

# EMODnet Steering Committee Draft Terms of Reference (ToR)

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## 1 Background and Rationale

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 coherence and functionality for users, DG MARE has called for the development of a common portal, labelled 'EMODnet Entry Portal', to provide an entry point delivering access to data, metadata and data products held by EMODnet thematic sites. This means it must allow visitors a good overview of the data products that are produced and maintained by the different thematic lots. The website which will be available from <http://www.emodnet.eu>, should therefore contain detailed information and links to the different thematic portals and provide an overview of the European Marine Observation and Data Network and its partner institutes, including information about the sea basin checkpoints. It should also make use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) to announce news and disseminate information.

The precise functioning of the central EMODnet Entry Portal will need to be agreed by the partners of the thematic portals as part of the remit of a Steering Committee, subject of this Terms of Reference (ToR). The EMODnet secretariat, administered by Seascope Consultants with funding from DG MARE since 16 September 2013, will organize the Steering Committee and oversee (as part of their remit) the development of the EMODnet Entry Portal as a common gateway to provide access to all seven thematic groups. This will ultimately lead to a more coherent, effective, efficient and fit for purpose EMODnet.

The Flemish Government, through the Flanders Marine Institute, is supporting the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODNET) by offering technical and scientific support to (1) construct and operate the EMODnet Entry Portal to visualize and provide access to the thematic data products, that are being build and managed in the individual thematic EMODnet projects and to (2) organize user services to facilitate and increase access and usage of the EMODnet Entry Portal.

## 2 Steering Committee Objectives

The EMODnet Steering Committee main objectives are to

- Guide the development of the EMODnet Entry Portal;
- Exchange information on the progress of the various EMODnet projects and initiatives, in particular with regards to the development of the thematic and Entry Portals;
- Streamline the interactions between the thematic assembly groups, the Sea Basin Checkpoints and the Secretariat and to discuss matters of relevance to improve the coherence of the various EMODnet projects;
- Discuss and provide high level decisions related to operational matters to be implemented by the Entry Portal and thematic portals.

### 3 Steering Committee Composition

The Steering Committee is composed of:

- (i) Coordinators of the thematic EMODnet portals;
- (ii) Coordinators of the Sea Basin Checkpoints which are invited and can participate the meetings as Observers;
- (iii) Members of the EMODnet Secretariat;
- (iv) One or more representatives from DG MARE;

Coordinators of the thematic lots and Sea Basin Checkpoints are invited to attend meetings as Members of the SC. However, coordinators may bring one additional member of their team to contribute to operational and technical discussions if necessary or may nominate a replacement in case it is not possible to attend the meeting. Ad Hoc experts or stakeholders may be invited by the Secretariat to attend meetings upon request from the SC if contributing to the objectives of the Meeting.

### 4 Roles and responsibilities

The EMODnet Secretariat convenes and chairs the Steering Committee meetings. To this end, the Secretariat shall draw up an agenda based on the SC work plan and additional points raised by the SC and DG MARE to be circulated well in advance of the Meeting. The agenda shall be adopted by the group at the start of the meeting. The Secretariat, with help of the relevant SC Members, will circulate SC Meeting Documents in advance of the Meetings and provide Meeting Minutes within one month after the Meeting. The Secretariat will follow up on the agreed actions, i.e. verify whether actions have been completed by those responsible in the timing foreseen, and report to DG MARE accordingly.

The Coordinators of the thematic EMODnet lots are the core members of the Steering Committee, responsible for taking high-level decisions to achieve the SC objectives listed above. As far as possible, the coordinators shall adopt their opinions or reports by a consensus. Voting should be avoided but in the event of a vote, the consensus is obtained by a simple majority of the members. Only one vote per thematic portal will be taken into account. Minority opinions will be documented.

Coordinators of the Sea Basin Checkpoints (initially North Sea and Mediterranean) are invited to attend the meetings as observers, inform SC about the Sea Basin activities and findings, participate in the discussions and provide recommendations to the SC with a view to improve the portals and achieve the SC objectives listed above. While they contribute to the discussions and may recommend decisions, coordinators of Sea Basin Checkpoints do not participate in voting.

### 5 Ad Hoc Working Groups

The Secretariat proposes following two EMODnet working groups to be established at the first SC meeting:

1. EMODnet Working Group on technical implementation of the Entry Portal
  - a. Composed of technical experts from the thematic (and checkpoint) portals
  - b. Convened and chaired by the Entry Portal developers (VLIZ)
2. EMODnet Working Group of Users to guide the development of the Entry Portal
  - a. Composed of invited experts from key sectors (e.g. aquaculture, dredging, offshore wind energy, oil and gas industry) as well as governmental management agencies, marine spatial planners, etc. based on nominations and open calls for participation.

- b. Convened and chaired by the EMODnet Secretariat

In addition to the above working groups, with consent of DG MARE and the EMODnet Secretariat, the Steering Committee may establish ad hoc working groups for specific support activities, in particular related to the development of the Entry Portal. Ad hoc working groups will operate on the basis of a terms of reference defined by the SC, report to the SC and shall be disbanded as soon as they have fulfilled their terms of reference. The Secretariat will act as an observers to these working groups, but the organization and running of the meetings will be the responsibility of the most appropriate organization to be appointed by the SC.

## 6 Deliverables / Expected Impact

The main output of the Steering Committee should be the development of an Entry Portal in a phased approach:

- Step 1: Development and making available a temporary EMODnet Landing Page serving as a central static information gateway – COMPLETED ON 21/10/2013.
- Step 2: Development of an EMODnet Demonstration Site with basic demonstration functions (based on selected use cases). [to be launched by mid 2014 and elaborated by end 2014]
- Step 3: Development and launch of a fully functional portal with advanced functionalities to combine layers with data from different thematic portals. [to be launched by mid 2015]

## 7 Indicative timetable

There will be 3 Steering Committee meetings per year, synchronized to take place 2-3 weeks prior to the MODEG Meetings to be able to report on the progress to MODEG.

- Meetings foreseen in 2014: (Dec 2013) / May / September – matching MODEG Meetings in February / June / October
- Meetings foreseen in 2015: Jan / May / September - matching MODEG Meetings in February / June / October

The activities and deliverables related to the development of the Entry Portal will be detailed in specific Steering Committee Work Plan. Major deliverables and indicative delivery dates include:

- EMODnet Landing Page online - completed
- Develop first set of use cases – mid 2014
- Development of an EMODnet Demonstration Site (Landing Page with basic demonstration functions, i.e. use cases) – end of 2014
- Launch of the Entry Portal – May/June 2015

Other tasks and deliverables by the Steering Committee will be detailed and managed as part of the Meeting Decisions and Actions. Major tasks and indicative delivery dates include:

- Indicators and reporting template established - December 2013
- Indicators reviewed and refined; start of bi-monthly reporting using template - January 2014
- Minimum requirements in terms of presentation for each portal to improve coherence (basic information, visual appearance, domain names) established - December 2013
- Minimum requirements in terms of presentation for each portal to improve coherence implemented - step1 MODEG meeting February 2014 / step 2 MODEG Meeting June 2014