

EMODnet: Your gateway to marine data in Europe

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Marine data are needed for many purposes: for acquiring a better scientific understanding of the marine environment, but increasingly also for decision making as well as supporting economic growth. Data must be of sufficient quality to meet the specific users' needs and be accessible in a timely manner. Both conditions are essential to achieving the crucial balance between making optimal use of our marine resources and protecting them.

Yet, despite being critical, this timely access to high-quality data proves challenging. Europe's marine data have traditionally been collected by a myriad of entities with the result that much of our data are scattered throughout unconnected databases and repositories. Even when data are available, they are often not compatible what makes the sharing of the information and data-aggregation impossible. Going to sea to set up new research cruises to gather data that already exist, is timely and costly.

To tackle those problems, in 2007 the European Commission through its Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) initiated the development of the European Marine Observation and Data network, EMODnet, a long-term initiative in the framework of the EU's Integrated Maritime Policy. Today EMODnet is comprised of more than 150 organisations which work together to assemble marine data and metadata and make them, together with ready-to-use data products, easily and freely accessible for a wider range of users. This "collect once and use many times" philosophy benefits all marine data users, including policy makers, scientists, private industry and the public.

Currently, EMODnet consists of seven sub-portals providing access to marine data and information from the following broad themes: bathymetry, geology, physics, chemistry, biology, seabed habitats, and human activities. Since the beginning of 2017, the EMODnet Data Ingestion Portal was launched which facilitates additional data managers to ingest their marine datasets for further processing, publishing as open data, and contributing to applications for society.

With this increase in EMODnet Open Marine Data, initiatives, such as the upcoming second edition of the OpenSeaLab Hackathon, are set up to seek new opportunities in the blue economy through the development of new applications using the marine data offered by EMODnet. The event will take place this Autumn from 4 to 6 September 2019, in Antwerp (Belgium). Registrations are free and will open in March 2019. More information can be found at www.opensealab.eu.

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