

# Organisation of a European Marine Conference

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## Final Report

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## 1. Introduction

To take stock of the state of the European seas, five years after the adoption of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), and to draw attention to the contribution of healthy oceans to sustainable growth, the European Commission decided to organise a major conference on the marine environment in Brussels on 3 and 4 March 2014.

The conference, bringing together over 400 participants, including Members of the European Parliament and EU Environment Ministers, government experts, scientists, academics, industry representatives and NGOs, aimed at shedding light on the on-going efforts at EU, regional and national levels to enhance the protection of the marine environment through an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities.

In addition to the actual conference, the dissemination of information about the conference and the conference website allowed to reach a broad range of stakeholders all over the EU and neighbouring countries and raise awareness on the reasons for the organisation of the conference.

Milieu and its partners, Fresh Thought and the Aarhus University, put together a team of experts to provide support to the Commission with the organisation, execution and reporting of the Conference from February 2013 to April 2014.

This final report presents an overview of the work done for the organisation of the European Marine Conference, which took place on 3-4 March 2014. The annexes of the report contain all the deliverables for this contract.

## 2. Summary of the activities

### 2.1 Preparatory phase: February 2013 – March 2014

#### *Steering Group*

In order to prepare the Conference, a Steering Group was formed and met three times throughout the duration of the preparatory phase. At different stages, the Steering Group drew on the expertise colleagues from across the Commission, depending on the topics addressed during the meeting. At its core, the Steering Group included staff from DG Environment's D.2 Unit, the project manager and coordinator from the Milieu team and staff from the SCIC. The Steering Group met on 6 May 2013, 27 September 2013 and 13 January 2014. In addition to the three meetings, members of the Steering Group met with DG Environment's webmaster on a few occasions to discuss the Conference website and the technical staff at the Conference's premises (the Charlemagne building) to discuss logistical issues.

#### *Development of programme and selection of speakers*

The Milieu team provided support to the Commission services for the development of the programme of the two-day Conference as well as ideas of potential speakers to be invited. The input of senior experts Jesper Andersen from the Aarhus University and Thomas Dworak from Fresh Thought was particularly valuable at this stage of development. For the development of the programme, the Milieu team reflected upon the implementation cycle of the MSFD, including the work going on at the time on the Article 12 assessment and the next steps in implementation, i.e. the monitoring programmes and programmes of measures. They also took into consideration the need to shed light on the work of the Regional Sea Conventions in the context of the MSFD implementation.

The programme of the Conference evolved throughout the duration of the contract and was finalised a few weeks before the Conference, taking into account the availability of the speakers. The final annotated programme, distributed to participants, is attached to this report (see Annex 8).

One idea that emerged from the discussions between the project team and the Commission services was to organise “Speed-pitching” sessions, as was done at the Berlin Conference in 2012 on marine litter. The objective of the “speed-pitching” sessions is to give a platform to participants to present to the Conference audience their project/work (related of course to the MSFD implementation) in 3 minutes maximum. The final programme for the “Speed-pitching sessions” is attached to this report (see Annex 9).

### ***Design***

The project team worked with the Commission services to develop a visual identity for the Conference, in line with the Commission guidelines. In particular, Fresh Thought designers made a number of proposals for a Conference visual ID. On the basis of the design selected with the Commission services, Milieu web and graphic designers developed the designs of the website and background documents respectively (see Annex 1). This visual identity was used on all Conference-related documents and material (e.g. the screen banners presenting the various sessions of the Conference), which helped with creating a unity in the visual identity of the Conference.

### ***Website***

The web pages to announce the Conference were developed between July and December 2013. Many discussions took place with the web designer, the project team, the Commission services and the webmaster on what the expectations and technical possibilities were and what the structure of the website should be. The integration of the Conference web pages in the structure of DG Environment’s web pages created a number of technical and coordination difficulties at the beginning of the process. The final structure was agreed shortly before the website went live. Some modifications to the structures were also made after the launch, in particular to make the “Artist’s corner” page more visible.

The [website of the Conference](#) went live on December 2013, just before the first round of invitations was sent. From December 2013, up to the Conference, Milieu updated the website bi-weekly, first, and then on a weekly or even daily basis from February onwards, following the comments from the Commission and upon receiving additional input from the team (e.g. background documents), speakers and moderators (biographies) and artists. Following the Conference, the website was updated a few more times to add the presentations of the speakers, the Declaration of HOPE and the videos of the Conference. The website is still running.

### ***Background document***

A background document was developed throughout the duration of the contract to provide background information on the various topics that were addressed at the HOPE Conference. Following approval of the outline before the Interim report, the Milieu team finalised the document early 2014, integrating comments from DG Environment (see Annex 4). Once finalised, including the design, the document was sent to printing. 500 copies of the documents were printed and distributed on the day of the Conference as part of the Conference Pack.

### ***Invitations to participants and follow-up***

Between February and December 2013, the project team worked on identifying a list of contacts to be invited to the Conference. As the target number of participants was 400, the number of contacts to send the invitation to needed to be much higher. However, the project team and the Commission also counted on the fact that many contacts approached were networks, which spread the information about the Conference to their members. In addition to Brussels-based stakeholders, the invitation was sent to Member States’ representatives members of the MSCG group, therefore a high level of attendance from those involved in the MSFD CIS discussions was expected.

To send the invitation and invite people to register, a specific email address was created for the purpose of the Conference ([hope2014@milieu.be](mailto:hope2014@milieu.be)), which also served to answer requests from participants and speakers (see below). The first save-the-date invitations were sent early December

2013 and included a link to the website (and registration) as well as a notification that registration for the “speed-pitching” sessions was opened. Participants were asked to send their “pitches” to the HOPE email address in order to see if they fit the criteria and would be selected to present.

Between December 2013 and March 2014, Fresh Thought, supported by Milieu, was responsible for the registration of participants. Registration for the Conference was done through Fresh Thought’s website, which created a specific page for the Conference and which was linked to the Conference website. Fresh Thought provided by-weekly an update of the registration rate, which helped the Commission and Milieu assess the number and frequency of reminders to be sent. Milieu also proceeded to a first sorting of the registrations in order to filter potential undesired participants and to regulate the number of participants by organisation. The final selection remained in the hands of the Commission. The final list of participants (in Excel format) is included in the present report (see Annex 5).

The selection of the “speed-pitching” participants was also done in the late stage of registration, after receiving more than 30 requests to pitch. It was then decided to hold two sessions, one on the Monday night during the cocktail (20 pitches) and one on the Tuesday, during lunch time (13 pitches).

### ***Speakers’ help desk***

The Milieu team supported the Commission with the invitation to the speakers and moderators by preparing the invitation letters. High-level speakers were usually invited by the Commission services, while other speakers were invited directly by Milieu. Follow-up of the invitations was divided between the Commission services and the Milieu team, depending on the speakers. Once the list of speakers was confirmed, Milieu prepared guidelines to give speakers and moderators an overview of what issue each speaker would be addressing and a number of “tips” regarding their presentations and the overall execution of the event (see Annex 6). A similar document was prepared for the speed-pitches sessions, with guidelines to those presenting their projects in 3 minutes maximum (see Annex 7).

Until the day of the Conference, the Milieu team provided a help desk function to all speakers, moderators and “speed-pitching” participants, giving them guidance (with the support of the Commission) on their presentation (including format) and on general logistical questions they had. The Milieu team was also responsible for collecting all presentations and disseminating them to the moderators as well as organising them for the day of the Conference.

### ***Logistical organization***

The Consortium provided support with the logistical organization of the Conference, in coordination with the Commission’s services. These services included, as mentioned before, attending a number of meetings at the Charlemagne buildings with the responsible persons for various services (SCIC, technical staff, catering, etc.)

In addition, support to the logistical organisation included:

- Printing 500-600 copies of all final documents for distribution to the participants
- Preparing 500 Conference packs (see below) and bringing them to the Conference site
- Preparing participants’ badges, Conference signs, participants’ lists and a number of additional material for the Conference days.
- Coming to the Conference site the day before the Conference to help organize and put up the art in the rooms and halls
- Help with tidying up the Conference site and taking down the art after the Conference.

## 2.2 Execution of the event: 3-4 March 2014

### *Speakers' help desk*

The night before the Conference, the Conference team organised a small reception for speakers and moderators at the hotel where they were staying. The reception offered the opportunity to speakers and moderators to:

- Meet with the Conference team, i.e. the Commission staff from Unit C.2 and the Milieu staff, who would be supporting them with logistical matters on the days of the Conference;
- Meet with other speakers and moderators;
- Receive their speakers' badges and Conference folders;
- Give the Milieu staff the latest version of their presentations.

The reception helped create a friendly atmosphere among the speakers, moderators and organisers and allowed the organisers to address any issues the speakers may have been facing before the Conference.

### *On-site logistical support*

On the day of the Conference, the Milieu and Fresh Thought staff provided support to ensure the successful execution of the Conference.

Four people were present at the registration desk on the Monday morning welcoming participants and distributing the Conference pack, which included the following documents: annotated agenda (Annex 8), agenda overview (Annex 2), speed-pitching session script (Annex 9), background document (Annex 4), the list of registered participants (Annex 5), the Commission communication on Article 12 reports, the draft Declaration of HOPE, the invitation from ICES to the launch of the ICES Strategic Plan, a notebook with the Conference design and a small notepad. The EEA Marine Messages report was also distributed to participants. Throughout the two days of the Conference, at least two staff members were present at the registration desk at all times to answer requests from participants and speakers.

In addition, on-site support included between two and four people available in the halls to answer requests from speakers, artists and participants and to direct participants during the breaks to the right break-out rooms. Finally, at least two people were present in the conference rooms to address any technical issues arising during the sessions, to upload and run visual supports of presentations through the central computer system in coordination with the technical team of the Charlemagne, and to ensure smooth transitions between speakers and sessions and any issues brought forward by the Conference moderators. In particular, the opening session and the speed-pitching sessions were particularly challenging from a technical and timing perspective.

Support from Fresh Thought during the Conference also included taking notes of the Conference discussions and posting regular messages from DG Environment's Twitter account on the discussions at the Conference with the hashtag created specifically for the occasion (#hope4EUseas).

## 2.3 Follow-up to the event: March – April 2014

Following the Conference, Milieu and Fresh Thought prepared a Conference report on the basis of the notes taken during the Conference and the videos of the sessions (Annex 10). The Conference report provided a summary of the discussions held during the various sessions and the conclusions from the parallel sessions reported back to the plenary session by moderators, as well as a final version of the 'Declaration of HOPE', the outcome of the final session of the conference. The objective of the report was to be accurate but concise. It should also help the Commission to demonstrate support for the objectives of the MSFD at ulterior events. The Conference report was sent to participants of the Conference in May 2014. It was also uploaded to the Conference website.



## Annex 1. Final Conference designs



Figure 1 Conference visual ID

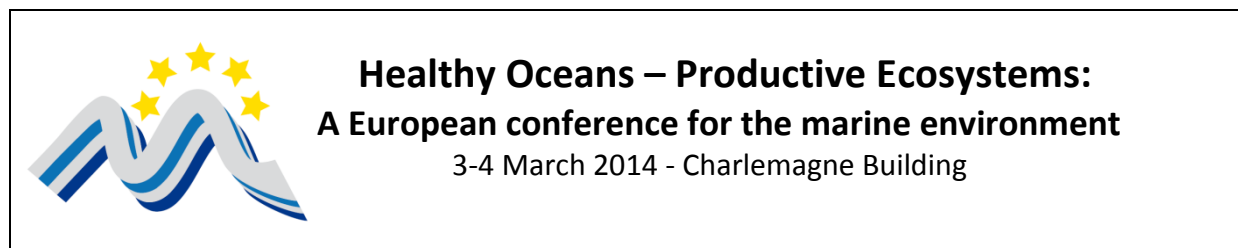


Figure 2 Design of the documents distributed to participants in the Conference pack



Figure 3 Print screen of Conference web pages

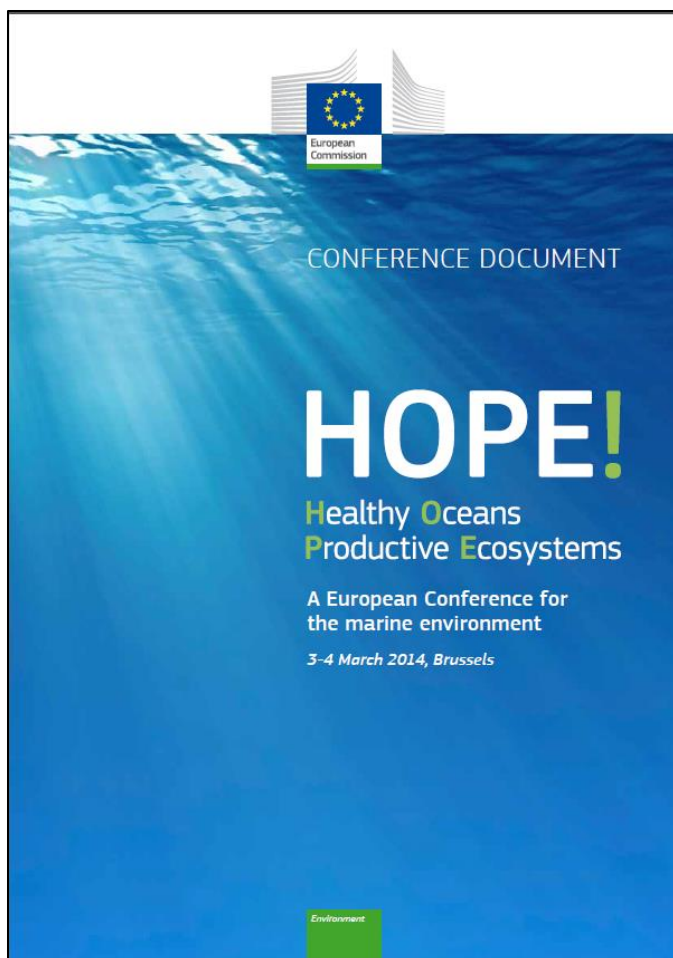


Figure 4 Cover page of Conference Document



Figure 5 Example of screen banner during Conference

## Annex 2. Agenda overview

**Internet Access**  
Login: xicb510  
Password: Meeting  
**Twitter:**  
#hope4euseas



### PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

#### MONDAY 3 MARCH 2014

8.00-9.00: Registration – Ground Floor

	GASP room (2 <sup>nd</sup> floor)	JENK room (ground floor)	MANS room (ground floor)	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor hall
9.00-10.45	Opening session	<i>When not in use for parallel sessions, the JENK and MANS rooms will feature live retransmission from the plenary room</i>		
10.45-11.15	Press point			Coffee Break
11.15-12.30	"Wake up Call" panel			
12.30-14.00				Networking Lunch
14.00-15.30	State of the Marine Environment			
15.30-16.00				Coffee break
16.00-17.30	Biodiversity, fisheries & aquaculture	Disturbance (marine litter and noise)	Eutrophication/pollutants	
17.40-18.00	Plenary session			
18.00-20.00	"Speed-pitching" Session 1			Cocktail
20.00-21.00	Documentary Screening " <i>Light the Ocean</i> "			

#### TUESDAY 4 MARCH 2014

8.00-9.00: Registration – Ground Floor

	GASP room (2 <sup>nd</sup> floor)	JENK room (ground floor)	MANS room (ground floor)	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor hall
9.00-10.00	Financing Marine Protection			
10.00-11.00	Gaps in marine knowledge	Shared resources for monitoring	Common indicators	
11.00-11.30				Coffee break (also on ground floor)
11.30-12.30	Programme of Measures: the way forward		Ensuring coherence within and between regions	
12.45-13.15	Plenary session			
13.15-14.45	"Speed-pitching" Session 2			Networking Lunch
14.45-15.30	The economics of marine protection			
15:30-16.00				Coffee Break
16.00-16.45	The international perspective			
16:45-17.15	Concluding panel			

## Annex 3. The Declaration of HOPE

### *The Declaration of HOPE*

**The participants at the HOPE (Healthy Oceans – Productive Ecosystems) marine conference, recognising that:**

- *The Rio+20 declaration, "The future we want", stresses the main global challenges facing our oceans;*
- *A healthy ocean delivers a range of benefits now and in the future, providing a basis for the sustainable development of ocean-related economic activities;*
- *Much remains to be learnt about the marine environment, our collective scientific understanding needs to increase, and be shared widely with the public, to enhance ocean literacy;*
- *Europe's seas and oceans are under significant pressure and must be safeguarded for their intrinsic value and to ensure the health of their ecosystems including for human benefit;*
- *The Marine Strategy Framework Directive, along with the EU Biodiversity Strategy and nature legislation, addresses the pressures on the marine environment and requires an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities, with a view to achieving "Good Environmental Status" of our seas and oceans by 2020;*
- *Regional Sea Conventions and other relevant international organisations play an essential role in supporting this goal, thereby protecting the seas and oceans that EU Member States share between them and with third countries.*

**Call for urgent action to better protect the European marine environment and in particular:**

- *to take the lead in implementing the Rio+20 conference chapter on oceans through the UN post-2015 framework, including through considering a Sustainable Development Goal on Oceans and supporting the UNCLOS implementing agreement on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction;*
- *to restore our fish stocks to healthy levels through the coherent implementation of the new Common Fisheries Policy and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive;*
- *to increase the national and EU research budgets which are devoted to understanding the oceans and their role in supporting life on the planet;*
- *to halt marine biodiversity loss and meet the targets set by the EU Biodiversity Strategy to measurably improve the conservation status of vulnerable marine habitats and species by 2020, and by the Convention on Biological Diversity to conserve at least 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020 through effectively and equitably managed ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas, including under the Natura 2000 network;*
- *to limit the effects of climate change on oceans, in particular acidification;*
- *to halt and reverse the impacts of eutrophication of large swathes of our seas, including through reducing nutrient-inflow from diverse sources, such as unsustainable agricultural practices;*
- *to address all other sources of marine pollution and combat them, in particular the increasing amounts of marine litter, including through the implementation of regional actions plans, and the setting of ambitious targets; to ensure the sustainable development of economic activities affecting the marine environment at sea and on land, with the private sector taking appropriate responsibility;*
- *to phase out environmentally harmful subsidies;*
- *to create a common framework for maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal management;*
- *to involve the public in ocean protection and better communicate our goals.*

*Stress the need to work closer together to protect the marine environment, to achieve greater coordination and cost-effectiveness within and between marine regions and to improve the governance of the seas, in particular through the Regional Sea Conventions and effective implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and other relevant EU environmental legislation.*

*Urge political leaders to turn words into action and encourage all stakeholders, including the private sector, to take the measures necessary to deliver "Good Environmental Status" for Europe's seas and oceans by 2020.*

4 March 2014, Brussels