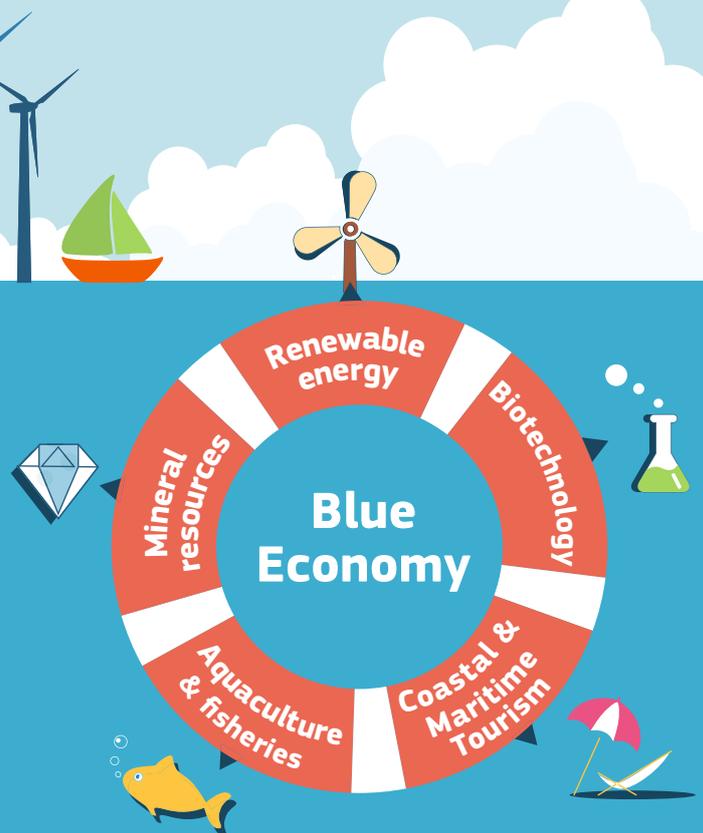


Summary of the results of the public consultation on international Ocean Governance



International Ocean Governance

Public consultation from 4.6.2015 to 15.10.2015

The aim of this consultation is to gather input on how the EU could contribute to achieving better international governance of oceans and seas to the benefit of sustainable blue growth. On the basis of the results and other sources of data and information, the European Commission will consider how best to develop a more coherent, comprehensive and effective EU policy on improving the international ocean governance framework.

All citizens and organisations are welcome to contribute to this consultation. Contributions are particularly sought from stakeholders, private and public, as well as international governmental and non-governmental organisations.

The contributions to the consultation and summary of the results can be found here: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/maritimeaffairs_fisheries/consultations/ocean-governance/index_en.htm

The International Ocean Governance Consultation is available in all languages.

CONTACT DETAILS

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Summary of the results of the public consultation on international ocean governance

1 The consultation

President Juncker gave a political mandate to Karmenu Vella, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, to engage in shaping international ocean governance in the UN, in other multilateral fora and bilaterally with key global partners.

On 4 June 2015, the European Commission launched a public consultation on international ocean governance. The purpose of this consultation was to gather input from all stakeholders, private and public, as well as international governmental and non-governmental organisations on how the EU could contribute to achieving better international governance of oceans and seas. The consultation process ended on 15 October 2015.

A total of 154 contributions were received, 89 contributions sent by individual stakeholders and 65 replies to the online questionnaire. Different types of stakeholders have answered to the consultation: governments, public bodies, business representatives, associations, NGOs, academia and citizens.

In addition to this public consultation, Commissioner Vella has conducted a “listening tour” to collect the views of stakeholders and international partners and discuss possible ways forward.

The views summarised in this document are those of stakeholders and do not represent the views of the Commission.

2 Profile of respondents

As illustrated by the graphic below, most of the responses come from public authorities (26%), followed by citizens (19%), NGOs (17%) and businesses (17%).

Type of stakeholders (%)

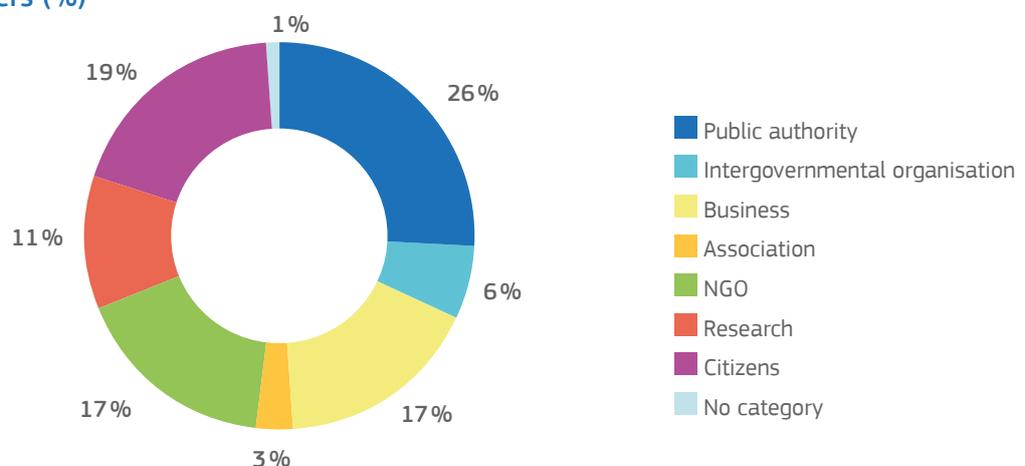


Figure 1: Replies by type of stakeholders in percentages

Contributions were received from representatives of 13 EU Member States, Iceland, Norway and the United States, as well as international organisations, including the UN DOALOS, UNESCO and UNEP. 15% of contributions came from stakeholders who could be considered as international or who come from non-European countries.

3 Summary of responses

3.1 The ocean governance framework

Nearly all contributors considered that the current framework for ocean governance is not effective enough in ensuring sustainable ocean management as illustrated by increased pollution, overexploitation, climate change and acidification. Respondents argue that this is not necessarily because the current framework as such is not the right one, but rather because of inefficient implementation and insufficient coordination.

A need for better implementation and better coordination

There is broad agreement amongst respondents that although several bodies of governance and agreements already exist, the system is fragmented and existing instruments are not implemented or enforced uniformly. Therefore, respondents consider that better implementation and better coordination are the first steps to improve ocean governance.

In order to illustrate their positions, several respondents refer to instruments that have already been signed but that have not been ratified or effectively implemented yet, such as the United Nations fish stock Agreement, the FAO Port State Measures Agreement and flag state performance Guidelines, the IMO ballast water Convention and the ILO work in fishing Convention. *Promoting good application of existing agreements within the maritime fora, sanction mechanisms and capacity-building* are the most frequent actions cited to address the implementation gap.

As regards the institutional aspects, most of the contributors point out the fragmentation of the ocean governance framework. This is due, among other reasons, to the prevalence of a sectoral approach over a more integrated one. However, maritime activities are de facto inter-connected and one decision in one area can affect all the others. Moreover, increasing competition for marine space renders the current approach inadequate and requires a more collaborative approach. In parallel, most of the respondents also advocate such an approach to protect marine biodiversity.

Adopting this approach requires better coordination between organisations. All respondents are asking for better coordination not only at the global level but also at the regional level. To be more efficient, this coordination has to be both horizontal - i.e between UN agencies and programmes and between regional organisations - and vertical - i.e between the global, regional and national levels.

While a minority of participants is asking to establish an overarching body to take on the role of coordinator, for most of them, better coordination does not require the creation of a new institution. Using existing structures is put forward as the most prevalent solution. The coordinating body should ensure closer cooperation between all organisations involved in ocean affairs, internationally and regionally and reduce potential conflicts and overlaps.

Among the solutions proposed to improve the coherence of the overall system, some of the contributors are also asking for more transparency in the decision-making process, thus increasing stakeholders' participation in the new governance structure.

Filling the legal gaps

On the regulatory aspect, participants point out the legal gaps in the areas beyond national jurisdiction and in the regulatory framework applicable to new activities.

Biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ)

All participants who are referring to BBNJ agree on the need for an international legal instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Among the issues that need to be addressed in a future agreement, some of the respondents mention the

creation of an international mechanism to establish marine protected areas in the high seas, the definition of modalities for carrying out environmental impact assessments for activities conducted in the high seas and the legal status of marine genetic resources.

Regarding fisheries, although most respondents do not call for new rules, they demand the correct application of international legal instruments and their conformity with the future scheme to be adopted under BBNJ. As for shipping, the sector wants to maintain the principle of freedom in the high seas and rights of navigation.

This future agreement is also regarded as a good opportunity for strengthening the coordination and cooperation between existing international and regional organisations as well as across sectors.

Emerging activities

Some contributors underline the legal gaps concerning emerging activities such as offshore renewable energy, deep water hydrocarbon exploitation and seabed mining and the need to ensure that these activities are properly regulated. This includes promoting best practices so as to protect the marine environment and minimise possible seabed damages. Respondents argue that defining clear rules will also provide legal certainty for businesses and secure new investment.

For the last two sectors, even if they are currently in a phase of exploration, regulators need to anticipate the phase of exploitation before the industry takes off. As for offshore renewable energy (which covers wind and ocean energy), respondents underline the importance of adapting the existing framework to new developments and ensuring legal stability internationally.

Principles and new arrangements that should guide future action

Participants have identified the application of the ecosystem approach, the precautionary and polluters-pay principles and in a broader sense the cross-sectoral approach as principles that should guide future action. Some of the respondents underline the need to conduct environmental impact assessments to evaluate the potential impacts of activities on biodiversity.

Some participants refer to the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and the specific goal dedicated to oceans – SDG 14 “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources”. Respondents argue that its implementation should be fully considered as part of the improvement of ocean governance and that this SDG and other SDGs related to the oceans need to be taken account in future actions.

The regional ocean governance framework

Most contributors consider that international ocean governance cannot be limited to the global framework and regret the lack of reference to the regional framework in the Commission’s consultation document, especially with respect to the definition of international ocean governance as both levels are closely linked and interdependent.

Respondents recommend better cooperation between international organisations and regional organisations. This should not be limited to one specific sector but also applied to other sectors – for instance the Memorandum of Understanding between OSPAR, NEAFC, IMO and ISA. From a practical perspective, the regional approach seems to be the most appropriate one for States that are sharing a sea basin and de facto have to deal with common issues. This contributes to create more synergies and concerted actions and then facilitates a good management of sea basins.

In terms of regional mechanisms, all participants acknowledge the importance of Regional Seas Conventions (RSCs) and Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) in ocean governance. Both are playing a key role in the protection of the marine environment and sustainable management of fish stocks. However, both are perceived as confronted by serious challenges such as marine pollution and overexploitation. Respondents would like to face these challenges as efficiently as possible and to improve the performance of these regional mechanisms.

Regional Sea Conventions

Perceived shortcomings of Regional Sea Conventions include their geographical fragmentation, the lack of implementation, the lack of capacities and the lack of coordination between entities. Some of the respondents also underline the limited scope of their action as most RSCs do not have the mandate to apply management measures to areas beyond national jurisdictions (ABNJ).

With regard to coordination, respondents propose to use an existing body rather than a new one. UNEP could for instance be in charge of coordinating the work of all RSCs as it is already playing this role with some of the RSCs. It is also recalled that being a party to international agreements (Convention on Biological Diversity and other Multilateral Environment Agreements) should not be dissociated from being a member of a RSC.

Better connections between structures would allow addressing issues such as marine pollution more efficiently. This concerns not only the cooperation among RSCs but also with RFMOs. Respondents mention the Memorandum of Understanding between OSPAR and NEAFC, the one between UNEP/ MAP/Barcelona Convention and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) as good models of synergies between fisheries management and environmental management.

Regional Fisheries Management Organisations

Most of the respondents recognise the important role of RFMOs in ocean governance and consider them as one of the most advanced models of governance. The current structure and legal instruments seem to be sufficient. However, respondents highlight the persistence of certain problems such as overexploitation and IUU fishing, and some of them propose strengthening capacities related to RFMOs in developing countries, and to promote the adherence to legal instruments.

Regarding IUU fishing, several respondents believe that this problem should not be addressed through a sectoral approach but in a cross-cutting way. The fight against IUU fishing should start from the moment the fish is caught to the moment it is put on the market. It requires the commitment of all stakeholders involved in the process and a strong cooperation between them. Similarly, RFMOs should further cooperate with IMO and FAO. Respondents also recall the necessity to promote the ratification and application of existing instruments, such as the FAO PSMA, on a global level, and to support initiatives such as the FAO's world register of fishing vessels and Vessel Monitoring System (VMS). Some mention the use of new technologies such as satellite monitoring.

3.2 Ocean knowledge

Knowledge gaps

A majority of participants confirm that there is a lack of knowledge about oceans and this weakens the proper functioning of international ocean governance. Solid knowledge is essential to properly assess the impacts of maritime activities on marine biodiversity and to develop evidence-based policies. Some respondents consider that without a comprehensive understanding of consequences of human activities on marine ecosystems, the precautionary principle should be applied.

Although there is a general consensus that the knowledge deficit constitutes a challenge in ocean governance, the major difficulties seem to lie in how to better coordinate data collection, ensure data sharing among stakeholders and secure research funding. With regard to research funding, a few respondents underline that the EU has an important role to play in providing funds to ocean research.

Areas where better knowledge is needed

Economic activities

All economic activities would benefit from better availability of maritime knowledge. Some of the respondents consider that the greatest beneficiaries would be the emerging sectors while others think that it will also offer solutions for traditional sectors to address challenges such as ocean warming, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and providing opportunities to develop sustainable technologies.

Improving knowledge is also generally seen as crucial to ensure a sustainable management of ocean resources. Increasing knowledge will contribute to better assessment of fish stocks and the potential impacts of certain fishing methods on the marine environment. Better understanding of the marine environment will also help maritime activities to act in a more informed manner and authorities to better plan activities at seas.

Marine environment

Some participants stress the need for better knowledge not only of the cumulative effects of human activities on marine ecosystems but also of the ecosystems themselves and the services they provide. This should contribute to enhance the application of an ecosystem-based approach to planning activities.

Besides the pressures of maritime activities on oceans, respondents estimate that additional knowledge is needed to better understand the role of oceans in global climate, the consequences of climate change on oceans and the various dynamics in oceans and seas. Additional information regarding the high seas and deep sea habitats is underlined as being important as well.

Respondents insist that increasing the collection of data on oceans will be of added-value only if coordination and sharing of data are improved.

Improving coordination and sharing data

The need for better coordination and sharing data in marine research is shared by nearly all participants. Although there is a clear need for additional knowledge, most respondents believe that the problem is more about an effective use of the existing data and about making such data available - including identifying what exists and where the concrete needs are, rather than comprehensive databases that are expensive and take time to set up.

The current system is fragmented: data collection is carried out by sector and by different types of stakeholders, often working in isolation. This could lead to the duplication and the non-utilisation of data. Some of the respondents point to the European system “EMODnet” as a good example and support the creation of a global EMODnet. This includes the setting of common standards and the contribution of all data providers, including the private sector – while respecting data confidentiality.

Besides common databases, other means of data sharing and cooperation have been identified: organising events, creating synergies between research programmes, strengthening the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, increasing dialogue between scientist and policymakers, establishing knowledge bridges between regional and international organisations (eg: ICES’ cooperation with OSPAR and HELCOM), supporting research alliances (reference to the Galway Statement) and monitoring actions, such as the Copernicus programme.

3.3 Role of the EU in shaping ocean governance

A large portion of respondents believe that the EU has a major role to play in improving international ocean governance. Firstly, the EU is an active player in relevant fora and negotiations at global and regional levels. Secondly, it is a global player in maritime activities. Thirdly, it has the expertise to contribute to achieving better international ocean governance.

Leadership

The EU is a major actor in all international and regional maritime organisations. In close cooperation with EU Member States and in strict compliance with its competencies, the EU has the potential and the legitimacy to play a significant role in promoting the ratification and effective implementation of existing agreements and improving coordination of international and regional arrangements. A majority of respondents point out the need for the EU to play an active role in the BBNJ negotiations. Some respondents refer specifically to the role that the EU could play in promoting SDG 14 and other SDGs.

Some respondents mention that the EU, as a global economic player, should be a frontrunner in ensuring a level playing field for maritime stakeholders to contribute to supporting innovation and developing sound competition between businesses. The need for equal rules and standards is requested by a majority of respondents. The EU should also take advantage of its economic weight to participate actively in developing rules for emerging activities.

Lastly, some of the contributors would like the EU to take the lead in order to make progress on some important issues such as the fight against IUU fishing and the promotion of decent working conditions in maritime sectors. Regarding IUU fishing, several stakeholders welcome the European Commission's action with respect to specific countries. EU action should continue notably with regard to strengthening the enforcement of existing rules. The EU should also use its market weight to get important players on board.

A few participants stress that the EU commitment is crucial to promote fair competition. EU action should be based on the ILO instruments and on cooperation with its partners. With regard to fisheries, a few respondents consider that the connection between indecent working conditions and illegal practices should be further acknowledged.

Expertise

A large majority of respondents acknowledge the added value of the EU in enhancing international ocean governance because of its expertise in several areas. Respondents stress that the EU has developed tools to better manage maritime activities, promote sustainable growth and protect the marine environment in line with international commitments. Among these tools, respondents have in particular mentioned the Integrated Maritime Policy, the Integrated Coastal Zone Management instrument and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive and the new Common Fisheries Policy. By developing such management based tools in an integrated approach, the EU also proves that it is able to contribute to developing a coherent approach to good ocean governance.

Cooperation with third partners

In general, contributors acknowledge that developing countries lack the capacities to ensure a good application of existing agreements and a sustainable development of their maritime activities. They invite the EU to closely cooperate with developing countries, providing them with the expertise to fully seize opportunities connected with the ocean and to participate in international and regional fora.

A few respondents mention the need for improving cooperation with neighbouring countries on oceans and maritime activities. They consider that the EU neighbourhood policy could be useful to promote cooperation. One contributor suggests an "Ocean neighbourhood policy".

4 Conclusion

The Commission would like to thank all respondents for their contributions. The contributions confirm the starting assumption that there are several gaps in international ocean governance that need to be addressed.

Whilst perceptions vary on how best this can be achieved, contributors agree that implementation of existing agreements is crucial, that the regional level needs to be part of any action on this, highlighting a number of general principles to be taken into account, and confirming that the EU has an important role to play in the context of international ocean governance.

ANNEXE 1: LIST OF ACRONYMS

BBNJ: Biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction

CBD: Convention on Biological diversity

EMODnet: European Marine Observation and Data Network

FAO: Food and Agricultural Organisation

GFCM: General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean

HELCOM: Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, also known as Helsinki Commission

ICES: International Council for the Exploration of the Sea

IMO: International Maritime Organisation

ISA: International Seabed Authority

OSPAR: Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic

MEA: Multilateral Environment Agreements

NEAFC: North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission

PSMA: Port State Measures Agreement and flag state performance

RFMO: Regional Fisheries Management Organisations

RSC: Regional Seas Conventions

SDG: Sustainable Development Goal

VMS: Vessel Monitoring System

UNEP/MAP: United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan

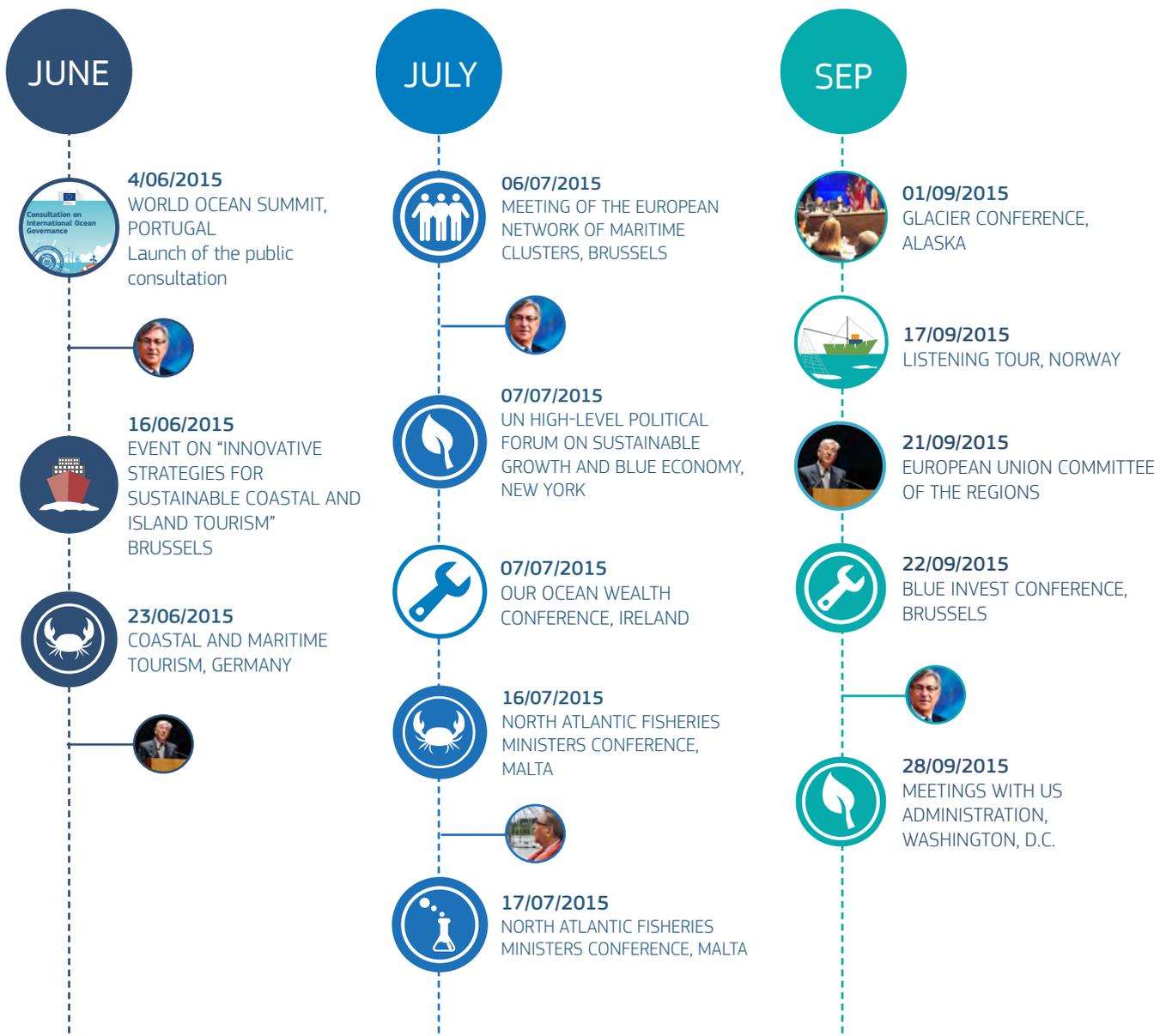
Listening Tour, June–December 2015

International Ocean Governance

The public consultation opens in June aimed at private and public stakeholders, maritime organisations and citizens at large. In parallel to this, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu Vella, embarks on the listening tour with international, national and regional stakeholders.

The big question:

How can the EU improve international ocean governance for the benefit of sustainable blue growth?





OCT



05/10/2015
OUR OCEAN CONFERENCE,
CHILE



09/10/2015
ANNIVERSARIES IN VIGO,
SPAIN



12/10/2015
HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUE, CHINA



15/10/2015
PUBLIC CONSULTATION
CLOSES



20/10/2015
OCEAN ENERGY
STRATEGY, DUBLIN



29/10/2015
2ND ATLANTIC
STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM
CONFERENCE, BRITTANY



NOV



2/11/2015
MEETINGS ON THE NETHERLANDS'
MARINE-RELATED PRIORITIES AND
BLUE GROWTH



4/11/2015
DISCUSSION ON GREEN AND
BLUE GROWTH AND CIRCULAR
ECONOMY, THE NETHERLANDS



11/11/2015
BLACK SEA ECONOMIC
COOPERATION ORGANISATION,
BRUSSELS



17/11/2015
UFM MINISTERIAL
CONFERENCE, BRUSSELS



25/11/2015
EUFORES MEP BREAKFAST
ROUNDTABLE ON OCEAN
ENERGY, STRASBOURG



26/11/2015
SEMINAR: THE TRANSITION TO THE
POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT GOALS,
VALLETTA

DEC



04/12/2015
OCEANS DAY, PARIS



08/12/2015
MARITIME SPATIAL
PLANNING CONFERENCE,
BRUSSELS

JUNE



4/06/2015
WORLD OCEAN SUMMIT, PORTUGAL

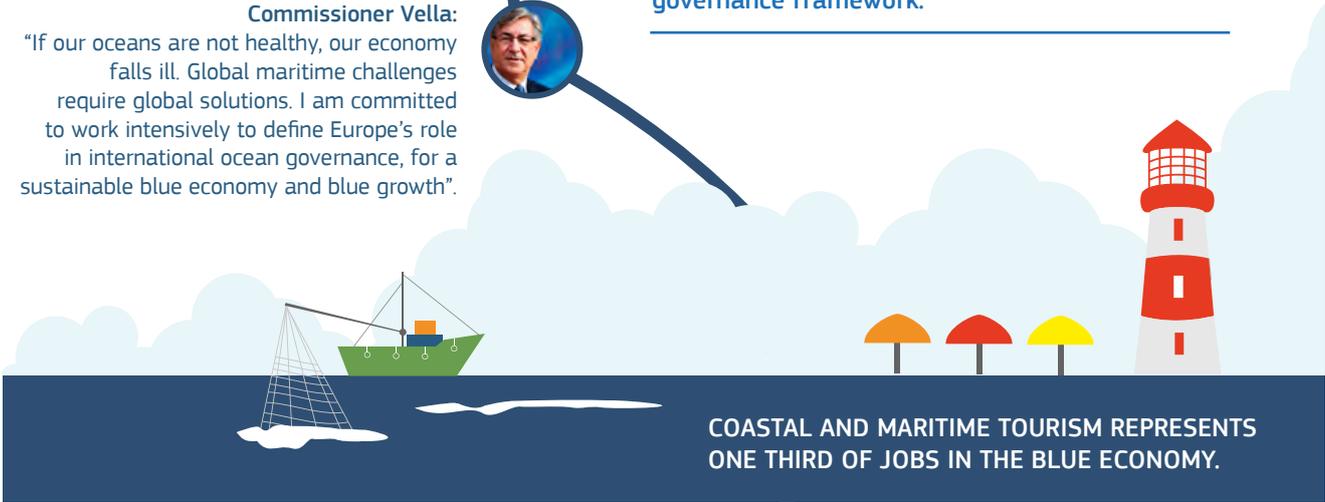
Launch of the public consultation

Building the Blue Growth agenda: Commission asks public its views on EU's role in shaping international ocean governance.

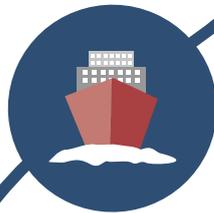
The results will help develop a more effective EU policy on improving the international ocean governance framework.

Commissioner Vella:

"If our oceans are not healthy, our economy falls ill. Global maritime challenges require global solutions. I am committed to work intensively to define Europe's role in international ocean governance, for a sustainable blue economy and blue growth".



COASTAL AND MARITIME TOURISM REPRESENTS ONE THIRD OF JOBS IN THE BLUE ECONOMY.



16/06/2015
EVENT ON "INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE COASTAL AND ISLAND TOURISM", BRUSSELS

For the "Innovative Strategies for Sustainable Coastal and Island Tourism" event, Brussels plays host to academia, local and regional authorities, international institutions and NGOs from all tourism sectors to foster dialogue on common challenges and encourage knowledge sharing.

23/06/2015
COASTAL AND MARITIME TOURISM, GERMANY



At the German Bundestag, **Commissioner Karmenu Vella** listens to the tourism committee's views on the EU's efforts towards growth and job creation in coastal and maritime tourism. He stresses the need for Member States to collaborate across regions and borders.

3.2 million
in 2012

largest single maritime economic activity in terms of jobs



Generating over
€ 180 billion
 in gross added value



JULY



06/07/2015

MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN NETWORK OF MARITIME CLUSTERS, BRUSSELS

Maritime stakeholders share their views on how the maritime economy can be strengthened, whether by improving skills, fostering innovation or making the most of existing funding opportunities. Stakeholders also speak up on the **Commission's Ocean Governance consultation**.



Commissioner Vella: "Thanks to the clusters that are now all over Europe, businesses are able to network on innovation, create economies of scale, and cooperate with each other nationally and internationally."

Maritime industries account for about

5 million JOBS

and between

3.5 and 4.5%
of the EU's GDP



The Irish maritime economy has a turnover of about

€4.5 billion
A YEAR

It is growing nearly twice as fast as the overall economy:

+9% 2010 ▲ **+8%** 2012 ▲ 2014



07/07/2015

UN HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND BLUE ECONOMY, NEW YORK

Commissioner Vella shares his vision for sustainable development and blue growth with the EU's key international partners, and reaffirms the EU's commitment to make progress on international ocean governance.

07/07/2015

OUR OCEAN WEALTH CONFERENCE, IRELAND

Ireland is living proof of how a strong and sustainable maritime economy can create jobs and foster innovation. The Commissioner delivers a keynote speech at the 2nd Annual Our Ocean Wealth Conference in Cork, and exchanges views with industry leaders, NGOs and researchers from the Irish Marine Institute in Galway.



16/07/2015

NORTH ATLANTIC FISHERIES MINISTERS CONFERENCE, MALTA

Ministers of major fisheries from the North Atlantic come together for informal discussions on the ideal framework for the governance of our oceans, and the challenges that lie ahead.

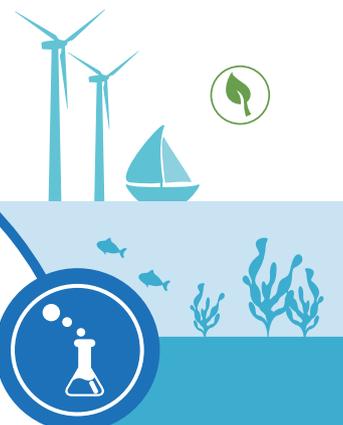
Commissioner Vella: "The Atlantic Ocean does not belong to any one of us. It is a single ecological system that links the continent of Europe with the Americas and with Africa. Our responsibility is to help build an international system that helps us manage that asset."



17/07/2015

NORTH ATLANTIC FISHERIES MINISTERS CONFERENCE, MALTA

Ministers agree on the need for scientific cooperation and knowledge sharing and are determined to explore the scope for new partnerships in order to support blue growth in the North Atlantic. They identify the expanding and emerging maritime sectors that have strong potential to boost jobs and growth.



SEP



01/09/2015 · GLACIER CONFERENCE, ALASKA

The EU is strongly committed to ensuring the Arctic region's sustainable development while safeguarding its fragile environment. Commissioner Vella points out the need for a science-based management regime for the Arctic region involving the EU and all other key actors.

Read Commissioner Vella's [speech](#) on the importance of the Arctic region, as it becomes increasingly "ice-free" and accessible.



17/09/2015 · LISTENING TOUR, NORWAY

Norwegian Fisheries Minister Elisabeth Aspaker shares Norway's views on the perceived gaps in ocean governance and what the international community should do to fill them. Mr Vella takes the opportunity to discuss ongoing EU cooperation with Norway in areas of mutual interest, including fisheries, aquaculture, research, blue growth and Arctic policy, as well as ocean governance.

Commissioner Vella: "Both the EU and Norway can be justifiably proud of our positions as global leaders on ocean governance. We share a responsibility to encourage international action."



21/09/2015

EUROPEAN UNION COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Commissioner Vella outlines his Ocean Governance plans, which focus on the need for sustainable blue growth and for concerted international action to ensure environmental standards are clear.

[Read his full speech here.](#)



22/09/2015 · BLUE INVEST CONFERENCE, BRUSSELS

An EU conference co-organised with the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions encourages Member States and coastal regions to make use of existing investment possibilities, including EU funds. Participants share examples of successful EU-funded projects, some of which are included in the brand-new [EU project repository](#).



Commissioner Vella: "Much will depend on the regions' ability to convince private and public operators to bet on the blue growth economy and invest in it – particularly in the emerging sectors that we know are 'this close' to blossoming, but need a little push."

28/09/2015

MEETINGS WITH US ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Ocean governance and the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing are on the agenda in Washington where Commissioner Vella meets with several senior figures from the U.S. administration, as well as the U.S. Coast Guard to discuss at-sea fisheries enforcement. Mr Vella takes the opportunity to welcome the UN's new [2030 Sustainable Development Agenda](#).

The global value of IUU is estimated at around

10 BILLION EUROS A YEAR.

OCT



05/10/2015 OUR OCEAN CONFERENCE, CHILE

The Commissioner announces a political initiative on international ocean governance in 2016, and highlights what the EU is doing to protect and better manage its ocean areas.

10% of all EU marine waters to be marine **PROTECTED AREAS** by 2020



REDUCE MARINE LITTER, cutting the number of single-use plastic bags by **50%** by 2019



100 MILLION EUROS a year dedicated to marine **RESEARCH UNTIL 2020**



675 MILLION EUROS from 2016-2020 to enter into **SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES Partnership Agreements**



09/10/2015 ANNIVERSARIES IN VIGO, SPAIN

The European Fisheries Control Agency celebrates its 10th birthday and the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries is 20 years old. Taking part in the celebrations in Vigo, Spain. Commissioner Vella congratulates the Agency's staff for removing technical barriers between inspectors from different EU Member States, and praises the FAO Code as a source of "major inspiration" for two decades.
[Read his speech here.](#)



12/10/2015 HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUE, CHINA

In an important first visit to China, Commissioner Vella meets with key ministers to further EU cooperation with China in relation to environmental, maritime and fisheries policy. They discuss how global ocean governance can be improved and express strong interest in developing concrete actions.





Commissioner Vella:
 “Global environmental and maritime challenges cannot be tackled by Europe alone. As two of the world’s biggest economies, the EU and China’s role is fundamental to ensuring a greener future.”



15/10/2015

PUBLIC CONSULTATION CLOSES

With input from over 154 governments, public bodies, NGOs, industry representatives, academics and other stakeholders in Europe and beyond, the public consultation on the international governance of oceans and seas closes. Commissioner Vella will have travelled from **Portugal** to **Ireland, Washington, Malta, Norway, Alaska, Chile, Spain and China** to collect views.



Commissioner Vella: “Better managed oceans are healthier oceans – and healthy oceans are the basis for blue growth and a thriving ocean economy. I am convinced that the responses we have received will allow us to make solid proposals that further build on the existing cooperation and dialogue with our international partners.”



20/10/2015

OCEAN ENERGY STRATEGY, DUBLIN

Commissioner Vella takes part in a high-level meeting to discuss a roadmap to develop the ocean energy sector in Europe. The draft strategy had been prepared by the **Ocean Energy Forum**, created by the EU in 2014 to help get promising ocean energy technologies off the ground.



Commissioner Vella: “The work carried out by the Ocean Energy Forum shows that industry and governments can collaborate to identify common problems and barriers to the development of the sector. Now it is time to go one step further and flesh out the general recommendations so that we can start to take concrete actions to deliver this roadmap.”



29/10/2015

2ND ATLANTIC STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM CONFERENCE, BRITTANY

Commissioner Karmenu Vella visits Brittany to discuss the **Atlantic Strategy Action Plan** and identify suitable project ideas and cooperation opportunities, and to engage with various stakeholders on fisheries, the blue economy, and marine protection.



Commissioner Vella: “The scene for implementing the EU’s Maritime Strategy in the Atlantic area is set; now it’s time for action. Helping Member States and regions to work together is where the Atlantic Action Plan can be most valuable.”

NOV



2/11/2015
MEETINGS ON THE NETHERLANDS'
MARINE-RELATED PRIORITIES AND
BLUE GROWTH

Commissioner Vella meets with Sharon Dijksma, Dutch Minister for Fisheries and Agriculture at The Hague to discuss the Netherlands' marine-related priorities and Blue Growth.



4/11/2015
DISCUSSION ON GREEN AND
BLUE GROWTH AND CIRCULAR
ECONOMY, THE NETHERLANDS

Wageningen University and Research Centre is committed to green and blue growth, and Commissioner Vella makes an important visit to discuss the circular economy in these areas.

[Read his speech here.](#)



11/11/2015
BLACK SEA ECONOMIC
COOPERATION ORGANISATION,
BRUSSELS

Commissioner Vella meets with Mr Christides, Secretary General of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation organisation.



17/11/2015
UFM MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE,
BRUSSELS

Commissioner Vella welcomes 43 Mediterranean countries for a ministerial meeting of the **Union for the Mediterranean**. The Union aims to promote growth, jobs and investments in the marine and maritime sectors. A **joint declaration** signed by the Ministers outlines an effective and result-oriented cooperation on blue economy and maritime governance in the Mediterranean.

[Read Commissioner Vella's speech here.](#)



25/11/2015
EUFORES MEP BREAKFAST
ROUNDTABLE ON OCEAN ENERGY,
STRASBOURG

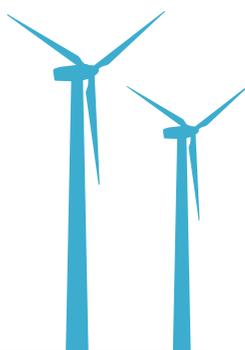
The European Forum on Renewable Energy Sources (EUFORES) is a European parliamentary network that promotes the deployment of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency within Europe. Commissioner Vella attends an important roundtable meeting to discuss how EUFORES can help support the development of the ocean energy sector.

[Read his full speech here.](#)



26/11/2015
SEMINAR: THE TRANSITION TO THE
POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT GOALS,
VALLETTA

Commissioner Vella takes part in conducting an online seminar titled "The Transition to the post-2015 Development Goals". The seminar places special focus on SDG 14 concerning the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.



DEC



04/12/2015
OCEANS DAY, PARIS

At Oceans Day, within the setting of the **COP21 international climate negotiations**. Commissioner Vella argues that better ocean management is necessary to return them to good health and support their vital functions, including their crucial role as climate regulators.



Commissioner Vella: “Healthy oceans are fundamental for a healthy climate – which is why governments need to do more to protect them.”

08/12/2015
MARITIME SPATIAL PLANNING
CONFERENCE, BRUSSELS

Commissioner Karmenu Vella opens the Maritime Spatial Planning conference, which was created to share experiences on MSP with representatives of maritime industries, national authorities and non-governmental organisations. The fifth session is dedicated to the relationship between MSP and the Marine Environment.



[Read Commissioner Vella's speech here.](#)

“We are using our seas and coasts in more ways than ever before. This has often been presented as creating conflict: a) between competing economic interests, and b) between economic activities and safeguarding our marine environment. Let me assure you: it need not be so. Planning and managing our activities better allows us to reap environmental and economic benefits.”



