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## **Commissioner Vella consults CEOs of European Marine Board member institutes on priorities for advancing ocean observation and seabed mapping**

Karmenu Vella, EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries is meeting with ocean research leaders at the European Marine Board offices in Ostend, Belgium, today to discuss ocean research challenges. The meeting with Commissioner Vella follows on from a previous consultation, held in March, which identified ocean observation and seabed mapping as crucially important for managing human activities in European seas and across the global ocean. The Commissioner is also faced with the challenge of achieving sustainable Blue Growth, Europe's long term strategy to support sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors.

Today's meeting will advance the discussions on ocean observing and seabed mapping in Europe (set within a global context), by identifying critical gaps in our capability, investment needs and potential funding sources for the future.

The EU Blue Growth Strategy will only be sustainable if we understand, manage and minimise the impacts of commercial activities on the health and productivity of Europe's seas. To achieve this, coordinated ocean observation and seabed mapping is crucial. For instance, placing structures such as communication cables, oil and gas platforms and offshore wind parks in the marine environment depends on knowledge of the seafloor and sub-seafloor as well as local environmental conditions. Equally important is the role of ocean observation and seabed mapping in meeting the requirements of EU policies and directives that aim to promote a healthy marine environment. These include the EU's Integrated Maritime Policy, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Marine Spatial Planning Directive and the Common Fisheries Policy. These policies and directives rely fundamentally on marine observations, data and data products for their successful implementation.

*"The ocean research community in Europe has led the development of ocean observing technologies and programmes which deliver valuable data for a range of scientific, commercial and public users" explains Dr. Niall McDonough, Executive Secretary of the European Marine Board. "But there are big gaps in the system. Commissioner Vella is showing his commitment in advocating for adequate investment for ocean research and technology development and we welcome the opportunity to present the views of the marine research community to the Commissioner and his team."*

Hosted by the European Marine Board, the meeting with Commissioner Vella marks the second in a series and is an important platform for the ocean research community to communicate directly with the Commissioner on ocean research issues.

## Notes to editors

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The meeting agenda and list of participants can be viewed on the European Commission's Maritime Forum website:

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/en/node/3938>

The European Marine Board provides a pan-European platform for its member organizations to develop common priorities, to advance marine research and to bridge the gap between science and policy, in order to meet future marine science challenges and opportunities. [www.marineboard.eu](http://www.marineboard.eu)

The European Marine Board (established in 1995) facilitates enhanced cooperation between European organizations involved in marine science (research performing institutes, research funding agencies and national networks of universities) towards development of a common vision on the research priorities and strategies for marine science in Europe. In 2016, the European Marine Board represents 35 member organizations from 18 countries.

The European Marine Board works in association with the European Science Foundation. [www.esf.org](http://www.esf.org)