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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL, THE
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COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**Guidelines for an Integrated Approach to Maritime Policy:
Towards best practice in integrated maritime governance and stakeholder consultation**

(presented by the Commission)

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consultation**

1. INTRODUCTION

The oceans and seas are extremely complex and influenced by many activities, interests and policies. Not surprisingly, the expertise to deal with the multiple challenges of maritime affairs, and also the powers to tackle them, are spread between numerous public and private players at different levels of governance ranging from the United Nations to small coastal communities.

Yet the world's oceans and seas are interlinked, and action in one sea or one policy area with an impact on the sea may have positive or negative, intended or unintended effects on other seas and policy areas. Moreover, the ever more intense use of the oceans and seas by sectors such as shipping, energy, tourism or fisheries, combined with climate change, have added to the pressure on the marine environment. Due to this inextricable interdependence, a holistic approach is the best way to handle maritime affairs. An increasing number of governments, in Europe and all over the world, are signing up to a new, cross-cutting, integrated approach to governance of maritime affairs.

This approach lies at the core of the Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union (the "Blue Paper") proposed by the Commission in October 2007¹ and, since then, endorsed by the European Council and the European Parliament².

This approach is also driven by the recognition that there is a maritime dimension to virtually every major issue facing Europe today, including energy, climate change, environmental protection and conservation, research and innovation, competitiveness and job creation, international trade, transport and logistics. An integrated approach at every level is therefore a basic tool for policy-making and implementation across sectors, different levels of governance and borders, allowing systematic identification of synergies or inefficiencies. This not only provides a more effective means of achieving coinciding policy goals, but also paves the way for developing shared, cross-cutting tools and a common knowledge pool making for effective, cost-efficient solutions.

¹ [COM\(2007\) 575](#).
² www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/97669.pdf;
www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P6-TA-2008-0213&language=EN&ring=A6-2008-0163.

In order to move towards a more integrated approach, in 2005 the Commission set up a Steering Group of Commissioners on Maritime Affairs together with an Interservice Group on Maritime Affairs, which joins the Commission Directorates-General dealing with issues related to the seas and oceans. More recently, it restructured the renamed Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE)³ which, with a coordination unit, three units in charge of the different European sea basins and one dealing with the external dimension of maritime affairs, is now equipped for permanent internal coordination of maritime affairs.

Yet the full potential for optimised policy-making will not be reaped unless the integrated approach permeates every level of government, all players involved, research and policy advice and stakeholders' activities. This depends on cooperation between policy-makers and coordination of action taken at different levels of government. Several moves towards closer integration are also being taken throughout the EU. They should be encouraged, further developed and generally applied. This is why, when implementing the Action Plan on an Integrated Maritime Policy, the Commission will promote implementation of EU law and an integrated approach to maritime affairs throughout the EU, fully complying with the subsidiarity principle and in line with the existing division of powers.

In accordance with Section 3.1 of the Blue Paper, this Communication proposes a set of guidelines aimed at encouraging Member States and other players to take steps towards adopting an integrated approach to sea-related affairs within their governance frameworks.

2. TRENDS TOWARDS INTEGRATED MARITIME POLICY-MAKING

The Commission decided to make *“the particular need for an all-embracing maritime policy”* one of its strategic objectives for 2005-2009, in line with an international trend towards more integrated policy-making on maritime affairs.

The Preamble to the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea stated that *“the problems of ocean space are closely inter-related and need to be considered as a whole”*. In 2002, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development concluded that *“ensuring the sustainable development of the oceans requires effective coordination and cooperation”*. “UN Oceans”⁴ was set up in 2003 to ensure closer coordination of UN activities, organisations and agencies related to oceans and coasts, to define joint action and to promote integrated management.

A number of countries⁵ have also started building new policy frameworks for sustainable use of the oceans and seas that embrace every aspect of maritime

³ ec.europa.eu/dgs/fisheries/organi/oganig_en.pdf.

⁴ www.oceansatlas.org/www.un-oceans.org.

⁵ http://ioc3.unesco.org/abelos/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=55&Itemid=62

affairs and set clear, predetermined goals, taking an inter-sector and cross-cutting approach.

- In the USA, a Committee on Oceans Policy has been set up in the Executive Office of the President to implement an Ocean Action Plan focusing, *inter alia*, on closer coordination of policies⁶.
- In Australia, lead responsibility for coordinating oceans policy lies with the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, while the National Oceans Office coordinates efforts to deliver oceans policy initiatives⁷.
- Canada's Oceans Act, Strategy and Action Plan provide the framework for ocean-related programmes and policies. They are led by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and actively involve government bodies, NGOs and citizens⁸.
- Japan's "Basic Act on Oceans Policy" of 2007 provides for an integrated approach to maritime affairs. It established a "Maritime Policy Headquarters" under the responsibility of the Prime Minister. The Chief Cabinet Secretary and a newly assigned Minister for Ocean Policy will serve as Headquarters Deputy Chiefs. An Ocean Action plan has been adopted⁹.
- Norway presented a Maritime Strategy in October 2007. The work is coordinated by a network of State Secretaries, led by the State Secretary for Transport¹⁰.

The principles, objectives and modalities of all these maritime policies are largely similar. All these countries recognise the major contribution made by sea-based activities to their economy. They all acknowledge that the intensive development of these activities poses a challenge to sustainable development and use of their sea resources. And they have all decided to develop an overall policy that allows a comprehensive, coordinated approach, ensuring sustainable development of the different sea resources and activities.

The Impact Assessment¹¹ prepared prior to the Blue Paper on an Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union drew some basic lessons from this experience, for example that coordination is generally preferred to centralisation. Yet to ensure that everyone involved signs up to the process, an active catalyst is needed to further coordination and holistic thinking. Also, science and data resources have to be brought together to give the policy a sound basis for strategic and forward-looking decision-making.

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ocean.ceq.gov/.

www.environment.gov.au/coasts/oceans-policy/index.html.

www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans-habitat/oceans/ri-rs/cos-soc/index_e.asp.

www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/kaiyou/konkyo5.pdf

www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/nhd/Press-Centre/Press-releases/2007/--Norwegian-maritime-industry-is-to-be-t-2.html?id=482329.

SEC(2007) 1280.

The main problems found to slow down implementation of an integrated approach, apart from financial constraints, are generally lack of collaboration and of coordination structures between the players concerned and the long time it takes for administrations and stakeholders to internalise fully integrated thinking. Therefore, clear communication about the policy and dialogue is essential.

Many EU Member States apply or are moving towards an integrated approach to policy, such as France, Germany, Portugal, the Netherlands and Slovenia¹². Some have entrusted maritime affairs to a particular ministry, such as Greece and recently Spain, or are progressively applying holistic thinking in the form of thematic strategies, such as the UK and Sweden (on sustainability and environmental protection) or Ireland (marine science strategy).

Despite the lack of formal structures, the EU institutions organised their responses to the Green Paper consultation on a maritime policy for the EU holistically¹³. The Finnish Presidency organised a consultation cutting across various Council formations in the “Friends of the Presidency” group. The German Presidency organised a high-level conference covering the whole spectrum of maritime affairs and the Portuguese Presidency held a first informal ministerial meeting dealing with maritime policy in the broadest sense. Under the Portuguese Presidency, the Commission’s proposal for an Integrated Maritime Policy was also discussed in the General and External Affairs Council, given its horizontal and across-the-board remit.

The European Parliament produced its Opinion on the Green Paper on maritime policy after “enhanced cooperation” between five committees. The Committee of the Regions’ opinion was prepared by the Sustainable Development Committee, which has a broad, non-sectoral mandate.

3. NEEDS AND DRIVERS FOR AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO MARITIME GOVERNANCE

In Europe, maritime affairs have traditionally been dealt with by a number of separate sectoral policies. Such compartmentalisation of maritime governance continues to predominate the different levels of power at international, European, national, regional and local levels.

The move towards a more integrated approach to maritime affairs in the EU is not being taken just because this is the trend in other parts of the world, nor because it is the natural evolution of the governance framework in the prevailing context of sustainable development.

¹² Presented in the High-Level Focal Points Group, 22.4.2008, http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/focal-points-meeting_en.html.

¹³ ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/post_green_en.html (EP Opinion: No 484; Opinion of the Committee of the Regions: No 93; Economic and Social Committee Opinion: No 147).

More than that, it is a clear response to achieve greater coherence between different policy areas and approaches, taking particular account of:

- the need to avoid duplication of regulatory powers of different national or regional authorities in the Member States and to replace overlap and double-track decision-making by a one-stop-shop approach in each Member State;
 - the acknowledged need for coordinated planning of competing maritime activities and for strategic management of maritime areas (maritime spatial planning);
 - the need for better coordination between the different Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees at European level who are involved in maritime issues;
 - the adoption and implementation of the ecosystem approach and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive;
 - the need to develop an interface between science and policy and to ensure that marine science is able to inform maritime policy;
 - the need for reliable and comparable statistics to inform maritime policy making on all levels;
 - and, last but not least, the need to facilitate closer coordination on maritime surveillance between, and within, Member States.
- (1) Predictability of the decision-making process is essential for all maritime stakeholders. Purely sectoral maritime governance where different decision-makers may adopt differing approaches *vis-à-vis*, for instance, the maritime industries, including ports and shipping, is not conducive to the business-friendly environment that the EU is seeking with the Lisbon Strategy on growth and jobs. In this sense, joined-up governance of maritime affairs also means developing a one-stop-shop system for maritime activities at Member State level.
 - (2) There has been a rapid increase in sea-related activities – no longer just fisheries or shipping, but also offshore energy, including renewables, maritime tourism (recreational boating and cruise ships), mariculture amongst others. In marine protected areas, activities can be regulated or banned in relation to the conservation objectives. With such competition for space in Europe’s increasingly crowded coastal waters, there is clear potential for conflicts of use. Development and use of specific marine planning tools at the appropriate levels is therefore widely recognised as necessary in order to harmonise, prioritise and manage the uses made of seas, oceans and coastal areas. These planning tools, in turn, can only be built on an integrated approach to maritime governance.
 - (3) European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees tend to take a narrow sectoral approach to the issues affecting their sector. In order to widen their view, and to encourage them to follow a more holistic approach,

there is a need to put in place mechanisms to encourage cross-sectoral discussions in the area of maritime activities, such as dedicated meetings of the Social Dialogue Liaison Forum;

- (4) The ecosystem approach, enshrined in the recently adopted Marine Strategy Framework Directive, brings with it particular challenges. Decision-making may no longer be organised exclusively along the lines of traditional sectoral policies, but needs to reflect the large, transfrontier marine ecosystems which must be preserved in order to maintain the resource base of all maritime activities. Within this context of marine environmental protection, it is therefore necessary also to think in terms of maritime basins and the marine regions and sub-regions provided for in the Directive.
- (5) The Commission's vision for Europe's oceans and seas is one based on excellence in scientific research, technology and innovation. This vision is shared and supported by all other EU institutions and the European marine and maritime science and technology communities, encouraging a European Strategy for Marine and Maritime research. One key goal of this new strategy will be to assist the integrated maritime policy by creating the conditions for improving the interface between science and policy. This interface will achieve a two-fold objective: let science better inform policy and let policy strategically orient science towards Europe's main challenges and societal needs. A dialogue between scientific communities and policy is therefore both a driver and a response to an integrated, interdisciplinary and informed approach to maritime governance.
- (6) Eurostat has started a cross-sectoral work programme on socio-economic statistics covering maritime sectors and coastal regions; Member States have an interest to work with Eurostat towards comparable and reliable statistics;
- (7) Finally, maritime surveillance is of the highest importance for safe use of Europe's maritime areas. Improving cooperation, coordination and, at times, even the coherence of maritime surveillance agencies, and the interoperability of their surveillance systems at European level, also requires a more integrated approach to maritime governance at the appropriate levels. Without this integrated approach it will not be feasible to coordinate different sectoral offshore activities (on fisheries, criminal activities, port security, pollution, rescue and safety, border control, etc.) nor to generate synergies between them. Similarly, at European level, the European network for maritime surveillance called for in the Blue Paper will require new, more integrated governance mechanisms.

All the points made above are prerequisites for efficient, sustainable management of Europe's maritime assets and act as drivers for a coherent and more integrated framework for governance of maritime affairs.

4. GUIDELINES FOR INTEGRATED GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORKS FOR EUROPE'S SEAS AND OCEANS

4.1. Developing a strategic approach to maritime policy at national level

Member States should develop their own national integrated maritime policies.

As was made clear in the Commission's proposal for an Integrated Maritime Policy for the EU, one size does not fit all: there are different, equally suitable ways to make an integrated approach to maritime affairs work. A number of Member States are developing their own new approaches, in accordance with their legal frameworks and with their economic, social, political, cultural and environmental context. These different approaches are actually necessary in order to adapt to the specific challenges in different sea basins and to align seamlessly with structures and traditions in the Member States.

The guidelines set out below are therefore not in any way meant to call on Member States to adopt any single system of maritime governance. They are designed to encourage them to draw up their own national integrated maritime policies, in close collaboration with their maritime stakeholders, and to enhance and facilitate cooperation at all levels of maritime governance, including at European level.

Each government will have its own specific priorities for its maritime policy. Yet different government entities should work towards shared goals. To this end, a strategic plan should set out the policy's overarching vision, goals and path to implementation, guiding the different public departments involved. Such a plan should explain the benefits and results that this integrated approach will deliver.

These national integrated maritime policies will differ from each other, depending on their different constitutional, geophysical, economic, social, cultural and environmental contexts, but should take into account the European vision for the oceans and seas endorsed by the European Council in December 2007.

National integrated maritime policies should therefore be based on the recognition that all matters relating to the sea are interlinked and should be dealt with as a whole.

Just like the EU's Integrated Maritime Policy, integrated national policies should also be guided by the principles of subsidiarity, competitiveness and economic development, the ecosystem approach and the principle of stakeholder participation.

4.2. Governance frameworks for decision-making by public authorities at national level

Member States should consider creating internal coordinating structures for maritime affairs within their government frameworks.

These structures should include a mechanism providing political guidance at the highest level. Some Member States have established an inter-ministerial committee as their lead structure for coordinating maritime affairs.

Responsibility to act as political leader and as a catalyst for the integrated approach at political level should be clearly assigned. This function must have sufficient weight to be able to structure the dialogue between sectoral interests.

In addition, parliaments' central role in defining the public interest makes their engagement in support of a holistic, overarching approach to maritime affairs essential¹⁴.

Public administration, too, should reflect the integrated approach set out at political level, with each Member State making organisational arrangements that fit in with its administrative traditions. In existing practice in some Member States, inter-ministerial committees are usually supported by a coordinating office or agency, directed by a high-level official, with the task of making sure that decisions taken by the inter-ministerial committee are implemented. This implies that the director of the coordinating office or agency must hold a considerable level of authority. The integrated approach should also strengthen the coordination and reporting necessary in the context of the implementation of Community law in Member States, thus reducing the number of infringement procedures in relation to maritime affairs.

4.3. The role of coastal regions and other local decision-makers

Sub-national levels of decision-making – regional and local levels – have a role to play.

Coastal regions not only benefit from an integrated approach to maritime policy, but also run the largest risks in the absence of coherent sea-related policies. In view of their close relationship with the sea, several coastal regions are developing their own integrated strategies, tailored to their specific needs. Within Member States, they may often be responsible for Integrated Coastal Zone Management or to regulate the spatial deployment of economic activities. As they often have unique know-how and insights and represent key interests in maritime issues, they have a role to play in the development of integrated policy-making, in accordance with the specific responsibilities that the regions have for maritime affairs in each Member State.

Where appropriate, and depending on the constitutional powers of these levels of decision-making, it could also be useful to develop regional integrated maritime policies in line with the relevant national and EU policies.

¹⁴ Parliaments' responses to the Green Paper: the Lower and Upper German Chambers: No 309 and 129; Swedish Parliament: No 254, ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/post_green_en.html.

4.4. Stakeholder participation in integrated maritime policy-making

Active participation by maritime stakeholders in integrated national, regional or local maritime policies is highly recommended.

The European vision for the oceans and seas, as set out in the Blue Paper on an Integrated Maritime Policy, is not only directed to national governments but also extends to all stakeholders, in particular to all those with a specific interest in maritime affairs. These stakeholders were the driving force behind the year-long consultation organised by the Commission following publication of the Green Paper on a future maritime policy for the Union. They include the many industries and services which depend on the sea for their economic activities, social partners, environmental and other NGOs, academic and research institutions and maritime heritage organisations, among many others.

The Commission recently declared, during celebrations of the first, newly established European Maritime Day on 20 May, that participation by stakeholders in implementation of the European Union's integrated maritime policy is a major priority.

Economic operators should adopt an integrated approach by forming "maritime clusters" which, in turn, can cooperate with other stakeholders by setting up civil society *fora* and networks of maritime stakeholders.

Member States developing their own national integrated maritime policies are recommended to promote and facilitate appropriate stakeholder structures, allowing broad participation by stakeholders in governance of maritime affairs, taking measures to increase the capacity of the social partners and ensuring a transparent decision-making process.

4.5. More efficient links at regional sea basin level

During the consultation period, it became evident that many aspects of an integrated maritime policy can best be addressed at regional sea basin level. Also, the entry into force of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive makes it necessary for Member States and the Commission to cooperate more at this level and to make best use, where appropriate, of the added value provided by the multilateral regional seas conventions, such as HELCOM¹⁵, OSPAR¹⁶ or the Barcelona¹⁷ and Bucharest Conventions¹⁸.

In response to the request made by the European Council on 14 December 2007, the European Commission is preparing an EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, which will include measures to implement an integrated maritime policy for the Baltic which, however, will go beyond maritime policy. The Commission has also started work on a strategy to implement a holistic

¹⁵ www.helcom.fi/

¹⁶ www.ospar.org/

¹⁷ www.unep.ch/regionalseas/regions/med/t_barcel.htm

¹⁸ www.blacksea-commission.org/OfficialDocuments/Convention_iframe.htm

approach to maritime policy in the Mediterranean and envisages publishing a policy paper on this in autumn 2008. The governance challenge is to optimise efficiency in cooperation in the regional sea basins and to ensure that it adds value to the ongoing work at EU level, within Member States and with the EU's neighbours.

For integrated governance of maritime affairs in Europe to work fully, it is crucial to develop a degree of coordination across borders, allowing exchanges of best practice and closer cooperation between states in critical areas, such as those relating to protection of the marine environment, to the safety, security and surveillance of Europe's vast maritime areas and to marine and maritime research.

5. CONCLUSIONS

As part of its efforts to promote steps towards integrated maritime policy-making at different levels of governance, the Commission will provide information about action in this direction at global, European, Member State and regional levels, in order to facilitate this process and provide guidance to stakeholders looking for models of best practice.

The Commission invites the EU institutions and Member States to share information about the steps they are taking towards integrated maritime governance.

As called for in the Blue Paper on an Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union, the Commission will report on progress towards an integrated approach to maritime affairs by the end of 2009.

Annex – Format for sharing information on integrated approaches via the Internet

	Structure			Dialogue	Strategy		Management and implementation		
	Political leadership	Administrative organisation	Links between different levels of government	Transparent and inclusive dialogue	Vision	Knowledge and scientific advice	Offshore government functions	Maritime clusters	Maritime spatial planning
<i>MS</i>	Minister responsible	Coordinating department	Description of devolved governance and role of regions	Structured dialogue	Document Annual reports, including on budget	Advisory committees Science networks	Organisation of coastguard service/national maritime agencies Surveillance systems	Cluster organisations	Summary of planning system
	Member of high-level focal point group			Communication tools					Regular events

The table will bring together key facts on integrated maritime governance and stakeholder consultation, with information on websites and contacts.