

# Integrated maritime policy (IMP) - Evaluation of progress made and new challenges

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**PURPOSE :** progress report and strategic directions for the EU's Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP).

**CONTENT :** the Commission presents this report following the European Council's endorsement of the IMP in December 2007. The report sums up the achievements of the IMP and charts the course for the next phase. It also highlights how coherent policy-making towards our seas, maritime sectors and coastal areas can contribute to addressing challenges posed by the current global economic crisis and by the need to take decisive action against climate change and environmental degradation.

The October 2007 Blue Paper ([COM\(2007\)0575](#)) set out an ambitious Action Plan. The implementation of the Action plan has progressed well: Of the 65 actions in the plan, 56 have been launched or completed (mostly in the form of Commission or Council acts). On 9 actions various initiatives have been undertaken, although no formal documents are adopted yet. Following the first phase, the Commission and Member States are now focusing efforts on effective implementation on the ground, with additional activities in all relevant policy areas pursued where needed.

The Blue Paper and Action Plan were drawn up in a radically different economic climate. The crisis has not spared the maritime economy from declining revenues and downturn. Beyond achievements so far, the paper also sets out where further action will be required in order to unlock the undeniable potential of our oceans, seas and coastal regions, but also to address the economic problems faced by maritime sectors.

The Commission's assessment is that the last two years have confirmed the IMP as a highly promising policy providing a significant contribution to growth, jobs and environmental sustainability for Europe's coastal areas and beyond. Despite its young age, this new EU policy has already changed the way in which Europe deals with its maritime and coastal assets. After three years of intense deliberations, it is fundamental to keep this momentum in order to address the challenges of environmental protection and economic growth. The double impact of climate change and the economic crisis is particularly felt in the maritime world: oceans are the drivers of our climate and maritime industries have been the drivers of globalisation and prosperity. It is therefore important to unlock the economic potential of maritime Europe, optimise government action on the seas, and further explore the synergies that allow economic growth and environmental stability to reinforce each other.

The Commission considers that these objectives will be best achieved through a combination of progress in six strategic directions.

Integrated maritime governance must be further enhanced. The progress registered over recent years needs to be turned into effective integrated structures at all levels of government. EU institutions, Member States and coastal regions have a particular responsibility in ensuring upstream policy integration and in adopting coherent agendas for maritime affairs, further counteracting the prevalence of isolated sectoral policy thinking. Stakeholder involvement in maritime policy-making should also be enshrined more permanently in governance structures. This should also lead to a more intense dialogue between the EU, Member State's governments and coastal regions, which often hold key expertise necessary for an integrated approach to Maritime Affairs. For the same reason the formation of a cross-sectoral platform for stakeholder dialogue on maritime affairs should be supported.

Cross-cutting policy tools are of utmost importance to enhance economic development, environmental monitoring, safety, security and law enforcement on Europe's oceans and seas. In particular, maritime spatial planning, in combination with increased marine knowledge, can unblock considerable economic investment and drastically improve the way we manage our maritime spaces, preserving their ecosystems. It must become a practical instrument on all levels of governance, and to ensure coherent decision-making over cross-border investments. The integration of maritime surveillance has the potential to make a difference to the way key policy objectives such as the fight against illegal immigration, the safeguard of commercial shipping and the protection of natural resources are carried out by national authorities. Member States and the Commission will have to continue to work together on these items so that the processes which were initiated in the last two years will bear fruit.

The definition of the boundaries of sustainability of human activities that have an impact on the marine environment, in the [framework of Directive 2008/56/EC](#) (Marine Strategy Framework Directive) will design a platform for the successful development of all maritime activities, paying due attention to their cumulative impacts. Hence, the implementation of this Directive will remain a key objective of the IMP, which should also develop the necessary cooperation between all relevant sectors, including between marine science and the marine environment policy.

Sea-basin strategies are key to a successful implementation of the IMP. This is where the priorities and the tools of the policy can be adapted to the specific geographic, economic and political contexts of each large maritime region. Co-operation among Member States and regions sharing a sea basin is a crucial element of success and this should be accompanied with proper dialogue with third countries sharing a sea basin with the EU. Action at the level of sub-basins can also be useful in establishing best practices.

The international dimension of the IMP will also require more attention, as discussed by the Communication published together with this report ([COM\(2009\)0536](#)). Europe must take a leading role in improving global maritime governance, as it has done in the matter of piracy or with regard to destructive fishing practices. The Commission intends to strengthen dialogue with a limited number of major maritime partners and its participation in international fora and informal processes.

The implementation of the IMP, in the present context of economic downturn, should put a renewed focus on sustainable economic growth, employment and innovation. Hence the EU should explore synergies between the European Energy Policy and the IMP, promoting energy generation from the sea, including renewable forms of energy, and use the sea more for energy transportation through pipelines, underwater grids and vessels. It will also be necessary further to link the EU's Climate Change Policy with IMP, by developing a strategy for adaptation to climate change in coastal and maritime areas. As part of the developing debate on territorial cohesion, it will be important to ensure that maritime and coastal areas are fully taken into account.

The EU will also have to promote better maritime transport in order to foster co-modality, to implement the concept of the Motorways of the

Sea, and to improve the EU programme for short sea shipping. Still aiming at the economic development of maritime activities, it will be necessary to find ways of further stimulating maritime employment and investment in EU-flagged shipping, while remaining determined to advance the idea of clean ships. Indeed, support for innovation and research towards very low or even zero emission ships will continue to be a major part of the Community's response to the strategically important shipbuilding sector. In this manner the EU can give to European shipyards and the marine equipment industry a competitive technological edge over other regions of the world, and will make maritime transport, in particular along the coasts of Europe, safer and more sustainable.

Lastly, the Commission is examining the future funding needs of the IMP. It intends to produce in 2010 a policy document detailing projects and initiatives aimed at further developing the above six strategic directions, following consultations with stakeholders.