

How to encourage new marine data users and providers through communication and outreach? The examples of EMODnet and the European Atlas of the Seas

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At the onset of its third development phase (2017-2020), the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet) had reached a maturity level where it could provide real value for industry and the public sector, including Member States.

In line with this, the focus of its communication strategy is therefore to increase communication and dissemination efforts to encourage new users to exploit this immense resource of marine data, products and services. EMODnet sits in an increasingly complex European marine observation data and information sharing landscape. This complexity is confusing, off-putting and limits both the visibility and the usability of EMODnet.

Through four examples, this abstract will illustrate how EMODnet has overcome this limit in clearly defining and communicating what its unique role is, what services and resources it provides as well as its economic and societal relevance. This abstracts will also cover the promotion of the European Atlas of the seas, a tool developed under the coordination of EMODnet since October 2017.

An updated visual identity

The EMODnet Website has undergone minor graphical and structural improvements since its inception in 2013. A major visual and structural improvement has been carried out in the course of 2017 to provide visitors with a visually attractive, state-of-the-art, and user-friendly interface.

This revamp of the Central Portal also provided the basis for a coherent EMODnet visual identity permeating through all sub-portals and delivering a user-oriented focus in line with the mature and operational stage EMODnet had reached. The new visual guideline allowed EMODnet to become a more recognizable brand for users worldwide.

In addition, a general online survey is implemented on each portal once a year to gather user's recommendations for improvements. Moreover, the friendliness of the portals is assessed each year by a professional communication firm.

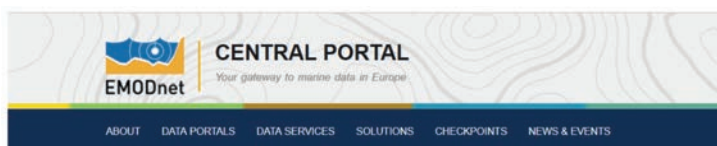


Fig. 1 - New visual identity for the EMODnet Central Portal.

The EMODnet for business campaign

The number of businesses downloading EMODnet datasets is still limited and many of them continue to pay other companies to gather data that are freely and easily accessible on EMODnet. Get more businesses involved as marine data users and data providers is therefore a major priority for EMODnet. This pushes the intermediate service providers to provide more advanced added-value products and services rather than selling what is available publicly.

In order to better meet the needs of industry and show the numerous benefits of using EMODnet, a Marine Knowledge Expert Group and an EMODnet for business campaign have been set up in 2018.

These were opportunities to highlight concrete uses of EMODnet and success stories from industry through different channels (social media, presentation to associations, etc.). A new Associated partners brochure, an EMODnet for business leaflet and a data products catalogue were created at the same occasion to get more users on board and show how they can get value from ocean data.

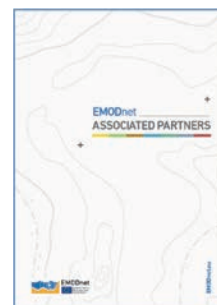


Fig. 2 - EMODnet Associated Partners Brochure.

The EMODnet Open Sea Lab hackathon

Huge efforts are being undertaken to develop and improve EMODnet and this is only worthwhile if the data and services are actually used by the various user communities. The Open Sea Lab hackathon took place in Antwerp in November 2017 to provide concrete, innovative and day-to-day usages of EMODnet portals data.



Fig. 3 - Visual identity of the EMODnet Open Sea Lab Hackathon.

This 3-day hackathon was not only an opportunity to reach new types of users, but it appears to be a powerful communication tool and an operational stress-test for EMODnet services.

Partnerships with schools and institutions

2018 is an important year for the European Atlas of the Seas as a new version of this gateway of interactive maps will be launched in June. With the ambition to become the central access point to marine information and maps for citizens, partnerships with schools and aquariums have been set up to better meet their needs. A pilot phase will be held in Autumn 2018 with few institutions and wider partnerships in all EU Member states will be put in place in 2019.

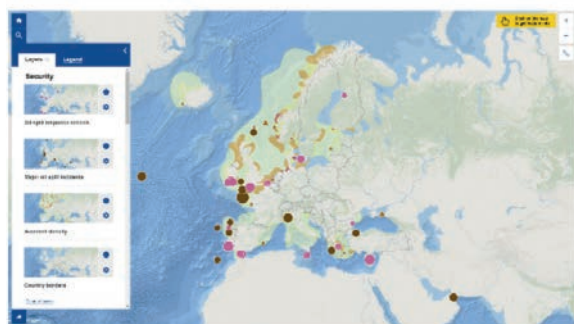


Fig. 4 - Visual identity of the EMODnet Open Sea Lab Hackathon.