

# Regional EMODnet approaches and online presence of the sea-basin checkpoints

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## ***EMODnet Steering Committee discussion document***

### **1 Background**

In EMODnet Phase II a new EMODnet type of activity has been introduced with a regional scope: the EMODnet sea-basin checkpoints along a concept first coined in the EC Marine Knowledge 2020 Communication. These checkpoints are envisaged to determine gaps in data and observation systems and priorities for an observation system that supports the delivery of sustainable growth and innovation. The overarching aim is to support the deployment of a marine observation infrastructure that offers the most effective support to the blue economy. The cost-effectiveness, reliability and utility of the existing monitoring infrastructure are to be assessed by developing products based on these data and determining whether the products are meeting the needs of industry and public authorities.

In 2013, the Commission tendered for two pilot checkpoints, one covering the Greater North Sea, including the Kattegat, and the English Channel; and another covering the Mediterranean. The objective of these projects, as stipulated in the tender document, is to *“examine the current data collection, observation and data assembly programmes in a sea basin, analyse how they can be optimised and deliver the findings to stakeholders through an internet portal.”*

Aside from a set of reports, the tender specifies that the outputs of the projects include setting up a *“website portal providing free and unconditional access to EMODnet portals and outputs from the challenges in digital form. The web-site should be linked to the EU’s maritime forum which will contain all reports in digital format and allow comments and feedback.”*

### **2 Questions to consider**

The establishment of these checkpoints, their activities and the creation of a new series of EMODnet ‘portals’ raises questions in terms of the nature of the checkpoints as well as how they relate to each other, to the other ongoing and potential future EMODnet thematic and regional project as well as to the outside world. In view of the recent launch of a Mediterranean EMODnet checkpoint portal and ongoing work to set up a North Sea portal, it is therefore timely to consider how existing portals (thematic and central) should relate to these new entities and how these portals should best be developed/positioned to avoid confusing the users, avoid duplication of efforts and maintain a harmonised EMODnet visibility.

To ensure most efficient way forward, following issues may need to be clarified and considered by DG MARE and the Steering Committee:

- What is the nature and primary aim of the regional projects (assessment or development and release of products)? Who are the targets?
- Are they permanent services or one off ‘projects’ or both?
- Should checkpoints provide data or only products, and if so what kind of data should they make available?
- What is the best way to present the checkpoints to a wider audience online?
- What level of integration with or linking to other portals and websites (e.g. maritime forum) is desirable?

- How to deal with the new series of checkpoints that should start late 2014 – early 2015? How can we best present and integrate their efforts in the overall picture?
- Should the checkpoints develop and brand their website as ‘portals’ or websites or is this irrelevant? How can we avoid confusing the stakeholders and users in view of already existing EMODnet ‘portals’?

There are also a number of technical issues to be consider including:

- Should all projects use the same implementation of OGC services (e.g. sextant).
- Is a standard 'Geoserver-type Stack' the right solution for the Check Points? Would the target user community need something more like a Google/Bing maps WMTS with the emphasis on cartography and easy layer selection than formal metadata catalogues and standard WMS deployments based on individual data sets?
- Do the checkpoints need download services, particularly if all they do is duplicate what the EMODNET topic sites are doing?
- Etc.

### 3 Current Status

Some of the above questions have naturally been considered already by the checkpoints themselves and over the last months discussions between the North Sea and Mediterranean checkpoint, some of the main partners of thematic portals, the central portal and Secretariat have been initiated.

At the European Geophysical Union Conference (April 2014, Vienna), an Marine Knowledge Splinter Meeting took place with presentations and discussions from ongoing EMODnet checkpoints. The presentations highlighted the importance of tuning current monitoring activities indicating that regional checkpoints could assess the value of challenges and generate a virtuous cycle of continuous improvement. As such the regional checkpoints could have the role of aggregator, or recipes or mock-up and perform periodic assessments of EMODnet, producing products for specific challenges.

The report of the meeting notes:

*“A crucial point is on how to link the challenges to data. The objective is to obtain, for each challenge, a catalogue and provide a link to the portals that contains the data. It was suggested that the CheckPoints can provide processed data products in the Checkpoint portals and link to relevant data sources via the EMODnet portals.”*

The discussion also highlighted the main difficulties perceived by the users which are: data inaccessibility, different standards, quality not always known, non-adequate coverage, inconsistencies among data sets. It was suggested that “a working group on EMODnet could provide recommendations on more coherent data infrastructure capable to serve governance and society.” It is however not entirely clear what added value such a working group would have in addition to the checkpoints work and user groups as well as the Ad Hoc Working Groups set up under the EMODnet Steering Committee (technical group and user group).

- ➔ DG MARE, the Checkpoints and the Steering Committee members are invited to consider the above questions and share their views as well as suggest best way forward.

