

Draft EMODnet Secretariat Communication Strategy

Last update May 2014

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 of the Communication Strategy

- 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 EMODnet is also relevant for non-European users. Where relevant, key audiences from other areas, e.g. across the Atlantic, may be targeted depending on the strategic needs identified throughout EMODnet Phase II and III.

4 Key Messages

The main messages will be determined and selected depending on the EMODnet Phase, audience and desired outcome of the implemented communication tool/product. Examples of possible message may include:

- EMODnet is your preferred gateway to European Marine Data (main slogan of the EMODnet leaflet released early February 2014 – also available on www.emodnet.eu);
- Access to marine data is of vital importance for marine industries, decision-making bodies and scientific research. An effective pan-European marine data infrastructure will:
 - o Enable effective and efficient marine spatial planning and legislation for environment, fisheries, transport, border control, customs and defence;
 - o Reduce uncertainty in our knowledge and ability to forecast the behaviour of the sea;
 - o Improve offshore operators' efficiency and costs in gathering and processing marine data for operational and planning purposes;
 - o Stimulate competition and innovation in established and emerging maritime sectors.
- EMODnet is a dynamic long-term initiative: EMODnet 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): these tools are management by the Secretariat for the Network and 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 dimensions 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 assisting the participating organization in branding EMODnet, could include but are not limited to:

- EMODnet leaflet (Completed in February 2014);
- EMODnet posters (Completed in May 2014): a poster has been developed by the Secretariat based on the Leaflet and partners are invited to print it for their own purposes;
- EMODnet powerpoint slides/presentation (Ongoing): all presentations prepared and given by the Secretariat will be made available for the partners to use. Templates will be produce by the Secretariat for uniform use by the thematic and regional lots;
- Maintain information pages and news items on the Entry Portal (Active since February 2014): the Secretariat currently manages these appges with support from the central portal team;
- Manage twitter/linked-in accounts of EMODnet (Active since February 2014): the social media accounts have been set-up by VLIZ, activated by the Secretariat at its the opening in February 2014 and are currently managed by the Secretariat for the Network;
- EMODnet newsletter, e.g. the EMODnet Quarterly (unlikely to be implemented before 2015);
- 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 2014

The Secretariat has submitted a proposal for a workshop and booth (jointly with the European Atlas of the Seas) at the upcoming European Maritime Days in Bremen (19-20 May 2014) where the Secretariat will showcase the breadth of EMODnet activities and advertise the services already available and those that are currently under development.

5.5.2 Dedicated EMODnet Event for all partners and stakeholders

The Secretariat is currently exploring options to organise an event for the entire EMODnet community. Current options include but are not limited to:

- An EMODnet dedicated event at the European Maritime Day 2015. The EMODnet Steering Committee is to 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). This may be linked to the plans of the European Commission to set up a Blue Economy Business and Science Forum which will be launched at the European Maritime Day 2015 in Pireaus (Greece).
- A standalone event towards the end of the EMODnet Phase II projects in 2016 to showcase the results and bring all the partner institutes together. Options for organisation, location and costs should be developed by the end of 2014 to make an informed decision. This could be kept small or could be very large with exhibitions/showcases etc.

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 raising 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