

EMODnet: the gateway to marine data in Europe

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Marine data are needed for many purposes: for acquiring a better scientific understanding of the marine environment, but also, increasingly, for decision making as well as supporting economic growth. Data must be of sufficient quality to meet the specific users' needs. It must also be accessible in a timely manner. Both conditions are essential to achieving the crucial balance between making optimal use of our marine resources and protecting them.

And yet, despite being critical, this timely access to high-quality data proves challenging. Europe's marine data have traditionally been collected by a myriad of entities with the result that much of our data are scattered throughout unconnected databases and repositories. Even when data are available, often they are not compatible, making the sharing of the information and data-aggregation impossible. To tackle those problems in 2007 the European Commission through its Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) initiated the development of the European Marine Observation and Data network, EMODnet, in the framework of the EU's Integrated Maritime Policy. Today EMODnet is comprised of more than 160 organisations which gather marine data, metadata and data products and work together to make them more easily accessible for a wider range of users.

We will present how EMODnet has developed, currently consisting of eight sub-portals providing access to marine data from the following themes: bathymetry, geology, physics, chemistry, biology, seabed habitats, human activities, and coastal mapping. In addition, six sea-basin checkpoints have been established to assess the observation capacity in the North Sea, the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, the Baltic, the Arctic and the Black Sea. This exciting and innovative approach to assessing the adequacy of our current European data provision system shall also be described.

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