

**15th MEETING OF THE IHO INTER-REGIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
IHO-IRCC15
Tokyo, Japan, 12-14 June 2023**

[IHO-EU Network Working Group report]

Submitted by:	IHO-EU Network Working Group (IENWG)
Executive Summary:	This report outlines the review of the IENWG strategy and the way forward for its activities, which are the major outcomes of the last meeting of the WG.
Related Documents:	10th anniversary of the MoU between the IHO and the EU (6 May 2022): https://maritime-forum.ec.europa.eu/en/node/7175
Related Projects:	none

1. Introduction / Background

The IENWG held its last meeting in Brest (France) on 23 May 2023. The agenda of the meeting included a review of the strategy of the group and the way forward for its activities.

2. Analysis/Discussion

The discussion related to the strategy of the IENWG and its activities, and its outcomes, are reported in the extract of the minute of the meeting which follows.

Way forward of the IENWG- Strategic discussion on the WG situation and objectives (All).

The chair (Pierre-Yves Dupuy) reminded that the last review of the activity and the strategy of the WG was made 5 years ago and welcomed the proposal for this point made by Germany. The Director General of Shom (Laurent Kerléguer) took part in this part of the meeting.

Thomas Dehling raised the following questions: where are we, what are the next steps, how to more involve the IHO secretariat? He exposed the importance to regularly consider the alignment of the WG with the IHO activities, the development of EU maritime policies, financial opportunities and member States' needs. The review of the IENWG activities and strategy is particularly topical in the anticipation of the next IRCC15 meeting (12-14 June) and the discussion at the IRCC level to extend capacity building funding in the IHO.

It was agreed that the IENWG Chair should summarise the directions to be prioritised in the future work of the IENWG, which are reported below, circulate them to members for approval and report to the next IRCC15 meeting.

The main highlights of the participants to answer to “where are we”, were:

- The IENWG network activity allows a dialog with the EU Commission (like DG MARE this meeting).
- The DG MARE confirms that an intervention or suggestion from the WG (11 countries represented for this meeting) has a much better chance to be considered than an individual one.
- The WG Members value the interactions with the EU Commission and information sharing between the HOs.
- The IENWG gives within the IHO an understanding of EU maritime policies and expectations and within the EU Commission the knowledge of the IHO and HOs competencies.
- The IENWG allows HOs to set up common position and to influence on EU maritime policies.

- The IENWG stands out from other IHO WG for its networking activities and should continue to give priority to its capacity of networking, reactivity and informal way of working.

Next steps?

The following topics were discussed, on the basis of exchanges with the EU Commission representative in the morning (Rémy Dénos from Unit Maritime innovation, Marine Knowledge and Investment of DG MARE), and should be considered as priority developments. Rémy Dénos is ready to liaise with other *ad hoc* DGs for the development of IENWG activities. The involvement of the IHO secretariat would definitely be an asset for the promotion activities at high level in the EU Commission.

- 1) **EU maritime policies evolutions:** to continue the activity of monitoring and influencing developments in EU maritime policies in the benefit of IHO and EU countries HOs.
- 2) **Development of the S-100 hydrographic products and services in Europe:** to promote to DG MARE and DG MOVE, the IHO S-100 products and concrete use cases (organization of a dedicated webinar, transmission of a flyer, organization of a EU study about the benefits of the S 100 for Blue economy, marine safety, protection of marine areas and biodiversity). The lobbying shall be extended towards DG ENV, DG CLIMA, DG RTD.
- 3) **Capacity Building:** to promote the value to develop programs for the development of competencies, expertise, training and means to increase the hydrographic capacity in the EU and outside EU. This activity at the IENWG level should be well connected to activities to be developed by the IRCC on extending CB funds. CB is of strategic importance to the EU, because: (1) the world economy strongly depends on the Sea Line of Communication between Europe and East Asia, requiring safe passage through all national maritime areas in between. East Asian countries are currently the largest IHO CB donors, and an EU role would complement that; (2) Africa may be the next geopolitical focus area, with large European interests in rare Earth minerals, human trafficking, fisheries, and other natural resources.
Benefits: Improvement of marine safety and protection of environment. Increase in the data acquisition and marine knowledge for all.
- 4) **Data collection:** to develop with HOs Interreg and Horizon Europe programs, **common acquisition campaigns of bathymetric data in the EU maritime basins** (coastal mapping project recommendation)
Obstacles: no topic clearly identified in the EU financial programs for that; the principle of subsidiarity: the EC does not act on responsibilities that are with the Member States.
Benefits: acceleration of the acquisition of data indispensable for the EU maritime policies and the digital twin of the oceans (DTO)

Shom emphasised that the activities regarding the new directions of work should be shared among members. It is expected that it will result in new ideas and orientations for projects to be discussed with the European Commission.

3. Action Required of IRCC

The IRCC is invited to:

- a. note the report, in particular the review and the way forward for the IENWG and the proposal to connect the IENWG activities with other IRCC developments on extending capacity building funds