

Speech Commissioner Joe BORG

Info day Call "The ocean of tomorrow"

Brussels, 16 September 2009 - 10: 00

"An integrated approach to science for an integrated maritime policy"

Commissioner Potocnik,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here at the launch of this joint call on "The Oceans of Tomorrow" – a concrete and multi-million tangible result of the European Union's Marine and Maritime Research Strategy adopted by the Council last December. I would like to warmly congratulate Commissioner Potocnik and his Services for the work they have done to bring this joint call to fruition.

In 2005, the European Commission set out its strategic objectives, calling for an all-embracing EU maritime policy supported by excellence in marine scientific research and technology.

The EurOCEAN conferences in Galway in 2004 and in Aberdeen in 2007 produced resounding calls from scientists and the marine industry for a strengthened and integrated approach to maritime and marine science as a catalyst for economic growth and sustainable development. These calls contributed in no small part not only to the launch by the Commission of the Marine and Maritime Research Strategy but also to the creation of the European Integrated Maritime Policy.

Today's momentous event shows just how far we have come in gaining widespread backing for groundbreaking initiatives such as this. For the marine and maritime scientific communities, the recognition of the principle of a science-based maritime policy creates not only opportunities – which are always most welcome - but also responsibilities.

"The Oceans of Tomorrow" initiative takes us a step further towards bringing together different scientific research streams in the spirit of the EU's Integrated Maritime Policy. Indeed, the integrated approach that lies at the heart of our European Maritime Policy, when applied to scientific research, corresponds to the interdisciplinary approach of marine and maritime research which we are aiming at with this joint call. We now have a golden opportunity to gather together the best scientists and make full use of the huge potential our scientific communities have to offer, thereby creating and building synergies serving to develop and implement maritime policy in Europe on the one hand and doing away with unnecessary duplication of effort on the other.

But it does not stop there.

We will need more joint calls in the future to build up a knowledge base to address complex issues related to maritime policy, to maintain our maritime leadership in Europe and to ensure that we harness the potential of the seas in a sustainable manner.

Finally, we will also need an effective science/policy interface to support policy-making if we aim to ensure the most sustainable form of development for sea-based activities. This is particularly relevant in the fight against climate change or in marine environmental protection since in both instances scientific

knowledge is paramount for policy-making. And this is where the 'responsibilities' come in.

When I say science, I of course mean "scientific communities" in the plural. For beyond the pivotal role that the various strands of "hard, physical science" can play, we would also like to see social sciences contribute through a critical analysis of our maritime policy actions. I have said this on previous occasions and I would like to repeat it here that: a critical approach will spur us on to think 'outside the box' and to be ever more creative in delivering an integrated maritime policy for Europe.

The European Maritime Day, celebrated every year on the 20th of May, could be a useful tool for this. It should serve as an opportunity for passing messages in the field of marine science on to policy-makers. Preparations for next year's Maritime Day in the Spanish city of Gijón, during the Spanish presidency of the Union, have already started. Europe's scientific community is invited to participate and to continue helping us to shape the Integrated Maritime Policy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to wish all those of you who are responding to this pioneering joint call the best of luck.

"The Oceans of Tomorrow" will hopefully be the first of many major initiatives serving to underpin the goals of our Integrated Maritime Policy in years to come.

Thank you.

(650 words)