

11 December 2024

RE: Marine Science to support EU's competitive edge in research and innovation

Dear Commissioner Ekaterina Zaharieva,

With this letter, the [European Marine Board](#) (EMB) wants to congratulate you on your appointment as EU Commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation. We also want to make you aware of the work of the EMB that can help you in addressing the mission with which President von der Leyen has entrusted you.

The EMB is the leading European think-tank in marine science policy, a unique strategic pan-European Forum for seas and Ocean research and technology. We represent the 38 foremost marine research organisations in Europe, supported by the knowledge of more than 10,000 marine scientists, engineers and technologists. Our flagship foresight document, [Navigating the Future VI \(NFVI\)](#), published in October 2024, provides the newest marine scientific advice to help us all to achieve a secure, prosperous and democratic Europe.

NFVI provides robust, independent scientific knowledge on the critical role the Ocean plays in the wider Earth system. It emphasises the importance of a multidisciplinary approach and appropriate governance to protect the Ocean and ensure that the Ocean continues to be healthy. This will be critical for your task of leading on the preparation of a multi-disciplinary strategy for European Life Sciences. NFVI also provides research and policy recommendations to ensure the Ocean continues to provide the services society requires, and that it can support us in addressing the climate, fresh water and biodiversity crises. These recommendations include training people to collaborate; sustained Ocean observations; open, accessible and digitised data, and their integration into Digital Twins of the Ocean; and sustained, long-term research funding. These recommendations will be important for developing a strategy for a European AI Research Council which the President has asked you to create.

The European Marine Board also lead the [Vigo Declaration](#), which was signed by all the European marine science networks and endorsed by the European marine science community at the EurOCEAN 2023 Conference (10-11 October 2023, Vigo, Spain). The Vigo Declaration underscores the urgent need for integrated land-sea policies, sustained and coordinated Ocean observation, and committed citizen engagement to address the pressing issues of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. By adopting these recommendations, the EU will lead on promoting social and economic justice, ensure global equity and sustainability, and achieve the goals of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. Implementing these strategies will not only align with the EU Mission to "Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030" but also strengthen the resilience of Europe's coastal communities, and the leadership of the EU in global Ocean governance. Your support and action on these recommendations will be crucial in securing a sustainable and prosperous future for our shared Ocean and the communities that depend on it.

We would therefore request that the European Commission prioritises and works towards the recommendations highlighted in the Vigo Declaration and re-iterated in the European Marine Board's foresight document Navigating the Future VI.

We would also like to highlight the role that the European Marine Board plays, as the voice of marine science in Europe, in international research and innovation cooperation, and the active involvement of its members in the Horizon Europe programme and the EU Mission to "Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030". We also support the next generation of researchers with the [EMB Young Ambassador Programme](#) and the network of EMB Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs) by providing a platform to strengthen and incentivise cooperation, and to engage with EU policies and initiatives.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these topics in the coming months, and to explore how the European Marine Board can support you in addressing the Mission that President von der Leyen has entrusted to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fiona Grant". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Fiona Grant
Chair of the European Marine Board