

The Atlantic our Shared Resource: Making the Vision Reality **European Commission, Brussels, Belgium, 16-17 April**

The Galway Statement, launching an Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance, was signed in May 2013 by the European Union (EU), Canada and the United States of America (USA). The 2nd Stakeholder Meeting on the Implementation of the Galway Statement was reported in the IH Bulletin in February 2015.

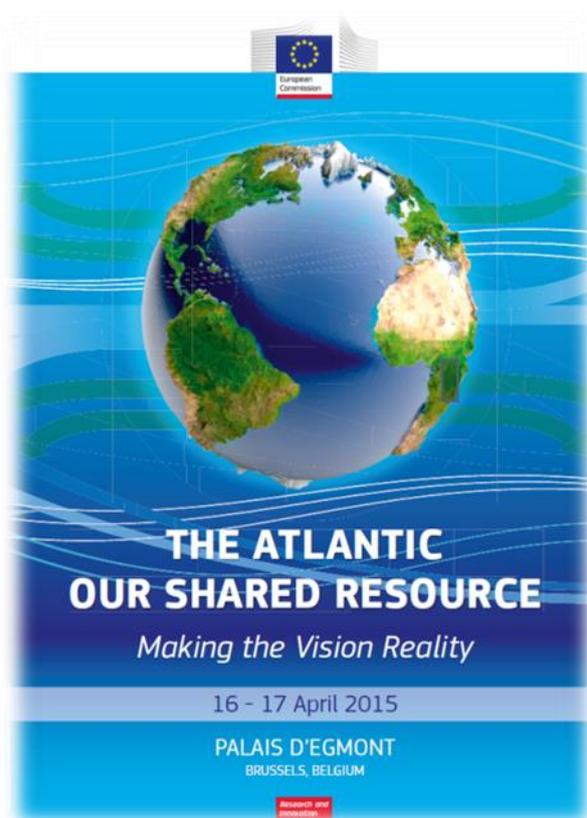
The implementation of the activities supporting this Galway Statement was the object of a high level Conference on “*The Atlantic our Shared Resource: Making the Vision Reality*”, held in Brussels, Belgium, on 16-17 April. The objective was to bring together all the project coordinators and their partners, report on progress and develop networking connections among stakeholders.

More than 340 participants representing European countries, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Canada, South Africa, USA, various organizations, and industry, were registered at this Conference. The Conference was opened by Mr Carlos Moedas, European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science and Mr Karmenu Vella, European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Environment, with the participation of high level authorities, including Ministers and Ambassadors, from Brazil, Canada, France, Ireland, South Africa and USA. The IHO had been invited to participate by the European Commission. Assistant Director Yves Guillam, on behalf of the IHO, provided an introduction to the IHO and the status of hydrography at the very first session.

On the European side, approximately 70 million Euros has been earmarked for the period 2014-2020. This funding will support the first round of projects approved under the *Horizon 2020 Blue Growth Galway Statement follow-up projects*.

The first stages of many Horizon 2020 projects were presented by their coordinators during the “showcase” sessions. The term *seabed mapping* was used much more than *hydrography* during the Conference. In this context, most of the speakers referred positively to the IHO presentation stressing the fact that many areas around the world remained unsurveyed or inadequately surveyed.

During the presentations, the development of new survey initiatives involving ships of opportunity from the commercial fleet was highlighted. Presenters indicated the creation of web data portals as part of the deliverables of every project - portals “*where you can finally find and download the data you need!*”, as they said.



Unfortunately, presenters made little or no reference to the IHO-IOC General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) programme and associated activities. However, discussions in the margins of the Conference between Assistant Director Guillam and senior representatives from many of the organizations provided opportunities to highlight the role of national Hydrographic Offices (HOs) and to confirm that they are well recognized in general, even if they do not featured in the large research and collaborative projects that were described at the Conference.

At the end of the Conference, a panel of high level participants contributed to the drawing up of a series of recommendations. Those of interest to the IHO include:

- a better knowledge of the ocean floor is required for running predictive models;
- there is a need to better interact and work with the community of oil and gas producers;
- before the research projects come to an end, it is important to ensure that existing organizations (such as IOC) or infrastructures (such as EMODnet) can take over;
- coastal States need to develop their own national ocean policies;
- marine information databases need to be harmonized and free access to data promoted

Further information concerning the Conference and related activities is available on the IHO web site at www.iho.int > Committees & WG > IRCC > IENWG & EC-IHO Cooperation > Miscellaneous Meetings and on the relevant web pages of the European Commission (http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/maritimeaffairs_fisheries/ and <http://ec.europa.eu/research/>).