Stakeholder Workshop EMODnet Ingestion:
Data Management in Offshore Licensing Procedures

February 29, 2024

On February 29, 2024, stakeholders from 18 different countries gathered for the EMODnet Ingestion workshop, focusing on data management in offshore licensing procedures. The workshop, organized by EMODnet and facilitated by Deltares, aimed to provide an overview of the diverse approaches and practices surrounding marine data management in offshore licenses, particularly in the aquaculture and renewable energy sectors. In addition to this, it was explored if a harmonized approach for data management in offshore licensing procedures is desirable. With around 65 participants actively engaging in discussions, the workshop laid the foundation for the development of a roadmap towards more coherent data management within offshore licensing procedures.

Participants were welcomed to the workshop by Zoi Konstantinou, a policy officer at DG MARE representing the European Commission. She stressed the importance of harmonized data management within licensing procedures and highlighted the advantages thereof. Subsequently, Dick Schaap, the coordinator of EMODnet Ingestion, delivered an introductory presentation on the scope and objectives of EMODnet.

Background

The European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet) involves over 120 European organizations working across thematic groups to gather marine data from various sources for enhanced accessibility and interoperability. Within EMODnet Ingestion the aim is to streamline data ingestion, encouraging both public and private sector entities to release their marine data for safekeeping and distribution through EMODnet. The EMODnet Ingestion project includes activities such as maintaining a web portal, facilitating data pathways to repositories, enabling machine-to-machine transfers, providing user support, engaging with stakeholders, and ensuring service continuity.

EMODnet
European Marine Observation and Data Network

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Current Practices in Offshore Renewable Energy and Aquaculture Licensing

As part of EMODnet Ingestion, an analysis was conducted on the offshore licensing procedures, with a specific focus on offshore aquaculture and renewable energy activities. This analysis revealed diverse approaches and practices related to data management within these processes. During the workshop, a total of six current practices in offshore renewable energy and aquaculture licensing were introduced.

Italy

Ing. Alessandro Severini, Founder and Project Manager of iL Studio srl (Studio Severini), highlighted the current permitting practices for offshore wind farms in Italy. He also voiced his concern about the amount of data that is marked as confidential by offshore operators due to the high costs associated with data collection.

Malta

Francesco Lombardo, Chief Scientific Officer at the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture from the Aquaculture Directorate, presented the licensing process for offshore aquaculture in Malta. He also provided an overview of the relevant stakeholders in this process.

Estonia

Merilin Kraun from the Consumer Protection and Technical Regulatory Authority introduced Estonia's licensing procedures for offshore aquaculture and renewables. Estonia currently has an identical licensing procedure for offshore renewables and offshore aquaculture. Additionally, the number of permits for offshore wind farms will be reduced from three to one to expedite planning.

France

Fanny Faure, Head of the Aquaculture Office from France's Ministry of the Sea, introduced the offshore licensing procedures for France and presented the platform that is used to visualize the location of offshore activities.

Bulgaria

Mira Robinson, Head of Department Marine Waters Conservation and Monitoring from Bulgaria's Black Sea Directorate, introduced the data management procedures that are in place for the Black Sea.

United Kingdom

For the UK, an overview of the licensing procedures for aquaculture and renewable energy was provided by Mark Hebden from the British Oceanographic Data Centre. In the UK, data management is supported via the Marine Data Exchange platform of The Crown Estate.

Discussion on Harmonization of Data Mangement in Offshore Licensing Procedures

The presentations from country representatives on current licensing procedures in various member states were utilized to initiate discussions on the feasibility and desirability of a harmonized approach. During the discussion, it became apparent that the majority of the participants were in favor of a more harmonized approach for data management in offshore licensing procedures. They also agreed, that efforts for harmonization should primarily focus on the EU level. Only a limited number of participants indicated that the focus should be more on the national level.

In addition to this, attendees identified various potential benefits of harmonization in data management. These benefits included improved accessibility, comparability and usability of data.

Furthermore, it was discussed which role EMODnet could play in supporting activities towards a harmonized approach. In this regard, participants indicated that EMODnet could play a role in capacity building. This can be achieved by contributing to training activities and providing guidance and examples of best practices. Additionally, EMODnet can also promote awareness on data collection. Lastly, participants considered EMODnet as a potential facilitator of dialogues between countries.

Overview of benefits of a harmonized approach for data management in offshore licensing according to workshop participants.

Next Steps

The workshop served as a first step in exploring the opportunities for a more harmonized approach in data management within licensing procedures. The outcomes are used as input to define the scope and activities of the next phase of the EMODnet Ingestion project. As part of this, a roadmap will be developed to promote the harmonization of data management within offshore licensing procedures.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to Dick Schaap, Maris (dick@maris.nl) or David Geurts, Deltares (david.geurts@deltares.nl).