

focus

News and views

from the European Information Association

All at sea?

Finding out about the Union's maritime policy

Does the EU need a Maritime Policy? This is the main question asked in a Green Paper published by the Commission in early June. Entitled *Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union: A European vision for the oceans and seas*, the Green Paper is said to be the largest consultative exercise the Union has ever undertaken.



The Union's interests in the marine environment extend over a wide range of issues: transport, shipping, trade, coastal and port-based industries; off-shore, traditional and alternative energies; fisheries, aquaculture, marine research, tourism ...

These many different areas have a multiplicity of interconnections and interdependencies, which the Green Paper attempts to highlight. Such links are, however, largely neglected in current EU policy-making, with individual sectors largely being developed in isolation.

This is at odds with the emerging trend at regional and international level to develop a more holistic approach to the oceans and seas, aimed at "bringing together different interests and actors, and [developing] positive and innovative approaches to dealing with the Oceans."

(The Commission points out that recent annual reports from the UN Secretary General on Oceans and the Law of the Sea

highlight the problems caused by lack of coordination between policies and countries).

The Green Paper thus seeks to open up a debate within the EU and beyond, with the aim of identifying how best to combine current good practice with consultees' views and ideas, so as to determine "the best approach for dealing with our common responsibilities towards the seas surrounding us."

Two basic questions are asked by the Commission:

- is it really possible to continue to manage and develop all these different and frequently overlapping activities independently of one another? and
- has the time now come for Europe to invest in a truly integrated policy approach?

The Commission is at pains to emphasise that this is not an opportunity to give the Union additional powers, "but to identify

areas where European level action can add value to what is happening in the Member States." Those Member States were amongst the stakeholders consulted during preparation of the Green Paper, with other consultees including regional representatives, industry and non-governmental organisations. >>

"Europe has long benefited from its maritime activities. However, much more could be made of our seas and oceans to increase the prosperity and well being of European citizens."

José Manuel Barroso,

President of the European Commission



Facts & figures

- ▶ The EU is surrounded by four seas and two oceans: the Mediterranean, the Baltic, the North Sea, the Black Sea; the Atlantic Ocean, the Arctic Ocean.
- ▶ 20 Member States are coastal States.
- ▶ Member States' marine areas are larger than their land territories.
- ▶ Marine tourism was estimated to be worth € 72 billion to the EU in 2004.
- ▶ At 68,000 km, the EU's coastline is seven times longer than that of the US and four times that of Russia.
- ▶ Maritime regions account for almost 50% of the Union's population and over 40% of GDP.
- ▶ 350,000 people work in ports and related services and 526,000 in the fisheries sector.
- ▶ In 2003, 3 393 million tonnes of goods were handled in EU-25 maritime ports (i.e. 7.4 tonnes per EU-25 inhabitant).
- ▶ In 2003, the UK accounted for more than 16% (556 million tonnes) of the Union's maritime transport, with Italy on 14%, The Netherlands on 12% and Spain at 10%.
- ▶ In 2003, 413 million people passed through the Union's ports.

The Commission envisages an “events-driven” consultation process, with a series of conferences being organised to discuss “important issues regarding maritime affairs” and to present the Green Paper to interested parties. The Green Paper website currently has details of over 70 events scheduled for the next 12 months, in the Member States and elsewhere.

The Green Paper was presented to the Brussels European Council in mid June. The European Council welcomed the launch of the consultation, and noted that Commission proposals for how the Union should move forward should be expected in Autumn 2007.

Background

The Green Paper had its immediate genesis in the Commission's Strategic Objectives for 2005-2009, published in January 2005, which declared:

“In view of the environmental and economic value of the oceans and the seas, there is a particular need for an all-embracing maritime policy aimed at developing a thriving maritime economy and the full potential of sea-based activity in an environmentally sustainable manner. Such a policy should be supported by excellence in marine scientific research, technology and innovation.”

In March 2005, the Commission decided to launch a consultation on the future of Europe's seas. President Barroso invited Commissioner Borg “to steer a new Maritime Policy Task Force with the aim of launching a wide consultation on a future Maritime Policy for the Union”.

The Commission then took a year or so to develop the Green Paper, the success of which will be gauged by whether a consensus can be forged among stakeholders (defined as “the Member States and citizens”), that the EU “needs to look at the oceans and seas in an integrated manner, if Europe is to maintain its resource base and to continue being competitive in maritime affairs.”

Information sources

The primary source of information is the Fisheries and Maritime Affairs thematic site (ec.europa.eu/comm/fisheries/policy_en.htm), maintained by the DG for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, under Commissioner Joe Borg.

The subsite dedicated to maritime affairs (ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs) has sections on the current consultative process, together with background materials such as press releases, speeches and ‘Frequently Asked Questions’.

Within the ‘Consultation on Maritime Policy’ section is a ‘Supporting documents’ link which

gives access to a collection of Background Papers. Amongst the topics currently covered are:

- ▶ competitiveness of Europe's maritime industries
- ▶ employment, social and training aspects of maritime and fishing industries
- ▶ regional issues and tourism
- ▶ climate change
- ▶ national approaches to maritime affairs

The ‘EU Maritime Affairs Sectoral Policies’ page highlights 11 relevant policy areas:

- ▶ Fisheries
- ▶ Environment
- ▶ Transport and Energy
- ▶ Research
- ▶ Enterprise and Industry
- ▶ Regional Policy
- ▶ Competition
- ▶ Freedom, Security and Justice
- ▶ Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
- ▶ External Relations
- ▶ Health and Consumer Protection

For each topic a variety of information is provided, including links to relevant pages from Commission DGs, summaries from SCADPlus and links to legislative texts via the ‘Directory of Community Legislation in Force’ on EUR-Lex. [This is an excellent presentation of relevant materials and is much to the credit of the people

"As our maritime activities increase and diversify so does the need for coordination and planning so as to avoid conflict and optimise our returns from the sea. An all-embracing approach would allow us to combine economic growth with effective protection of the marine environment and greater stakeholder participation."

Joe Borg, European Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs

"Many Europeans have always lived beside or close to the sea. It has provided them with a living as fishers and mariners, it has given them health and enjoyment, new horizons to dream of and a rich vocabulary of words and metaphors to be used in literature and their daily lives. It has been seen as a source of romance, but also of separation, unknown perils and grief. It has provided us with a constant challenge and a deep yearning to understand it better."

Green Paper



concerned; other information providers within the EU Institutions would do well to follow this model when developing topic-related pages).

The Commission's Strategic Objectives 2005-2009: 'Europe 2010: A Partnership for European Renewal Prosperity, Solidarity and Security' (COM (2005) 12 of 26.01.05) can be found via ec.europa.eu/atwork/synthesis/index_en.htm.

Elsewhere, Eurostat provides a variety of relevant materials, including the series *Statistics in focus*. Examples of potentially useful issues include:

Statistics in focus: Transport: 'Short Sea Shipping of goods 2000-2004' (4/2006) and 'Maritime transport of goods and passengers 1997-2003' (9/2005); and *Statistics in focus*: *Agriculture and Fisheries*: 'EU25 catches in the NW Atlantic fall by 29% in 2004' (4/2006).

Searching or browsing Eurostat's website (<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>) using terms such as 'maritime', 'marine', 'sea' etc will find other items, including for example *Transport by air and sea - National and international intra- and extra-EU - Data 2003-2004* - a 2006 CD-ROM which gives statistics on passenger and freight transport by air and sea for EU Member States, Candidate Countries and the EEA.

The lack of an integrated maritime policy means that identifying information can be difficult,

with responsibility for relevant issues being divided. For example, the European Parliament's website (www.europarl.europa.eu) includes sections on 'Agriculture and fisheries', 'Employment and social affairs', 'Internal market and industry', 'Regions and transport' and 'Health and environment', all of which might contain information relevant to some aspect of maritime affairs.

The Parliament's *Fact Sheets*

(www.europarl.europa.eu/facts_2004/default_en.htm) also reflect the problem, with sections on the 'Common fisheries policy' (4. 3), 'Regional policy' (4. 4), 'Transport policy' (4. 5), 'Industrial policy' (4. 7; 4.7.3 is 'Shipbuilding'), and 'Environment policy' (4. 9).

There is of course a similar problem in the Council, with the nine configurations including 'General Affairs and External Relations', 'Employment, Social Policy...', 'Transport, Telecommunications and Energy', 'Agriculture and Fisheries', and 'Environment'.

Although it is too soon for either of the Consultative Committees to produce documents on the Green Paper, the potential impact of the

initiative suggests that both the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC or ESC - www.eesc.europa.eu) and Committee of the Regions (CoR - www.cor.europa.eu) will produce their own responses. Neither website is particularly easy to search, but it should be possible to identify relevant documents by either browsing or searching the sites.

Green Paper

Green Paper: Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union: A European vision for the oceans and seas (COM (2006) 275)

Contributions to be sent before 30 June 2007 to:

European Commission
Maritime Policy Task Force
'Maritime Policy Green Paper'
J-99 7/12
B-1049 Brussels

E-mail:
ec-maritime-green-paper@ec.europa.eu