



**BUILDING**  
**A** **EURO**  
**PEAN**  
**COASTAL**  
**MARINE &**  
**MARITIME**  
**PLATFORM**

OPEN INITIATIVE OF EUCC, COASTNET, LOICZ, AMRIE, ENCORA



THE 6TH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME HAS GIVEN A STRONG INCENTIVE TO EUROPEAN RESEARCH COOPERATION IN SUPPORT OF SUSTAINABLE COASTAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF THE SEA, THROUGH NETWORK ORGANISATIONS SUCH AS ENCORA AND MARS. THE FORTHCOMING END OF THE CORRESPONDING PROJECTS HAS TRIGGERED THE SEARCH FOR NEW FORMS OF COOPERATION AMONG COASTAL AND MARINE PROFESSIONALS.

THIS COOPERATION SHOULD IN PARTICULAR PROMOTE A STRONGER INTERACTION BETWEEN THE SCIENCE, POLICY AND PRACTICE COMMUNITIES IN EUROPE. A BALANCED PARTICIPATION OF THESE COMMUNITIES FROM THE VERY START IS ESSENTIAL TO REALISE THIS OBJECTIVE. THEREFORE WE INVITE NETWORKING ORGANISATIONS REPRESENTING COASTAL AND MARINE SCIENCE, POLICY AND PRACTICE TO JOIN THE INITIATIVE OF A EUROPEAN MARITIME, MARINE AND COASTAL NETWORKS PLATFORM. THE IDEAS EXPRESSED IN THIS BROCHURE ARE OPEN FOR DISCUSSION.

## WHY A EUROPEAN NETWORKS PLATFORM

The diversity of interests in coastal, marine and maritime matters has given rise to many networks in Europe. Each responds to specific needs and to specific communities of interest. While this diversity is positive, in the sense that many different communities of interest are represented and actively engaged, it is also a fragmented response to the sharing of sound practice and knowledge in Europe, and with regard to relations with the European Commission. With the development of an Integrated Maritime Policy by the European Commission, following the initiative of Commissioner Borg, leading, among other actions to the establishment of DG MARE, it seems appropriate to launch a new pan-European networking approach.

Our vision is that a common European platform can provide a mechanism for the individual networks to cooperate more effectively. This enhanced cooperation will benefit the networks themselves, through the provision of higher quality and more efficient services to their members and through the transfer of knowledge, experience and practices across networks. It will also benefit the European Commission, through the ability of the Platform to identify issues of common concern and in this way to better assist the definition of policy priorities in relation to coastal and maritime matters, and in particular the development of the Integrated Maritime Policy.

## WHAT IS THE PLATFORM

- The Platform is a joint venture of networking organisations which contribute in diverse ways to sustainable coastal development and sustainable use of the sea.
- The Platform coordinates member actions through debate and exchange of experience and knowledge at the platform level, while respecting the management arrangements, objectives and legal status of the member organisations.
- The Platform facilitates improved delivery of services, through greater communication, liaison, and joint working between Platform members, and will not duplicate services already provided by the member organisations to coastal and maritime professionals at European, national and regional scales.
- The Platform voices the shared objectives and concerns of the network organisations at the European level, and seeks to achieve a favourable policy and operational environment for their activities, but will not take on specific commercial or political interests.

## PARTNERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

The European Platform of Maritime, Marine and Coastal Networks will consist of organisations representing networks of maritime and coastal stakeholder organisations and project partnerships with a diverse membership (geographic, sectorial or thematic), acting at national, European or international levels.

The Platform organisational structure is still under discussion. The present ideas tend to be focusing on:

- an association ruled by a jointly agreed charter
- a light, non-hierarchical organisation with an Assembly, a Council, an elected chairman, a coordinating secretary and a distributed secretariat
- a jointly agreed coordination programme of networking activities
- in-kind contributions of the network members to the realisation of this programme
- working groups responsible for activity clusters

The Platform offers a meeting place for networks to share mutual experience, knowledge and information and to further initiatives of common interest, on multiple aspects:

**Advocate of maritime Europe**

- Liaise with and advise the EU Commission on its integrated maritime policy
- Act as think tank for European policy and research priorities in coastal, marine and maritime areas

**Cooperation**

- Sustain a contact database of European coastal and marine professionals
- Stimulate mobility of researchers and practitioners
- Disseminate information on networking activities and promote tuning of events, venues and agendas
- Promote cooperation and harmonisation of R&D

**Dissemination of sound practice and knowledge**

- Improve links between research, policy and practice
- Facilitate sharing of knowledge, experience and data
- Stimulate interactive use of Internet (Wiki, Forums, Blogs, ..)
- Foster community networks in different topics

**Education and capacity building**

- Joint programming of training (summer) courses
- Contribute to e-learning curricula

**International recognition**

- Disseminate European expertise outside Europe
- Cooperate with non-European countries and international organisations in the field

PLANNING

The initiative to build the Platform will formally start on 28 November 2008. Networks interested to join the Initiative Group will sign the Venice Platform Declaration, at a ceremony that concludes the Littoral Conference in Venice.

During the following period of 6 months the Initiative Group will explore the interest of other networks to join the Platform, it will fix the objectives and organisational principles of the Platform and prepare the formal launch. The formal start of the Platform is foreseen at the European Maritime Day on 20 May 2009.