

Feedback from the EOOS Steering Group to the [EU inception impact assessment on Ocean Observation](#) (19 November 2020)

The achievement of the European Green Deal is time sensitive. The seas and ocean are common resources, as water and animals are not constrained by national borders. The European Ocean Observing System framework (EOOS, <http://www.eoos-ocean.eu>) Steering Group (<http://www.eoos-ocean.eu/eoos-steering-committee-members/>) welcomes the European Commission's efforts to achieve coherent ocean observations in Europe by coordinating within and between Member States. Although a centralized ocean observation approach would benefit all Member States and Associated Countries, we should not expect this initiative to require all Member States to agree on a common observing approach, as this is an unrealistic aim.

A common and overarching understanding of ocean observations and the need for integration and data sharing will lead to a better use of technologies and information for different purposes (research, monitoring, services). This initiative would improve the efficient use of public funds for ocean observation, creating both economic and social benefits. The harmonization of information on what ocean variables are measured where, how often, and by whom, using standards such as the Essential Ocean Variables (EOVs), and what is required by different marine Directives, would get us closer to achieving the goals of the EU 2030 Biodiversity Strategy, the implementation of a Digital Twin Ocean, and the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

Current efforts exist to integrate and optimise different ocean observation initiatives (e.g. EU projects EuroSea, JERICO), but Europe and its marine environment would benefit from a harmonised and overarching approach to ocean observations, including through improved integration and increased sustainability of the observing system, and clearer reporting. We encourage the European Commission to recommend that EU Members States and Associated countries reinforce national coordination and sustainability discussions in this framework, especially given that at present only 28% of systems (<https://insitu.copernicus.eu/library/reports/Sustainabilitysurveyupdatedreportfinal.pdf>) have clear long-term funding to ensure their sustainability. Furthermore, increased integration and oversight at European level would help to address current imbalance in the distribution of the ocean observing system across European waters. We find the broad definition used for marine observation, including all survey/monitoring/sampling currently conducted for different purposes to be beneficial for this initiative. The system should also be fit-for-purpose, with analysis carried out to understand what this entails.

In addition, the integration of different legal instruments and policies on observation activities, e.g. for MSFD and relevant conventions to which the EU is a party, could clarify their relation to the objectives of national, European, regional and international policies, and connect the competent governing bodies with interest in the ocean. Such integration will also allow a better assessment of the reasons why the current efforts to improve the health of the ocean do not translate into achieving the objectives. Lessons can be learnt from previous marine Directives (e.g. MSFD, WFD), analysing what was intended by the Directive



and what was in reality achieved through implementation by Member States, to ensure that an eventual approach on ocean observations is successful in its ambitions.

In addition to the funding by Member States, who bear most of the costs of observing systems and who should continue to do so, we consider that additional direct EU funding/co-funding will be required for pan-European and global aspects as well as for coordination. There should however be consideration of where the funding would come from, to whom it would be provided, and for what purposes. International-level engagement with GOOS and GEO should be ensured, with European-level coordination and funding to support this.