

Innovation in the blue economy

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// abstract:

This communication states that innovation in all economic sectors is crucial to making optimal use of the growth and employment potential of the *blue economy* (COM (2012) 494; p.69). The Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative Innovation Union (COM (2010) 546) is currently helping to create an innovation-friendly environment but some gaps in this initiative have yet to be addressed, such as the under-investment in knowledge, poor access to financing, ineffective use of public procurements, duplication of research, the high costs of intellectual property rights and the slow development of interoperable standards. Cooperation between the government and the private sector should also be encouraged and the exploitation of research results from knowledge-intensive sectors needs to be stimulated.

Innovation in the blue economy is hampered by a lack of information about the sea, the seabed and its biota. Making more high-quality marine data accessible to the public is crucial in this respect (see EMODnet) and will stimulate blue growth and make a better implementation of the *Marine strategy framework directive* (2008/56/EC; p.87) possible.

The EU's Horizon 2020 programme provides numerous opportunities for marine research (see also *Pirlet et al., 2015*). The Commission will work more closely with JPI Oceans in order to achieve complementarity between national strategic research and innovation agendas on the one hand and Horizon 2020 on the other. International cooperation is crucial to addressing global issues such as ocean acidification. Within this scope, use can be made of existing partnerships such as the Galway Declaration (transatlantic alliance for marine research).

The human potential in focus areas of research and innovation should be further supported (e.g. by Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions; see also *Pirlet et al., 2015*) in order to close the skills gap (align research and skills to the labour market). Nowadays there is a lack of an appropriately skilled workforce, able to apply the latest technologies. Skill development in the blue economy and cooperation between higher education and the private sector can be further supported by 'knowledge alliances' (a new scheme under the Erasmus programme). Finally, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (EIT-KIC) (see also *Pirlet et al., 2015*) bring together the key players in higher education, research and business to encourage innovation. The commission is examining whether the creation of a KIC for the blue economy after 2020 could be valuable.