

EMODnet Thematic Lot n° V – Biology

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Operational Phase

D4.4.2 Activities to support EU Member States regarding their reporting obligations





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Activities to support EU Member States regarding their reporting obligations

EMODnet Biology's workplan for the period between 2023-05-10 and 2025-05-09 (hereby referred to as Phase V) included actions and deliverables to (extracted from the Call for tenders CINEA/2022/OP/0018):

- ensuring coherence with the efforts of the regional sea conventions and other relevant actors;
- engaging with EU reporting mechanisms (e.g. through participation in working groups TG-DATA, JRC related expert groups, etc.);
- exploiting opportunities for interoperability with data distributed by non-EU organisations;

The activities were described and included in two different Tasks, more specifically Task 6 (Ensure the involvement of Regional Sea Conventions (RSC)) and Task 7 (Contribute to the implementation of the EU legislation and broader initiatives for open data).

Additionally, according to the tender, EMODnet Biology "... should liaise with the European Environmental Agency, responsible for the Member States reporting on the Habitats Directive, to ensure that any marine species data yielded through this process will be harmonised and become available through EMODnet."

This document summarises the work and outputs achieved by the thematic lot during Phase V. All acronyms are fully described in the Annex.

1 EMODnet Biology's connection with EU and international initiatives

EMODnet Biology's connection with the various initiatives/groups mentioned in this document is included in the diagram below.

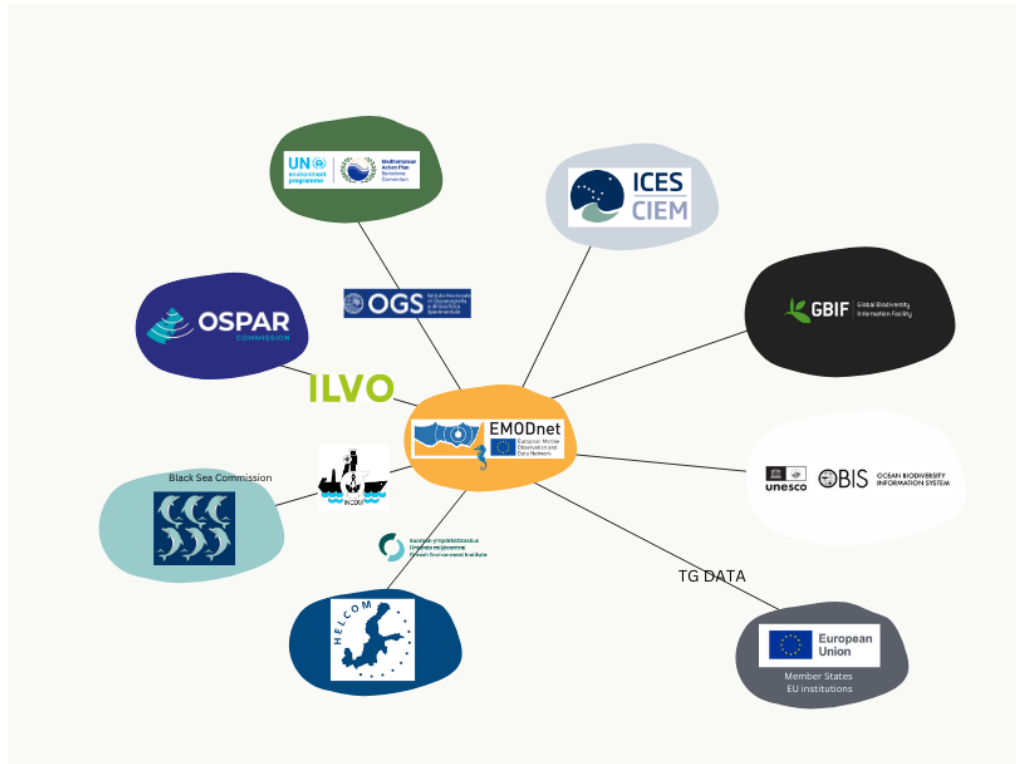


Figure 1. EMODnet Biology connection with the various organisations/initiatives mentioned in this document

Within the thematic lot's consortium several partners are involved with the RSC (ILVO for OSPAR, NIMRD for Black Sea Commission, NIMRD for Black Sea Commission, OGS for UNEP-MAP and Syke for HELCOM). ICES is part of the consortium and the close collaboration with OBIS and GBIF is achieved by representation in governance (e.g. VLIZ for the EurOBIS node, HCMR for the Mediterranean node, MBA for the UK OBIS node and UkrSCEs for the Black Sea node) and active participation in working groups (e.g. OBIS Data Coordination group). EMODnet Biology is also an active collaborator with GBIF, mostly through involvement within EU funded projects and through TDWG-Biodiversity Information Standards (the organisation that governs the Darwin Core Standard to which EMODnet Biology adheres to).

2 Ensuring coherence with the efforts of the Regional Sea Conventions and other relevant actors

Phase V workplan included a description of activities that were to be led in order to further collaborate with the RSC and other actors, including the organisation of a workshop, the design and distribution of a questionnaires aimed to collect specific needs from RSC (in terms of data and information) and the publication of informative material relevant to these stakeholders. Activities as these are not novel to EMODnet Biology, but follow on from actions planned and delivered in previous Phases.

The sections below summarise the actions undertaken in Phase V, their main conclusions and possible future lines of work.

2.1 Regional Sea Conventions (RSC)

Engagement with the RSC has been a line of work that has seen various activities over the different Phases. These activities mostly included the organisation and hosting of dedicated workshops. The list below points to the various deliverables that were published by the thematic lot:

- Phase V: [D4.1.3 RSC Workshop report](#)
- Phase II: [Data Solutions for a Changing Ocean An online showcase of achievement and opportunity](#)
- Phase II: [EU-wide assessment of those species and communities identified by national MSFD leads as required for MSFD monitoring and reporting](#)

Alongside these events, bilateral meetings with the various RSCs have taken place throughout the different Phases, with various levels of success.

In Phase V, due to collaboration in e.g. the [EU TG DATA group](#) and the [Marine Biodiversity Monitoring Harmonisation](#) project, the contacts with the RSCs, more specifically with HELCOM and OSPAR have been strengthened and several future lines of work discussed.

For the coming years, EMODnet Biology's line of work will focus on having an overview of the data flows between the RSCs and other organisations (e.g ICES or JRC) and establishing a direct flow to EMODnet Biology, for the data not available in ICES or at JRC. This will require a close collaboration between the thematic lot and the RSC, ICES and JRC.

2.2 International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

ICES is one of the EMODnet Biology consortium members since 2009 (Phase I) and throughout the various Phases, collaboration and development has been strengthened not only through the design and implementation of a data flow but also through the creation of various deliverables. ICES is the main data repository for [CFP](#) related data and there is continuous work to assess how restrictions on these data can be removed in order to increase the flow to EMODnet Biology. During Phase V, a number of lines of work were addressed:

- Assessment of the restrictions currently applied to fisheries survey data and suggested approaches for their removal, which resulted in a deliverable published in June 2024 ([D4.2.4. Report on progress for the publication of fisheries survey data](#))
- Establish contacts with the [Joint OSPAR/HELCOM/ICES Working Group on Seabirds](#) which did not result in concrete collaborative actions as the group had recently been established (2021) and had not produced any outputs that could be republished by EMODnet Biology (e.g. products focusing on seabird distributions/impacts on migration patterns)
- Continuous data submission from ICES managed data, which included updates to previously submitted datasets but also the inclusion of the Joint Cetacean Programme data. Details on the datasets are included in the EMODnet Biology Quarterly, Interim and Final reports available on the EMODnet website.

In the next two years the line of work will focus on identifying existing data flows with the RSC (as described in section 2.1) and other stakeholders and ensuring that fisheries data that are public find their way to EMODnet Biology.

3 Engaging with EU reporting mechanisms

EMODnet Biology has a remit to ensure that EU official reporting data are available through the [EMODnet Portal](#). This work is multifaceted and will be briefly summarised in the following sections.

3.1 Member States

One of the remits for EMODnet Biology is to support the Member States with their reporting obligations, the relevant legal mechanisms are within the framework of the [Birds](#) and [Habitats](#) Directives and the [Marine Strategy Framework Directive](#) where monitoring of biological parameters is required.

EMODnet Biology has been an observer in the TG DATA group for various years and has provided expert advice on data management and data flows. Future actions will continue providing the support requested by the Member States and, when the reporting data becomes available, ensuring that they are available via EMODnet Biology.

3.2 Joint Research Centre (JRC)

The JRC is the EU centre that hosts CFP data from the Mediterranean and Black Sea EU Member States. In 2024, this centre funded a project targeting [Marine Biodiversity Monitoring Harmonisation](#) and throughout the project's lifetime, EMODnet Biology was invited as a data expert and one of the main stakeholders.

It is expected that as soon as the fisheries data reported in the framework of the CFP becomes available that a data flow between the JRC and EMODnet Biology will be established, possibly in collaboration with ICES, to ensure that all data are readily available and interoperable with OBIS and GBIF. Up until the date of this report, these data are not public and a change in access policy must be approved by each Member State.

3.3 LIFE Programme data

Recently information reached EMODnet Biology that data from the [LIFE programme](#) was archived at CINEA (the programme's funding body). An action is planned for the near future to create a marine biodiversity data inventory and an assessment of the state of the existing data, including, if possible, the file format, volume, parameters collected, metadata availability, among others. This work will require support from the CINEA team that manages the programme and has access to the (meta)data.

4. Exploiting opportunities for interoperability with data distributed by non-EU organisations

It is well-known that European and non-European data providers submit their data to various repositories, e.g. [IODE-NODCs](#), specific repositories like [ENA](#), [Zenodo](#), [Figshare](#) or to structures hosted by scientific journals, e.g. [Scientific data](#) from Nature or [Mendeley Data](#), to name but a few. Some of these structures ensure that the data are managed and curated long term, however in many cases, it also means that the data do not find their way to EMODnet Biology and international biodiversity initiatives like [OBIS](#) or [GBIF](#), becoming effectively locked for use from the wider marine biological community.

Various actions have taken place in collaboration with OBIS and GBIF in order to (re)publish European and Caribbean data that were not yet available in EMODnet Biology. As both OBIS and GBIF work with a federated network, meaning that the data are published by nodes (regional, thematic, national), the actions consisted in creating an inventory of the data available in specific nodes and upon passing thorough Quality Control checks, ensuring that they are (re)published in EMODnet Biology. The work developed in Phase V has allowed for the republication of data from the [Caribbean OBIS node](#), [OBIS SEAMAP](#), [GBIF](#), [GBIF Portugal](#), [GBIF New Zealand](#). This line of work will continue in the future, either through the identification of new datasets or those that have been updated. Additionally, it is foreseen that work will be developed to identify marine biodiversity datasets that are held in repositories like Zenodo or Figshare so that a data flow can be established and those data become available in EMODnet Biology.

5. Acronyms

CFP: Common Fisheries Policy

CINEA: European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency- <https://cinea.ec.europa.eu>

ENA: European Nucleotide Archive

EU: European Union

TG DATA: Technical Group Data

EurOBIS: European (node for the) Ocean Biodiversity Information System- <https://www.eurobis.org>

GBIF: Global Biodiversity Information Facility- <https://www.gbif.org>

HCMR: Hellenic Centre for Marine Research- <https://www.hcmr.gr/en/>

HELCOM: Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission- <https://helcom.fi/>

ICES: international Council for the Exploration of the Sea- <https://www.ices.dk>

ILVO: Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food- <https://ilvo.vlaanderen.be/nl>

IODE: International Oceanographic Data Exchange- <https://iode.org>

JRC: Joint Research Centre- https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/index_en

MBA: Marine Biological Association- <https://www.mba.ac.uk/>

NIMRD: National Institute for Marine Research and Development “Grigore Antipa”- <https://www.rmri.ro/Home/Home.html?lang=en>

NODCs: National Oceanographic Data Centres

OBIS: Ocean Biodiversity Information System- <https://www.obis.org>

OGS: National Institute of Oceanography and Applied Geophysics- <https://www.ogs.it/en>

OSPAR: Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic- <https://www.ospar.org/>

RSC: Regional Sea Conventions

Syke: Finnish Environment Institute- <https://www.syke.fi/en>

UNEP-MAP: United Nations Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan- <https://www.unep.org/unepmap/>

UkrSCES: Ukrainian Scientific Center of Ecology of the Sea- <https://sea.gov.ua/?lang=en>

VLIZ: Flanders Marine Institute- <https://www.vliz.be/en>