

IV – Opinion of the rapporteur

As with an earlier opinion of ours on maritime issues, I would now give you my opinion in this section. Of course, this opinion does not bind the National Defence Committee, which expresses its views on the Conclusions in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.

The appropriate management of a '*European Marine Observation and Data Network*' with a view to fully exploiting the 'Marine Knowledge' goes to the heart of this Communication.

First of all, it is worth pointing out that this Communication shows that there are things wrong at present. For example, an analysis carried out by the Defence Committee showed that there were deficiencies in the functioning of the European Maritime Safety Agency (with HQ in Lisbon).

In a continent such as Europe, which changed the world with its maritime expansion, this is a very serious sign that its maritime policies are dysfunctional and frankly not working.

It is essential to strengthen responsibilities and coordination at European level in order to avoid difficulties in the dissemination and use of marine data. But, above all, it is necessary to change the mentality of the relevant institutions and the Member States of the EU, towards greater cooperation.

However, in my opinion, the proposal to establish a special Secretariat does not seem the most effective response. In particular as its creation should be a means to achieve greater functional rapidity rather than constituting one more burden. But then again, Brussels' eurocratic logic is what it is. This *Communication* is to a large extent and as usual, the written version of this logic with all the positive and negative aspects it entails.

To summarise: Do Member States not cooperate? Let us then establish a body forcing them to do so. If we can ...

It is in this context that I would stress the considerable contribution Portugal and, in particular its Navy, have made to marine knowledge for a long time.

We need only look at the reference work of the Hydrographic Institute (IH)

and, more recently, to the work of the mission office for the extension of the continental shelf (EMEPC), to which two specialised vessels of the Navy were assigned, the '*D. Carlos I*' and the '*Gago Coutinho*'.

But there is also the contribution of Portuguese universities in the field of oceanographic research and marine knowledge. In particular, the high scientific merit and the extensive research of the Department for Oceanography and Fisheries of the Universities of the Azores, Algarve and Aveiro. It is also right to acknowledge the excellence of the applied research and investigation work of the High Technical Institute of the Technical University of Lisbon and of the established and constantly updated scientific research of the Science Department of the Classical University of Lisbon.

The work of the Portuguese Navy and its research institutes as well as of the Portuguese universities has been, in many areas, pioneering. In the last few years, Portugal has been in the forefront at world level, in particular in the field of research work in very deep waters.

As one of the countries with the world's largest EEZ, Portugal will increase exponentially its maritime responsibilities with the international recognition of the extension of its continental shelf. It is only fair that Portugal is recognised as having been able to fulfil its present and future responsibilities as regards this strategic area.

In addition, it is worth underlining that the national institutions responsible for this area have opted for an open data-exchange policy, which I consider exemplary and at the same level as Portuguese universities and various bodies under the Navy, which keep online constantly updated relevant data.

Moreover, it is this open-door policy in the technical and scientific exchange of marine knowledge that represents the basis of this Communication.

For this reason, I consider that the European institutions and officials in this field may learn from Portugal how to share and exchange technical and scientific data on the marine environment. Had it already been so, this Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council would have not been necessary.

In the light of the above, I believe that Brussels' eurocrats should be reminded of the words of Pessoa, a poet who could only be Portuguese:

Oh salty sea, so much of your salt
Is tears of Portugal!
Because we crossed you, so many mothers wept,
So many sons prayed in vain!
So many brides remained unmarried
That you might be ours, oh sea!

Was it worthwhile? All is worthwhile
When the spirit is not small.
He who wants to go beyond the Cape
Has to go beyond pain.
God to the sea peril and abyss has given
But it was in it that He mirrored heaven

V – Conclusions

The Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council 'Marine Knowledge 2020: Marine data and observation for smart and sustainable growth' is the result of finding that the improved knowledge of the marine environment was one of the main objectives of the EU integrated maritime policy.

The improvement of marine knowledge, its organisation and subsequent application are based on a *European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet)*, which costs a billion euros to public bodies and three billion euros to private businesses.

Difficulties in data organisation, lack of competitiveness and innovation, unreliability of the data collected by an extremely fragmented observation network, led to efforts being made to address the situation, as illustrated in this Communication, which has three specific objectives;

1. reducing operational costs and delays for marine data users;
2. increasing users' competitiveness and their innovation capacity by extending and speeding up data access;
3. reducing uncertainty in ocean and sea knowledge.

The transnational nature of the issue provides a strong justification for action at EU level. The *subsidiarity* case is strongest when the additional monitoring is to take place outside Member States waters. However this is not a necessary condition. Marine observations do not only benefit the State in whose waters the observations are made.

Additional resources to be used by the EU are 2 to 5% of the amount currently being spent by Member States. However, EU actions imply an added value as compared to initiatives at Member State level. These resources would enable the Member States to achieve their objectives more effectively and are thus *commensurate*.

Lastly, a *regulation* is the most appropriate *legal instrument* through which measures can lay down programmes of expenditure or participation of agencies at European level.

Opinion

In view of the foregoing, the Defence Committee declares that this report-opinion to which the *Communication* and two working documents are attached should be transmitted to the Committee for European Affairs.

Lisbon, 3 January 2010

Rapporteur
João Soares

The Vice-President of the Committee
José Lello

Translation of a letter

From: Parliamentary Group of the Social Democratic Party

To: President of the Committee for the Environment, Land-use planning and Local Government

Date: Palácio de São Bento, 9 December 2010

SUBJECT: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council - Marine Knowledge 2020 - Marine data and observation for smart and sustainable growth – **COM(2010) 461 final**

No opinion to be issued regarding **the European initiative**.

Following the transmission to the Committee of the European initiative, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council - Marine Knowledge 2020 - Marine data and observation for smart and sustainable growth, it is the responsibility of the Parliamentary Group of the Portuguese Social Democratic Party to appoint a rapporteur to draw up the corresponding opinion.

Following the method agreed on at the latest meeting of the Committee for the Environment, Land-use planning and Local Government (CAOTPL) regarding the evaluation of European initiatives and after examining the documentation provided by the services of the Assembly of the Republic, I hereby call on the Committee not to deliver an opinion on the abovementioned initiative.

The Committee must deliver an opinion on non-legislative initiatives, which, because of their importance, justify scrutiny, in particular in relation with the priorities set out in the European Commission's Legislative and Work Programme. However, this would seem not to apply in the present case and so we propose to call on the Committee not to deliver the above opinion.

(Complimentary close)

