

Feedback from European Marine Board to the [EU inception impact assessment on Ocean Observation](#) (18 November 2020)

We welcome the European Commission's efforts to centralise the information on what ocean variables are measured where, how often, and by whom. We also find the broad definition used for marine observation, including all survey and monitoring campaigns and sampling programmes currently conducted for different purposes (e.g. military, environmental and fisheries monitoring, research, navigation, etc.) beneficial. The aim of the European Commission to simplify the reporting by national authorities is also appreciated.

Even though the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (UNESCO-IOC) has made a collaborative international effort in creating a system of programmes under the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS), ocean observing is still mainly financed nationally. As a consequence of the historic approach to understanding and managing the ocean, countries fund and programme ocean observations according to their national priorities and interests. However, many countries do not have a clear overview on what variables are being measured by which of their competent institutions and programmes.

Current efforts like EOOS (European Ocean Observing System) exist to coordinate different ocean observation initiatives by sectors, or at national or regional levels, but Europe and its marine environment would benefit from a harmonised and overarching approach to reporting the ocean observations made, which in turn could trigger closer collaboration and sharing between EU Member States and Associated Countries. We encourage the European Commission to recommend to the EU Members States and Associated countries to reinforce national coordination, sustainability and FAIR data discussions in this framework.

In addition, the integration of different legal instruments and policies could simplify the overarching conflicting objectives of national, European, regional and international policies, and connect the competent governing bodies with interest in the ocean. Such integration will also highlight the reasons why the current efforts to improve the health of the ocean do not translate into achieving the objectives. In addition, this will be an opportunity to check the design of current ocean observations programmes and include new, augmented or currently not integrated ocean observations such as biodiversity and ecosystem functioning observations.

The achievement of the European Green Deal is time sensitive. We therefore strongly recommend that the EU institutes an instrument to ensure uniform, direct, quick and simpler implementation, in close cooperation with the Member States. As mentioned before, Member States are the funders and implementers of ocean observation in Europe, and therefore, key to endure the success of this initiative. Careful discussions need to be considered to avoid this initiative becoming a very large financial burden on the EU.

Still, the seas and ocean are common European resources, as water and animals are not controlled by national borders. A centralized ocean observation approach would benefit all EU Member States and Associated Countries. Inaction cannot be an option. A non-binding regulation will mean a continuation of

uncoordinated and inefficient ocean observations, and will result in scattered, incomplete and delayed information.

Finally, this initiative would likely improve the efficiency in 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, 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.