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COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

on a new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU
Transforming the EU's Blue Economy for a Sustainable Future

To find it in your language:
https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2021:240:FIN

Blue Economy Com (2021) 240
EXTRACTS OF INTEREST FOR HOs

Economic activities have a ***cumulative impact*** on the marine environment, from visible pollution such as plastic litter and oil spills to invisible pollution such as microplastics, ***underwater noise,*** chemicals and nutrients. The effects of ***climate change*** and greenhouse gas emissions are devastating on our ocean, coasts and people living in those areas, ranging from changes in water temperature, to acidification, ***rising sea levels*** and more frequent and ***intense flooding and erosion***. Coupled with the major threat posed by biodiversity loss, which is driven by climate change, pollution, over-exploitation of resources and the destruction of ***natural habitats***, these impacts will challenge the resilience of the blue economy and society as a whole.

Blue Economy Com (2021) 240
EXTRACTS OF INTEREST FOR HOs

Coastal resilience

The IPCC indicated in 2018 that ***sea levels*** are likely to rise by 2100 between 0.4 and 0.8m and, if global greenhouse gas emissions stayed on their current trend, in a likely range of up to 1.1m. Beyond 2100 sea levels will continue to rise for centuries, due to continuing heat uptake and loss of Arctic and Antarctic ice. In addition, due to climate change, the likelihood of ***extreme weather events that emanate from the seas and oceans*** and that cause severe damage to populations, economic assets and infrastructures will increase by orders of magnitude.

Blue Economy Com (2021) 240
EXTRACTS OF INTEREST FOR HOs

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…….;

- work to **close the knowledge gaps** and stimulate innovation for increased climate resilience for coastal areas; including through a new comparative analysis of traditional and nature-based solutions;
- work to ***boost the capacity for Copernicus and EMODNet observation, modelling*** and ***forecasting*** to better **anticipate the effects of extreme weather events** (e.g. floods, storm surges) **and regional sea-level rise**;

Blue Economy Com (2021) 240
EXTRACTS OF INTEREST FOR HOs

Ocean knowledge

Reliable, high-quality and harmonised ocean data are the prerequisite for a sustainable transformation of the blue economy. Better knowledge of the ocean and its ecosystems, together with free access to data, will enable industry, public authorities and civil society to make informed decisions.

Through common standards and open access principles, EMODnet collates the measurements of hundreds of institutions to make the EU a model of best practice in **sharing marine data** and ocean observations. ***The Copernicus marine environment service*** provides satellite data and forecasting services in the EU sea basins and in the world. Work is ongoing to improve the digitalisation of the ocean, the resolution and usability of the data and to transform this data into knowledge and tools for the benefit of a wide range of stakeholders. This work, in particular the development of the ***Digital Twin of the Ocean as a component of the Destination Earth initiative***, involves several international institutions and will help tackle complex environmental changes and their socio-economic consequences by monitoring and simulating ocean developments. It will also be a tangible contribution to the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

The ***thematic digital twin on oceans*** will be programmed and added to the Destination Earth system from 2023 onwards.

Blue Economy Com (2021) 240
EXTRACTS OF INTEREST FOR HOs

To create the knowledge needed for the transition to a sustainable blue economy, the Commission will:

- prepare by 2022 an **Ocean Observation Initiative** to ***structure and harmonise the collection of data*** in the oceans for different purposes, such as environmental monitoring, fisheries and aquaculture management, research, safe navigation;
- ***expand the Copernicus marine service as an EU reference for ocean forecasting and an ocean climate centre for global, pan-European coastal services;***

All the above initiatives are in line with the European Commission's European data strategy in that they make public-sector data available for re-use and enable data to flow freely within the EU and across sectors, to the benefit of businesses, researchers and public administrations.

For Horizon Europe: The role of research and innovation in driving the transformation needed to achieve the Green Deal cannot be overstressed. R&I investment under **Horizon Europe** will support the transformation process to create sustainable blue economy value chains and enable the twin green and digital transitions.

Blue Economy Com (2021) 240
EXTRACTS OF INTEREST FOR HOs

4.1 Maritime spatial planning

The greater the demand for use of maritime space, the more crucial it is to have spatial planning. **Maritime spatial planning is an essential tool** to prevent conflict between policy priorities and to reconcile nature conservation with economic development. Public consultation involving both citizens and stakeholders is a fundamental part of the maritime spatial planning process**.**

4.3 Sea basins, regional cooperation and support for coastal regions

The EU will continue to support cooperation, develop tailored strategies for each European sea basin and extend the same cooperative approach to neighbouring countries that share with the EU a basin, marine living resources and geo-economic features.

Commission supports sea-basin and macro-regional frameworks for cooperation, i.e. the 2020 Atlantic action plan; the Western Mediterranean maritime strategy; the common maritime agenda for the Black sea, the EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region and the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region;
http://www.atlanticstrategy.eu/en. https://www.westmed-initiative.eu/. https://blackseablueconomy.eu/206/common-maritime-agenda-black-sea. https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/. https://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/about/about.

Blue Economy Com (2021) 240
EXTRACTS OF INTEREST FOR HOs

4.4 Maritime security

A safe and secure maritime space is the prerequisite to preserving EU's strategic interests such as freedom of navigation, external border control or the supply of essential materials and for protecting economic activities and citizens, both at sea and on shore.

Exchanging information, including in-situ, aerial and satellite data, is a crucial factor in addressing security challenges, preventing illegal activities at sea and enforcing the law. Cooperation on coastguard functions between three key EU agencies (EMSA, EFCA, and FRONTEX) generates significant economies of scale by reducing overlaps, developing multipurpose operations and sharing aircrafts and vessels for search and rescuing operations, oil pollution response etc.

To enhance information exchange, the European Commission has developed a common information sharing environment for the maritime domain (CISE). http://emsa.europa.eu/cise.html.