

Marine Science Contribution to Regional Seas Strategies

BONUS Seminar 09/12/2008 Brussels, Hotel Silken Berlaymont - 14h – 16h Session 1

Status and vision of the policy-oriented science in the European and regional contexts

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be here with you today and I would like to thank the Bonus Consortium for proposing and organising this event together with the European Commission.

In my presentation this afternoon, I would like to focus on the vision of the Commission concerning research policy and objectives, focusing on its regional and international dimension.

I would start by recalling that in March 2000, the Lisbon European Council endorsed the Commission communication on the European Research Area (ERA), and concluded that research activities at national and Union level must be better integrated and coordinated to make them more efficient and innovative. ERA was born and seen as a pillar of the Lisbon Strategy for jobs and growth

In conjunction with the launching of ERA, Framework Programme VI offered an opportunity for implementing and testing new mechanisms and schemes for networking, co-ordinating and integrating national programmes. ERA-Nets are particularly important in this context, since, as you know, this scheme aims at developing and strengthening the coordination of public research programmes carried out at national **or at regional level**.

Environmental science communities and the marine research community were very responsive to this new perspective and many Networks of Excellence, ERA-Nets and Integrated Projects were launched.

This trend was confirmed and strengthened during the preparation and the first steps of the implementation of Framework Programme VII, including clear orientations for an Art. 169 based Joint programme for the sustainable development of the Baltic Sea, with an ERA-Net Plus as a bridging measure.

For those who are not totally familiar with the FP7 instruments, the ERA-Net Plus instrument allows the Commission to contribute financially to a joint call for proposals organised by a consortium of funding agencies. This was the case for the ERA-Net Plus BONUS, with a community contribution of 9 million euro.

Now a few words about the future.

In May this year, at an Informal Meeting of the Competitiveness Council held in Slovenia, the EU Ministers responsible for Research commented that Europe had as yet not fully exploited its research potential – its human resources, institutions and, in particular, the operational synergy between them.

The European Research Area (ERA) can be created only in **partnership** between the Member States and between Member States and the EU, therefore it was agreed that the EU Member States and the European Commission would be jointly responsible for establishing a genuine single European Research Area and its main features were highlighted: the mobility of researchers, and attractive careers for them, enabled by the 'fifth freedom', modern universities and research infrastructures, research organisations ensuring global excellence (i.e. a researcher- and enterprise-friendly research environment) as well as a coordinated strategy for international cooperation in the area of science and technology.

The Informal Meeting participants also agreed that the ERA could be achieved only through improved political management of the European Research Area, encompassing policies on research, education and innovation and involving all other actors – administrations, academic institutions, business and civil society. In this, the Member States will endeavour to intensively exchange examples of good practice, create new models and apply them in national research policies (in line with the open method of coordination – OMC), based on a detailed analysis of the situation and on a well-developed information system.

In the spirit of partnership, the Ministers also proposed specific management methods to enable the ERA to be developed quickly and efficiently. The significance of this new commitment found expression in the launch of the 'Ljubljana Process'.

Recently, the orientations given within the context of the Ljubljana process were made concrete in a number of strategic areas. The Competitiveness Council of 1-2 December welcomed several Communications of the Commission.

The outcome of this Council meeting has been reported broadly in the press. I would like to mention, among other things that:-

1. The Council welcomed the "shared vision 2020" for the European Research Area, that aims to establish the "Fifth Freedom", the freedom of circulation of knowledge and the provision of attractive conditions for researchers.
2. Conclusions were also drawn on Joint programming in research. This concept sets out a new approach for making better use of Europe's limited public funds for research and development. It proposes that Member States first identify a limited number of key

challenges on which to focus their efforts, and then, agree on a common vision and together develop and implement a Strategic Research Agenda for each area. The Communication stresses that Joint Programming will be a voluntary process, for a partnership between the Member States, based on clear principles and transparent high-level governance.

3. A Communication on "Strategic European Framework for International Science and Technology Cooperation" was also welcomed. The European Research Area has to be open to the world. The EU needs to strengthen the international cooperation in Science and Technology. By adopting this Communication, member states committed themselves to define together, rather than in isolation, priority research and technology areas where a coherent EU effort would have more impact.

And finally

4. As human activities exert environmental pressure on the oceans and seas, thus threatening marine ecology, the engagement of stakeholders in the marine and maritime research sectors becomes vital. This is why the Council welcomed the Communication on "A European Strategy for Marine and Maritime Research". The objective is to overcome the fragmentation of the European marine and maritime research landscape by capacity building, increased integration across traditional research sectors and increased cooperation of all actors in this area.

The Strategy for marine and maritime research focuses on the important role that science and technology can play in the process of reconciling the sometimes competing goals of sustainable economic growth and environmental preservation in sea-based activities.

It is clear that any region in Europe, including the Baltic Region can benefit from these orientations in European research policy.

The Regional approach has always been central to the EU research policy, and in FP7 Decisions the significant role of the regions is underlined. The goal is to strengthen the research potential of European regions, in particular by encouraging and supporting the development, across Europe, of regional 'research-driven clusters', associating universities, research centres, enterprises and regional authorities.

It is interesting to quote FP7: "Regions are increasingly recognised as important players in the EU's research and development landscape. Research policy and activities at regional level often rely on the development of 'clusters' associating public and private actors."

This leads me to say few words about the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region that the Commission is currently finalizing.

I shall actually limit myself to say few comments on the subject because many participants to this meeting are more knowledgeable than I on the item. I just wish to indicate how such a strategy could and should benefit from a coherent and competitive research system.

The Strategy seeks to fulfil the potential of the 2004 enlargement, with a particular emphasis on economic, social, transport, security and environmental concerns. It will be based on the commitments that the Member States and regions have already undertaken under the Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives, the National Strategic Reference Frameworks and the Operational Programme. The key to its success, of course, will be the involvement of all concerned actors in its implementation, taking a fresh look at the work undertaken both at the national level, and in the EU and international contexts. Member States, Regions and stakeholders will all be called upon to contribute to making the Strategy a success by going well beyond the implementation requirements, and by ensuring close harmonization with, for example the Marine Strategy Directive, or international commitments such as the Espoo convention.

Such an ambitious goal cannot be achieved without a robust, multi-disciplinary and joint research effort, made primarily by the Baltic States.

Furthermore the Commission is committed to submitting a legislative proposal on an Article 169 initiative in the Baltic region. The Commission believes that such an initiative can improve the effectiveness of environmental and sustainable development policies for the entire Baltic region through a durable restructuring of the research fabric.

The European Commission has included the proposal for the BONUS-169 initiative in its legislative programme for 2009 and would like submit it to the Council and the European Parliament, provided that, and as soon as, all relevant boundary conditions are met.

Beyond the regional dimension, the Commission has also called for proposals for renewed and strengthened partnerships:

I shall mention two of them, which are in line with the orientations of the Communication on Marine Research:

1. A call for an overarching ERA-Net , to be built on existing ERA-Nets, aiming at developing common European research strategies and programmes, taking into account the whole range of issues and challenges that marine research has to face, and addressing the international dimension as well as the regional dimension, e.g. through the development of sea basin approaches.
2. and,
3. A call for a "partnership", a kind of Network of Networks that would also contribute to designing, and progressively implementing, common, innovative and efficient strategies and research agendas.

The partnership initiative, announced in the Marine Research Communication, and to which the ongoing call for proposals contributes, is complementary to the overarching ERA-Net in the sense that the Partnership initiative gives an opportunity to the potential participants, other than the National Funding Agencies (the only ones to be part of an ERA Net), to contribute to the strategic process.

Ladies and Gentleman, in my brief presentation I tried to give you an overview of the political orientations , the various instruments and policy- oriented strategies and objectives that we have set up at Community level to render European research more effective in addressing the big challenges that our societies are facing today.

Our success in doing this will depend on the extent to which the various actors at European, national, regional and local level commit themselves to this common course.

It is essential that the main actors of the European research system mobilise a sufficient amount of appropriate resources: human resources, infrastructures and financial resources, in order to contribute to environmental, social and economic stability and well-being. It is also equally essential that the forces contribute, in an integrated manner, to developing and implementing common visions and shared agendas and adopt common approaches on how to address and solve problems together.

In this perspective, words such as "partnerships", "fragmentation" and "competitiveness" of the European research fabrics are key-words that help in summing-up EU political orientations.

The challenge of sustainable development, including in the Baltic Sea, requires a huge effort, going well beyond what was done to date.

I very much hope that this seminar will welcome this message and be a step in the right direction for the Baltic Sea region as a whole.

I also hope that the process that has been initiated in the Baltic Sea region, will be of benefit to the other sea regions and I would like to mention again, that the recent communication on Marine Research and the ongoing calls for proposals offer some opportunities for this.

In concluding, I would like to thank again the BONUS consortium for having organised this event.

I do look forward to a very fruitful and successful seminar.

Thank you very much for your attention,

Glossary

ERA	European Research Area
FP7	7-th Framework Programme (2007-2013)
R&D	Research and Development
SME	Small and Medium sized Enterprise
SICA	Specific International Co-operation scheme
I-Mera	Implementing the Metrology European Research Area
Bonus	Bonus for the Baltic Sea science - Network of Funding Agencies
EDCTP	European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership
AAL	Ambient Assisted Living
EMRP	European Metrology Research Programme
BONUS	Joint Baltic Sea Research Programme
EUROSTARS	Research Performing Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
ITRE	Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, European Parliament

References

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4. Regulation (EC) No 1906/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 laying down the rules for the participation of undertakings, research centres and universities in actions under the Seventh Framework Programme and for the dissemination of research results (2007-2013)
5. Work Programme 2009 Environment (including Climate Change)
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