

5th IHO-IRCC Meeting, Wollongong, AU, 3–4 June 2013

Paper for consideration by IRCC

Proposal on improving IHO's relationship with the European Commission

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| Submitted by: | SE on behalf of the NHC, supported by FR as Chair of the NSHC European Union Marine & Maritime WG |
| Executive Summary: | This paper suggests developing the relationship between the IHO and the European Commission. The member states concerned are not only those who are also member states of the European Union (EU) or the European Economic Area (EEA), but the IHO itself due to the increasing influence of EU maritime policies on hydrographic matters. This paper suggests fostering the implementation of the MoU signed in April 2012 at the IHC18 between the IHO and the EC, by the establishment of an active network of focal points in the RHCs mainly influenced by EU policies. |
| Related Documents: | MOU on Establishing a Cooperation on Maritime Affairs Between the European Commission and the IHO. CL 97/2012 |
| Related Projects: | European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODNet) Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe (INSPIRE directive) Marine Knowledge 2020 Trans European Network TEN-T |

Introduction / Background

At the XVIII International Hydrographic Conference 2012 the “Memorandum of Understanding on Establishing a Cooperation on Maritime Affairs Between the European Commission and the IHO” was signed by both parties. The impact of this particular MOU was discussed at the following 30th North Sea Hydrographic Commission (NSHC) and the working group EUM2WG, established at the NSHC27 (Rostock, 2006, decision 81) with France as chair, was tasked to pursue the development of this relationship. The intention was also to increase participation of other affected RHCs. France, as chair of the NSHC EUM2WG, has since started to establish a connection between the IHO and the European Commission, and some meetings have been arranged between the parties in Brussels. However, at the 57th Nordic Hydrographic Commission meeting in April this year, it was recognised that there is a need to extend the circle beyond the NSHC countries to also include other Hydrographic Offices within the EU/EEA. It was decided that Sweden, as chair of the NHC meeting, should write an input paper to the upcoming IRCC5 meeting in June, in order to further discuss this matter in a wider circle. Sweden has since been in contact with France, as chair of the NSHC EUM2WG, in order to coordinate views.

Analysis/Discussion

All Hydrographic Offices within EU/EEA and beyond are directly or indirectly affected by a number of EU directives and regulations and are urged to deliver products, data and expertise to support the European integrated maritime policy and to meet the requirements of other related European directives. Many of these tasks intersect the IHO programme of work and, considering constraints on resources, the time has come to monitor these concurrent activities more closely to improve efficiency. Some examples of intersections are: standardisation and development of a geospatial infrastructure for environmental purposes (the INSPIRE directive); assessment and monitoring programme for marine environment (Marine Strategy Framework); hydrography-geology-oceanography marine databases (EMODNet); geospatial information to support marine spatial planning, re-use of public sector information policy, coastal mapping (Marine Knowledge 2020); global monitoring and environment security (Copernicus)... Within the framework of the European Commission, there are also several programmes with considerable resources available, where the competence of the HOs would be beneficial. Furthermore, this is an opportunity for the HOs concerned, as well as the IHO, to increase visibility and acquire co-financing for some tasks.

Since the NSHC EU2MWG was established, France has been working continuously on keeping other RHCs with EU member states informed. In some cases, member states outside the NSHC have been invited to participate in activities. However, none of these member states or RHCs have, as of yet, been particularly active. Raising the awareness of the IHO and sharing key information on these new political and financial driving forces therefore seems essential. The NSHC and the NHC are the only RHCs where all member states are also in the EU/EEA, and one potential issue with other RHCs can be that EU matters may not seem a natural focus for RHCs currently chaired by non-EU/EEA member states. However, the interest among the EU/EEA member states is increasing year by year, largely as a result of the involvement of the IHB and the Director Gilles Bessero in particular.

Since the establishment of the EU2MWG, France has taken initiative to two meetings with the European Commission DG Mare (seconded by DG Move, DG Environment). It has been clear that the European Commission is looking for a natural focal point to the Hydrography world, but that the existing IHO structure, with many RHCs concerned, is somewhat complex for the European Commission. As mentioned above, this matter was discussed at the 57th Nordic Hydrographic Commission meeting in April this year, where Sweden was tasked to write an input paper to the IRCC. Sweden has since been in contact with France, as chair of the EU2MWG, to form a joint opinion on the matter of how the IHO member states concerned can find a better structure in order to strengthen the relationship with the EU.

The actual ToRs of the NSHC EUM2WG (NSHC27, Rostock, 2006) are given below for information:

“Noting that significant new European directives and programmes on marine and maritime matters have been launched or are currently under development,

Resolved to establish a working group on EU marine and maritime policies to monitor the impact on HOs with the following terms of reference:

1. *identify EU activities and processes on matters of interest to HOs;*
2. *establish a common understanding of the issues when possible;*
3. *consider and propose the ways and channels to interface with the EU activities and processes (mechanisms) through NSHC initiatives or through the IHO in general.*

and the following rules of procedures:

1. *the working group will be chaired by France;*
2. *members of the NSHC are invited to appoint a contact person;*
3. *the working group will work mainly by correspondence and report on its findings at the next NSHC meeting. »*

Recommendations

The NHC, as well as France, are of the opinion that we do need a permanent structure working under the umbrella of the IRCC, if affected Hydrographic Offices want to have a key role in EU marine matters and to regularly report to the IHO in order to raise awareness. Our recommendations are:

- first, to identify a representative from an EU/EEA country, in every RHC (NHC, EAthC, MBSCH, NSHC, BSHC) with EU/EEA member states, to act as a focal point with the RHC Chair and members.
- second, to establish a permanent body under the IRCC with the representatives from the respective RHCs. This working group should not be an RHC, in order to avoid unnecessary overlap, but could be established as an ad hoc structure under the IRCC. A name suggestion could be the 'IHO European Union Network'. This working group should become the natural and clear focal point between the IHO and the EU and the European Commission. It would supersede the current NSHC EUM2WG. The ToRs of the EUM2WG could be used as a starting point for developing ToRs to this new body.

Action required of IRCC

The IRCC is invited to endorse this proposal and provide further actions and guidance.