

Speech András SIEGLER– Dir RTD/H

Info day Call "The ocean of tomorrow"

Brussels, 16 September 2009 - 10: 30 to 10:45

EU Strategy for marine and maritime research : implementation roadmap

Dear participants in this information day,

Dear Colleagues and friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is not an easy task to implement and coordinate research actions that cut across themes, neither for the Commission nor for the scientific community. My Directorate, responsible for transport research, and myself have the responsibility to coordinate the implementation of the strategy across DG RTD and with other DGs in the European Commission. We consider this responsibility both as an exciting opportunity for maritime research and a big challenge for all of us.

Yet the presence today of 2 Commissioners, 3 directors from Directorate General for Research, as well as your large attendance at this meeting, are clear indications that we are heading in the right direction. But this is not time for complacency and I can tell you that we will step up our efforts in the months and years to come.

Today, I would like precisely to outline where we stand on the strategy, and provide you with a roadmap of key actions that we intend to undertake in the short and longer term for its implementation.

Our ultimate goal is to provide the knowledge base for a sustainable development and an integrated management of sea based activities. We want research to inform us on the impact of human activities and climate change on the marine environment, as well as to help develop technologies that will allow us to grow the maritime activities in a more sustainable way. In order to achieve that objective, we must move decisively towards a European Marine and Maritime Research Area.

Check against delivery

The strategy has identified 4 major domains where we should fill gaps, in order to reach our objectives.

Firstly we need inter-disciplinary research and integrated knowledge to address complex sea-related issues.

Secondly we need strengthened marine research capacities, both qualitatively and in terms of geographical coverage, to provide the basic means and data necessary to develop scientific knowledge.

Thirdly we need enhanced synergies between member states' public research efforts as well as with the private sector. Synergies should occur at EU level but also around regional seas.

Finally we need new governance mechanisms to improve interactions within the broad, inter-disciplinary marine and maritime research community as well as our interactions with this community.

I wouldn't however be comprehensive if I don't add that, because seas have no borders, and because we are eventually dealing with one global ocean, we must boost the international dimension of our research in this area.

Let me run through these big areas and give you a snapshot of key actions that we will be pursuing in each of them to further our agenda.

Today we are bringing **integration** in marine and maritime research one step further with this joint call on "The Ocean of tomorrow". The challenge for us in the future will be to identify in cooperation with the marine and maritime research communities topics of strategic importance for future joint calls and to improve their implementation by learning from the first experiences. We will be doing that in the months and years to come.

Integration of knowledge can also be stimulated through integrated access to various sources of marine and maritime data. In that regard, the Commission will propose in the coming months an Action Plan for a European Marine Observation Data Network (EMODNET) and DG RTD will take an active role in this initiative, coordinated by DG MARE.

I should stress that knowledge integration can also take place through an analytical review of existing research results. We need to find new ways to do such work. It is for instance needed to provide scientific support to the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, and particularly to

Check against delivery

provide a scientific and integrated knowledge base for the definition of the Good Environmental Status of the seas. We will be working on that in the coming months.

Let me now move to the **capacities** agenda. Our first responsibility is to promote the financing by member states of marine related ESFRI research infrastructure. We will soon finance a study to screen opportunities to finance marine research infrastructure through structural funds. Obviously the ESFRI process provides the main framework for research infrastructure, and mobilizing all resources to finance ESFRI marine research infrastructure will be a key objective for us. But we shall also consider other needs, particularly at regional level that could be met with regional funds. An expert group on marine research infrastructure will also be set-up on a temporary basis to advise us in that respect and its activities should progressively be taken over by the future marine and maritime research forum when this latter becomes operational.

EMODNET is also an important marine research infrastructure tool that will not only enhance access to marine and maritime data, but also provide for their better integration as I mentioned earlier.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Commission cannot implement alone the EU strategy for marine and maritime research. Boosting **synergy** between member states' research efforts and with the private sector is indispensable to address marine and maritime issues with a critical mass of funding.

ERA-NETs have proved to be extremely useful tools to improve synergies between member states' research efforts. Three important developments will take place in that respect later this year. An over-arching marine ERA-NET will be set up and progressively replace 4 existing marine ERA-NETs when they expire in the coming year. This challenging development will bring a more integrated approach to marine research undertaken by member states. At the same time, we will upgrade the BONUS marine ERA-NET in the Baltic into an article 169 initiative, with a more ambitious strategic agenda in support to the Baltic strategy for a sustainable development of this maritime region. My colleague Manuela Soares will speak in more details of these two initiatives and the complementarity between them. It reflects the general principle that the EU strategy for marine and maritime research should articulate the EU level and the regional seas level, in a complementary manner.

But our actions to boost synergies do not stop there. We will seek to build bridges between the marine ERA-NETs and the MARTEC ERA-NET in the area of maritime research and technologies.

2009 has also been the year when the European Aquaculture Innovation and Technology Platform, has been launched, two years after the Waterborne Technology Platform. We challenge the maritime industries to think of their commonalities when it comes to develop offshore and deep water maritime activities and to propose to us innovative ideas in that regard.

Clearly none of these developments would be sustainable if we do not put in place new **governance** mechanisms to improve interactions within the broad marine and maritime research community, as well as our interactions with it.

Two important developments should be mentioned in that regard. First the transport research directorate has financed a support action called EMAR2RES to boost cooperation between maritime industries and marine science. Second and even more important is the setting-up of a marine and maritime research forum, which should be materialized when the negotiations on the corresponding support action are concluded. My colleague Manuela Soares will elaborate on that. Let me however tell you that we grant a big importance to the setting-up of this forum and to ensuring that it meets the objectives that the Commission assigns to it.

In the strategy, we committed ourselves to consider the need for a structured science / policy interface in support to the maritime policy. We will also make proposals in that regard, particularly as regards the scientific support to the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, which is the environmental pillar of the Maritime Policy.

This brings to the last point of my speech, the **international dimension** of the strategy.

The EU shares many seas with third countries. This is the case of the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea. Achieving good environmental status and a sustainable development of these sea basins cannot happen without an intense cooperation with neighboring third countries in these seas. The Mediterranean is of particular importance in that regard. We need a strategic framework for marine research cooperation in the Mediterranean and this will be a focus of our attention in the coming year.

Check against delivery

We have already shown our interest in the Arctic with the "Ocean of Tomorrow" Joint Call. The Commission is willing to boost cooperation with Arctic coastal states to address issues of common concern in this area.

But our responsibility doesn't stop there. As I mentioned earlier, there is eventually one global ocean and we will step up our involvement in global ocean governance, particularly in the framework of the International Oceanographic Commission. In that regard, we grant a big importance to the UN initiated global assessment of the marine environment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Commission is challenging the marine and maritime research community to break new grounds in order to achieve the objectives of the EU strategy for marine and maritime research. But we are also doing our homework in that regard. We have set-up an inter-service group that brings together DG RTD Directorates and other DGs for a coordinated implementation of the strategy. We have launched this first joint call and we will continue our work in this area. We will launch before the end of this month a Commission website, which will provide essential information regarding the strategy and its development. And finally, my directorate has just increased substantially the resources to coordinate its implementation.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, we have plenty of challenges ahead of us and there is no time for complacency. But if we join forces in a real partnership, we will make a success of this important endeavor.

I wish you a fruitful day and all success in your future work.