

Marine strategy for long term funding and maintenance budgets

Virtual Institute of Scientific users of deep-Sea Observatories (VISO)

by Antoine Dosdat & Charlotte Jagot
Ifremer
Direction for European Affairs

1. Recent developments in marine science policy and European Research Area

A) Consultation on Green paper ERA:

Specific initiative to set up a legal framework for new research infrastructure of pan-European interest : It will be adopted shortly (18-19th June).

=> ERIC (European research infrastructure consortium)

This could be an interesting framework for EMSO in the longer term but :

- has to be initially supported by MS
- needs to be mature enough
- needs funding commitments from Member States.

Requires at least 3 Member States, should be “qualified as an international body” and hence exempted from VAT.

=> VISO would not need to have a strong and burdensome structure but could be a light structure associated to EMSO-ERIC.

B) Marine and maritime research strategy (COM 2008/534)

Strong emphasis on capacity-building and especially on research infrastructures:

“Developing sustainable support for the specialised pan-European research infrastructures is required to meet identified challenges and opportunities, including those proposed under the current ESFRI Roadmap and Integrated Infrastructures Initiatives (I3) of FP7;”

“Defining at European level investment requirements (including their running costs) for new infrastructures is needed to support pan-European and international marine and maritime research (for example using Cohesion Policy funds to co-finance them);”

“Building new research and observation infrastructure” is clearly identified and “deep-sea observation” is also considered among the priority topics.

=> practically an expert group to look at Structural funds and financial engineering, as well as study through the Operational Programmes. Pilot projects envisaged.

C) Expert group on the future of Networks of excellence – final report (September 2008)

In general NoEs failed to address durable integration. However, they were **successful** in delivering **certain collective goods** (Developing joint programmes; pooling scientific equipment, joint use of research infrastructures; advanced education and training activities; science policy interface ...)

Recommendation: a EU scheme based on the NoE experience “**Joint research initiatives**”. It would comprise well defined core objectives which have to be identified beforehand, a well defined programme. Limited core number of partners (3-7) and longer duration (7-9 years). Consultation with MS and stakeholders will be essential to define such a framework.

=> The expert group proposes renewed funding opportunities for a very limited number of NoEs that are successfully moving towards achieving the objectives of the NoE scheme. (see call - ENV.2010.2.2.1-3 Coordination actions to support FP6 NoEs durable integration)

D) Evaluation of the 6th Framework Programme for research and technological development 2002-2006 – report of the expert group (February 2009).

Same interpretation as expert group on NoEs concerning the instrument and its failure to ensure durable integration

Interesting recommendations about potential FP8 approach:

=> **top-down** : collaborative projects/programmes on “grand challenges” for the European society (Joint Programming), complementary to industrial oriented initiatives (JETI)

=> **bottom-up approach** : promotion of “great ideas” or the promotion of the excellence based of individual research teams or on emerging needs (equivalent to NEST programme in FP6)

2. ESONET /EMSO beyond FP7 and links with other initiatives:

A) FP7:

Draft Work programme “Environment” 2010 “... following the recommendations made by the Networks of Excellence (NoE) High Level Group, two coordination actions addressing some of the existing FP6 NoEs are envisaged. “

=> ENV.2010.2.2.1-3 Coordination actions to support FP6 NoEs durable integration. **ESONET is not covered by this call (MARBEF, MARINE GENOMICS and EUROCEANS).**

EMSO: “Capacities programme” :

A budget exists to complement PP : “**support to the implementation phase**”. It involves the actual construction, building on the technical, legal, administrative and financial agreement achieved during the preparatory phase between all stakeholders.

⇒ **only for PPs mature enough** (with firm funding commitment from member States). EC Funding would be limited to about 10% of the costs. (In INFRA call 2010, this line will fund the PP “PRACE” about intensive computing)

B) Beyond FP7 links with other projects:

EUROFLEETS, SEADATANET, EUROSITES

= > may be a way to achieve durable integration through shared participation to these projects on common issues, which have a long run and are of paramount importance for Europe.

C) Beyond FP7:

- Structural funds and actions proposed under Strategy for marine and maritime research;
- To go for an ERIC for the future of EMSO. (Marine Genomics also has this view about EMBRC)
- GMES support for some specific sites ?

- **To link-up ESONET/EMSO and KM3NET** (ANTARES site) in the Mediterranean could be instrumental in mobilising certain Member States;
- Explore further the **link with SIAEOS** on the new ESFRI list (EMSO could be the deep sea component of the marine segment of SIAEOS)
- To better link up EMSO/ESONET with **offshore industry** sites could have a triggering effect for certain States : UK (DELOS-BP), Norway and facilitate/stimulate the set-up of an ERIC?
- VISO could then be considered as a **light structure advising the EMSO-ERIC, “club of users”** but this could be achieved only if EMSO is considered as a mature PP which is, up to now, not sufficiently advanced.

3) Learning from other projects:

Being funded under the last call of FP6, ESONET can build on the experience of previous NoEs who had to organize themselves ahead of ESONET.

Question of legal status:

- **GDRE**/consortium: light structure with workplan and objectives for 4 years, no legal entity but convention (EUROCEANS) ;
- **AISBL**: non profit international association under Belgium law (several NoEs, especially in the materials field have chosen this solution to achieve durable integration with a legal status);
- **EEIG (European Economic Interest Group)**: It is a flexible and light transnational structure, members interlink some of their economic activities while retaining their economic and legal independence. The formation of an EEIG gives rise to an independent legal entity with legal capacity. (some NoEs in the field of health have chosen this solution: “Expertissues”, “European vision institute”)
- **ERIC** framework for EMSO.

4) Conclusions and prospects

- Role of **VISO** as complementary to EMSO as virtual club of scientific users. But mainly corresponding to technology development. Needs a stronger science to society case.
- Before end of ESONET/EMSO, probably more insight about structural funds and ESFRI funding => strategy for marine and maritime research + pilot projects could be considered (find arguments and further explore).
- Possible legal structures: GDRE/consortium, AISBL, EEIG
- Adopt a light structure (GDRE?) with a view that EMSO, if it becomes mature enough , submit an application for an ERIC?
- Deepen association with other ESFRI initiatives : KM3NET and SIAEOS to extend coverage/support.
- Better linkage with offshore industry which could trigger interest on the part of member States and ease financial commitment.