted resources devoted to R&D in the Member States,....
- Encourage the development of an open method of coordination for benchmarking national research and development policies and identify, by June 2000, indicators for assessing performance in different fields, in particular with regard to the development of human resources; introduce by June 2001 a European innovation scoreboard,....”

Appendix 2

Participants in the meetings of the Working Group of Experts on the Proposal to set up a European Ocean Agency

- **Meeting 1:** 27 November 1999 • **Meeting 2:** 11 February 2000 • **Meeting 3:** 4 May 2000

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Appendix 3

List of the documents related to the creation of a European marine mechanism

All these documents are available on the following Web page: <http://www.iccti.mct.pt>

1. Documents related to the initiative of Portugal

13-14 July 1998

Document prepared for the meeting on informal consultations on the proposal to establish an European Ocean Agency: *Memorandum for the creation of a European Maritime Agency*

28 October 1998

Summary notes of the Chairman on Informal consultations on the proposal to establish a European Ocean Agency (Lisbon, 13-14 July 1998)

23 November 1998

Documents prepared for the 2nd Preparatory meeting on the proposal to establish a European Ocean Agency

- *The European research in marine S&T: A survey of European maritime organisations and programmes*
- *Main scientific and technological challenges in relationship with European marine policies*
- *A European Ocean Agency: situation of European cooperation, rationale for its creation*
- *Elements for the establishment of a European Ocean Agency*

4 December 1998

Chairman's summary notes: 2nd Preparatory meeting on the proposal to establish a European Ocean Agency (Lisbon, 23 November 1998)

Early 1999

- *Memorandum for a European Ocean Agency*
- *Draft Memorandum of Understanding for the creation of a European Ocean Agency*

23 December 1999

Chairman's summary notes: First meeting of the Working Group on the proposal on setting up a European Ocean Agency (27 November 1999)

11 February 2000

Document prepared for the 2nd meeting of the Working Group on the proposal on setting up a European Ocean Agency: *Towards a new maritime dimension for Europe through research and technological development*

2. Documents related to the initiative of the Council of Europe

April 1998

Proceedings of the Parliamentary Conference on the Oceans, Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie, Paris, 19 March 1998

September 1998

- *Future challenges in European maritime science and technology (report by Mr Roseta, Committee for Science and Technology, Doc.8164, 7 September 1998)*
- *Sustainable exploitation of living marine resources (report by Mr Carvalho, Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, Doc.8165, 9 September 1998)*
- *The oceans: state of the marine environment and new trends in international law of the sea (report by Mrs Blunck, Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities, Doc. 8177, 9 September 1998)*
- *Parliamentary Assembly: Summary record of the meeting on the Oceans, Lisbon, 31 August- 1 September 1998*

Recommendations adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly on 24 September 1998:

- Resolution 1168 (1998) and Recommendation 1387 (1998): Future challenges in European maritime science and technology
- Resolution 1169 (1998) and Recommendation 1388 (1998): The Oceans: state of the marine environment and new trends in international law of the sea
- Resolution 1170 (1998): Sustainable exploitation of living marine resources

April 1999

Oceans: Debates of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 175 p.

8-9 September 1999

Document 8515 adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

