

# Integrated maritime policy for the EU

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The Commission presented a communication on the conclusions from the consultation on a European maritime policy which followed the adoption of the Green Paper on Maritime Policy.

The consultation lasted one year and received a response that was unprecedented both in terms of the scope and in the depth of the participation in the consultation process. The Commission received over 490 contributions and over 230 events were held where maritime policy was discussed with stakeholders.

The main conclusions are as follows:

**The Search for Added Value:** stakeholders are in favour of an integrated approach to Maritime Policy in the European Union, because it integrates the needs and concerns of linked sectors that are currently dealt with in separate policy activities. The consultation process confirms the scope for developing the relationship between those who live and work in day-to-day contact with the seas, including seafarers and fishermen, as well as other related sectors of economic activity. Operators point out the need for the integration of systems and standards in the area of maritime monitoring and surveillance. Researchers point to the economic benefits of the combined use of expensive assets for their work.

Certain stakeholders urge that the development of an integrated approach should not lead the EU to re- or over-regulate, or to over-centralise. A significant number do not want to see an integrated policy change existing competences.

**Subsidiarity means Responsibility:** The response to the Green Paper confirms that a European Maritime Policy must build on the existing distribution of competences within the EU. The subsidiarity principle and the involvement of stakeholders will play a key role in the future initiatives taken in the area of the EU's maritime policy.

The European Union's role is seen as facilitator rather than integrator per se. This is particularly the case as far as spatial planning and offshore government activities are concerned. There is little support for a European Coast Guard, but there is interest in cooperation between Member States' assets to achieve similar objectives without changing competences.

Much emphasis has been placed on the necessity that existing policies and legal frameworks are better implemented and interact in a more consistent way. Calls were made in favour of specific regulatory initiatives in order to close gaps in EU legislation. The broad participation of local and regional government bodies indicates an enthusiasm to learn from others, share experience and contribute ideas. Industry, on the other hand, calls for less regulation and more self-regulation.

**Global Issues and Responsibilities:** the global nature of maritime activities, such as shipping and fisheries, became apparent in the course of the consultation. Several stakeholders thought that the EU should promote measures to protect the global ecosystem, including on the high seas.

Here, the majority of stakeholders agree on the need for multilateral rules and standards and their implementation and enforcement. Views on how to achieve this differ; some insist on developing standards only in the multilateral context, and are opposed to the EU developing standards first. However, a significant number of stakeholders believe that the EU has an important role to play in leading by example.

The consultation process thus confirms the importance of developing an international dimension to a European Maritime Policy. Stakeholders want to ensure that the current system is used to its fullest extent before trying out new solutions.

**Sustainable Use of Resources:** the consultation process highlights how much Europe's prosperity relies on the availability of safe and efficient shipping services. Stakeholders agree that European shipping services and ports are sectors with high growth potential and that the EU's international and internal performance in the maritime sectors is built on delivering higher quality – not in being cheaper. The technologies of the future will be crucial building blocks for a more sustainable economy, e.g. the development of renewable energy, in particular wind and wave energy.

The consultation process has revealed strong support for the better collection and use of (real-time and other) data on oceans and seas. There is a need for high standards to ensure high quality and thus competitiveness, and standards that support sustainability. Industry points out that competitiveness on the basis of high standards will only work if these standards are applied across the board, securing a level playing field. They also point out that voluntary approaches may sometimes bring better results than prescriptive regulation.

Stakeholders indicate that there is scope for improvement in skills and training. There are divergences on whether, and which, exclusions concerning maritime sectors in EU social legislation are justified, but there is agreement on the need to contribute to a global level playing field for the sector and the role that EU legislation can play in this context.

There is very little dispute about the need to set up marine protected areas – but there is discussion about their designation. The development of blue biotechnology or other uses of genetic resources is seen as an opportunity, demonstrating the need for an integrated approach linking research, sustainability, and international rule-making. Stakeholders point out that up to 80% of the pollution of the marine environment is land-based and call for more action on this.

The importance of linkages between existing environmental instruments and the implementation of the marine thematic strategy is mentioned. Coherence and compatibility are underscored as essential for the implementation of all these instruments. Some stakeholders highlight the need to go beyond the Marine Thematic Strategy to embrace broader environment protection objectives, while others want to ensure that the impacts of environmental measures and legislation take economic priorities duly into account.

Working on the basis of ecosystems and eco-regions is fundamental for the sustainable management of sea and coastal spaces. Stakeholders point to the need for cooperation between coastal regions and neighbouring Member States – as well as neighbouring countries. There are many voices calling for a stronger integration of environmental concerns within fisheries combined with stronger integration of fisheries within maritime policy. Lastly, according to stakeholders, without improvements in training, working conditions and job opportunities for fishermen, developing a sustainable approach to fisheries is not realistic.

**Maritime Management:** stakeholders emphasise the need for coordinated management and planning for competing uses of the seas. They agree that maritime spatial planning would be a good tool to apply across the EU, but should remain a Member State competence.

The initiative to develop a European Data Network is generally welcomed, and many proposals are made as to practical ways and means of taking on this task. Very few stakeholders dispute the potential to achieve cost savings through standardisation, interlinking and communication between existing sectoral systems.

Regional stakeholders, including the Committee of the Regions, call, for the adoption of specific and targeted approaches to funding in coastal regions, through more transparency, and the linking of existing financial tools, under the umbrella of a European Coastal Fund.

**Europeans and the Sea: Participation and Involvement:** contributions call for consultation and dialogue, and for more information to be made available to all affected by maritime policy.

Individual citizens and civil society respond with mixed messages. There is some concern that the EU should not take over national or local competences but overall the reactions indicate of the public's concern for the planet's marine ecosystem and their impression that insufficient government action is being taken against practices that damage it.

There is a general consensus that the overall image of the maritime sectors needs to be enhanced. Ideas abound for the organisation of exchanges of best practice, conferences, the involvement of experts in the maritime world, such as fishermen, or small-scale projects aimed at informing local communities or tourists.