Development of a Marine Biological Data Portal within the framework of the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODNet)

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Based on an extensive one-year consultation phase, the European Commission published a Maritime Policy Blue Book in 2007. One of the key-actions is the creation of a sustainable European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODNet) in order to assemble fragmented and inaccessible marine data into interoperable, contiguous and publicly available data streams for European maritime basins. Since May 2009, four pilot portals for respectively hydrographic data, marine geological data, chemical data and biological data are under development. This initial development phase will last three years and during this phase, the biological pilot will focus on spatial distributions of phytoplankton, zooplankton, angiosperms, macro-algae, invertebrate bottom fauna, reptiles, bird communities and sea mammals in the Greater North Sea, the Bay of Biscay and the Iberian Coast. The portal will be built on top of the existing European Ocean Biogeographic Information System (EurOBIS), which allows the user to search multiple datasets containing biogeographic information on marine organisms simultaneously. Through the use of standards for geographic data (OGC), metadata (INSPIRE) and vocabularies (SeaDataNet), the different EMODNet Portals will be able to communicate and exchange information through the web. The biological pilot action is now in the process of identifying long-term, pan-European biological data holdings to serve the EMODNet objectives. Based on the collected data and information, a set of derived or processed biological data and products to serve private bodies, public authorities and researchers will be made accessible online. Most of these derived 'dataproducts' will be discussed and created through a series of workshops with both experts and the different user communities.