

**Meeting with the Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries**  
**European Commission, Brussels, Belgium**  
**18 February 2016**



On 18 February 2016, IHB Director Gilles Bessero and Ingénieur Général Bruno Frachon, National Hydrographer of France, on behalf of the IHO-European Union Network Working Group (IENWG), met with Mr Joao Aguiar Machado, Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, at the European Commission (EC) in Brussels, Belgium. This meeting had been arranged at the end of 2015 following the appointment of Mr Machado. The Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) is the EC point of contact for the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on establishing a cooperation on maritime affairs between the EC and the IHO that was signed in April 2012.

Mr Machado was assisted by Mr Iain Shepherd, acting Head of DG MARE Unit C/1 - Maritime policy Atlantic, outermost regions and Arctic, and main point of contact at DG MARE of the IENWG.

Mr Machado acknowledged the importance of the EC-IHO MOU and welcomed the positive outcomes, in particular through the launch of the Coastal Mapping Project led by a consortium of Hydrographic Offices and funded by the EC within the framework of the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet). He confirmed that there was no alternative to the current mechanism of calls for tenders and public contracts for awarding financial support to HOs. He enquired on the inclusion of the outermost regions of the EU in the Coastal Mapping Project.

The IHO representatives highlighted the wide scope of activities of the IHO and its Member States, encompassing not only the safety of navigation but the support of the whole blue economy, and the relevance of these activities for several EC Directorates-General, including capacity building issues in relation to development aid. They suggested that points of contact be identified in the relevant DGs and that an annual review of items of joint interest be established in order to develop further the synergies between the EC and the IHO, including through better anticipation of the initiatives or needs of the DGs. They noted the need to ensure the sustainability of EMODnet in the long term, building on the operational role of Hydrographic Offices (HOs) and the relevance of the expertise of the HOs in relation to maritime spatial planning and climate change issues.

The unsatisfactory current status of the knowledge of the bathymetry of the seas and oceans and the specific difficulties related to surveying the coastal areas were emphasized. The responsibilities of governments in the provision of hydrographic services and the references to IHO resolutions and recommendations described in the international Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) were also mentioned.

Director Bessero recalled that three EU coastal States are not yet members of the IHO and noted the importance of the example set by Malta in asking to join the Organization.

The possibility to promote IHO activities at the next European Maritime Day, which will be celebrated in May 2016 in Turku, Finland, was discussed. DG MARE indicated that the programme was already finalized and suggested liaising with the Secretariat of EMODnet to set up a joint stand.

It was agreed in principle to schedule the next meeting between the EC and the IHO in October 2016.