

Draft EMODnet Secretariat Communication Strategy

December 2013 - Outline for information

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

EMODnet is a network of organisations working together to observe the sea, to make the marine data collected freely available and interoperable, to create seamless data layers across sea-basins and to distribute the data and data products through the internet. The primary aim of EMODnet is to unlock already existing but fragmented and hidden marine data and make them accessible for a wide range of users including private bodies, public authorities and researchers.

Currently, seven thematic assembly groups have been created to develop thematic web-portals covering data resources from diverse fields including hydrography, geology, physics, chemistry, biology, physical habitats and human activities. Many of these thematic portals are already operational. In addition, two sea-basin checkpoints have been established to assess the observation capacity in the North Sea and the Mediterranean Sea areas.

To strengthen the visibility and identity of EMODnet towards both data users and data providers, DG MARE requires the thematic and regional lots to communicate towards these relevant communities and the public at large. In addition it has called for the development of a specific set of dissemination materials by the EMODnet Secretariat, which is administered by Seascope Consultants since 16 September 2013.

The outreach documents and products which the EMODnet Secretariat has been tasked to deliver in its first term of two years include: the production of an EMODnet brochure, two videos and a demonstration. While not strictly a requirement, to maximise impact of these products, the Secretariat has taken the initiative to develop a Communication Strategy to ensure the products are designed and disseminated in a targeted way to best serve the needs with the resources available.

2 Objectives

- Increase the visibility and identity of EMODnet by ensuring targeted, coherent and coordinated external communication of EMODnet benefits and successes.
- Ensure that the communication tools, activities and products are mutually reinforcing and designed and disseminated in a targeted way to best serve the needs with the resources available.

3 Target Audiences

Data providers and users including from:

- Private industry
- Universities and other educational facilities
- Research organizations
- International, regional, national and local governments and/or governmental organisations
- Publishers and other mass media; and
- General public.

The primary audience is European, but it EMODnet is also relevant for non-European users.

4 Key Messages

Below is a tentative list – main messages will need to be determined and selected depending on the EMODnet Phase, audience and desired outcome of the implemented communication tool/product.

- EMODnet is your preferred gateway to European Marine Data
- EMODnet is a long term initiative which is developed through a stepwise iterative process – now moving from pilots to operational phase
- EMODnet covers a range of thematic areas to cover the breadth of available marine observation and data and growing number of Sea Basins (ultimately all)
- Huge efforts have been / are / will be undertaken to develop and improve EMODnet – this is only worthwhile if the data and services are actually used by the various user communities
- By contributing data you can become part of the EMODnet family and ensure marine data is obtained once and used many time also for your own benefit.
- ...

5 Tools, products and activities

5.1 Communication tools available

- Entry portal website (www.emodnet.eu)
- Partner websites and portals (see list on <http://www.emodnet.eu/content/partners-portal>)
- Maritime forum (<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/>)
- Social media account: twitter, facebook, linkedIn (company page and group page) – this will be embedded on the entry portal
- Thematic and regional portals may potentially also have considered to develop social media for their own portals; however it would be desirable to avoid fragmented/dispersed use of internet channels but communicate using the central accounts.

5.2 Communication networks and channels

- **Networks of the partner institutes:** EMODnet is *a network*, a very large network of organisations, institutes and companies working together to shape and realize the EMODnet vision. These organization are among the leading marine and maritime research and operational service providers with strong local, national, regional and in some cases pan-European and international deminations and linkages. Where useful and appropriate the entire EMODnet community should be activated to advertise and disseminate major achievements of the EMODnet work.
- **Virtual network of EMODnet Communication officers:** it is recommended to establish links between the communication officers of the various thematic and regional lots to coordinate dissemination and communication activities.
- **The European Commission / DG MARE** is supported by a strong communication and PR machine. This professional service should be activated where necessary and appropriate to support the EMODnet external communication activities, including dissemination of products and press releases, posting announcements of major events and mobilizing high level representatives and commission staff to raise awareness and advocate the EMODnet services.

5.3 Specific dissemination products by Secretariat (as part of the Secretariat tasks/requirements)

As part of the assignment by DG MARE, the EMODnet Secretariat has been charged with the development of a number of specific dissemination products within its first 2-year workplan. These include the production and dissemination of:

- EMODnet brochure
- Two EMODnet Videos (one targetted at data providers; another targetted at data users)
- EMODnet live and virtual Demonstrations

The development and dissemination of these products will be detailed in separate documents and provided to the relevant EMODnet partners as they become available.

5.4 Additional support materials and dissemination products

In addition to the specific products which will be developed by the Secretariat, at some stage in the future, depending on the interest by the network, available resources and time, a number of additional communication products could be considered for development under coordination by the Secretariat. These products aimed at increasing the visibility of EMODnet and assist the participating organization in branding EMODnet could include but are not limited to:

- Maintain information pages and news items on the Entry Portal (already under development by the Secretariat)
- Manage twitter/linked-in accounts of EMODnet (set-up by VLIZ and ready to be activated by the Secretariat)
- EMODnet leaflet (already under development by the Secretariat – for release in Februari 2014)
- EMODnet newsletter, e.g. the EMODnet Quarterly
- EMODnet powerpoint slides/presentation
- EMODnet posters
- EMODnet smartphone application (earliest in phase III)

In addition, in order to maintain an overview of communication activities, it would be advisable for the thematic and regional lots to keep the Secretariat informed about their communication products and activities. Where possible, the Secretariat could provide advice, feedback and/or guidance to ensure maximum coherence in style and messages coming from the EMODnet community.

5.5 Activities

The Secretariat will, where relevant and within the limits of the available human and budgetary resources, participate, organise, facilitate and (co-)organise events and activities to strengthen the visibility of EMODnet. This can range from very specific lectures plugged in pre-conceived events or information session (e.g. in the framework of the European Maritime Days) and training sessions, up to dedicated events with as many EMODnet partners as possible.

To structure the process, it is advisable to create a 'Calendar' function on the central portal (or continue using the maritime forum – or both) to allow partners to add events at national and regional level and provide potentially interested stakeholders with an overview of possible events/activities of interest. The Secretariat is already maintaining an activities log for internal purposes which could serve as a basis for an extended calendar function should this be considered useful bas on the level of interest and number of activities to advertise.

5.5.1 EMODnet @ European Maritime Day

The Secretariat already wishes to propose two specific events/activities for the EMODnet partners to showcase the progress and advertise the services already available and those that are under development. Both are linked to the European Maritime Day:

- European Maritime Day 2014: Organise an EMODnet information workshop with coordinators (or representatives) of the thematic and regional lots to showcase the breadth of EMODnet activities and advertise the services already available and those that are currently under development.
- European Maritime Day 2015: Consider the organization of a major EMODnet Event (an EMODnet 'family Day'), back to back with the European Maritime Day 2015, with various lectures, presentations, demonstrations, discussions about future strategic directions and opportunities with various stakeholders, an exhibition with stands of EMODnet partner organisations, and a contact forum where people can meet across boundaries (regional, thematic, stakeholder types).

6 Resources

Human and financial resources are limited, in particular on the short term, which increases the need for synergistic approaches among the EMODnet partners. Dedicated and targeted communication will have to focus on raise awareness and realistic expectations from data providers and users.

7 Timescales

There are 3 major time-horizons that need to be considered:

- Short term (2013-2015): focus on concrete aligning various external communication efforts, developing specific outputs and dissemination materials to promote EMODnet and significantly improve the visibility of EMODnet with the various stakeholders (user and providers of data), in particular those from industry.
- Medium term (2015-2017): establish EMODnet as a strong brand and preferred service for those looking for marine data in Europe; significantly increase the interest and participation of private organisations
- Long term (2017- 2020 and beyond): tbd

8 Evaluation and amendment