

EuroGOOS AISBL
Chairman's Report 2013

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As this is my last report I will not only deal with this year, but I will include the whole five years period as EuroGOOS Chairman, the more as the Secretary General will inform about the current activities in his report, either.

When I started my chairmanship in 2008 I got the impression that EuroGOOS was at a crossroads. Various initiatives concerning marine observation and operational oceanography were under way at European level. The most important ones were GMES – which now is called Copernicus - , EMODNET and the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. There was an urgent need to define the role of EuroGOOS with regard to these initiatives and to consider how EuroGOOS could cope with this role. And we had to raise the question whether EuroGOOS was still needed or other institutions could do the work.

A first step to renew the definition of the role of EuroGOOS was the development of the Short Term Strategy 2009 – 2013. It reconfirms that EuroGOOS shall act as the authoritative and competent expert voice of operational oceanography in all European activities with a clear mandate of its members and be represented in all relevant European bodies. But a more thorough discussion was needed. This was done by an expert group under the chairmanship of Erik Buch by elaborating a comprehensive report on the future of EuroGOOS which since then serves as a firm basis for the further development of EuroGOOS. The main role of EuroGOOS is identified as acting as a coordination and service organisation to the benefit of its members' responsibilities and operational services.

Many efforts have been made to raise the visibility of EuroGOOS, an indispensable prerequisite to play its role. The former EuroGOOS Director Hans Dahlin, the Secretary General Kostas Nittis and I have participated in a great number of meetings, events and projects to represent EuroGOOS. However, visibility does not only mean to be present, but to show that we can actively contribute to relevant activities. The most important event with this regard is the EuroGOOS Conference. The last one in Sopot, Poland, in October 2011 was very successful, being part of the activities of the Polish EU Presidency. I hope that the proceedings of this Conference will be available quite soon. The preparations for the next Conference in Lisbon in 2014 are on their way.

Since 2009 EuroGOOS is involved in the central activities of the European Maritime Day and has organised several workshops. In 2014 the European Maritime Day will be held in Bremen, Germany. One of the topics to be dealt with relates to monitoring and ocean observation. That gives another opportunity for EuroGOOS to show up.

Not only outward, but inward visibility, too, is of importance. It is necessary that EuroGOOS shows that its work is beneficial for its members. So we have tried to strengthen the relations with our members, among others we used all the Board meetings at various locations to contact member institutes. We also tried to provide information about EuroGOOS for high level and government representatives. And we clarified our relations with the ROOSs.

The main structural weakness of EuroGOOS which was again identified in the report on the future of EuroGOOS was its character as an informal association without its own legal personality. As a consequence EuroGOOS could act vis-à-vis third parties only through one of its members. In most cases this was done by SMHI which thankfully hosted the EuroGOOS Office for more than 10 years. But again and again it was obvious that EuroGOOS could only take over responsibilities and would be recognised as a serious player if it became a legal entity. So we transformed the “old” EuroGOOS into the new EuroGOOS AISBL.

The transformation process was one of the main issues of my chairmanship which also dominated this year’s activities. This includes the formal establishment of EuroGOOS AISBL as well as the move of the Office from Norrköping to Brussels associated with staff changes. Our new Secretary General Kostas Nittis has taken over his duties in Brussels with great devotion. Due to financial implications the Executive Directors Board decided that Patrick Gorringer should continue to stay in Norrköping with the kind offer of SMHI to continue his secondment to EuroGOOS under the current conditions until June 2014. The secondment of Sian Petersson who did a great job was terminated in June this year. She has been replaced in Brussels by Yota Antoniou who familiarized herself with the EuroGOOS work in a quick and professional manner. Our new premises in Brussels are most appropriate. We are very grateful to Belspo for hosting us.

Since last year’s Annual Meeting we held four Board meetings, three of them as the new Executive Directors Board of EuroGOOS AISBL: in Hamburg on 23 November immediately after the Annual Meeting, in Norrköping on 10/ 11 January, in Malta on 23 May at the occasion of the European Maritime Day and in Copenhagen on 1/ 2 October. The Board elected Erik Buch as Vice Chair and dealt in particular with the following issues:

- the need for funding in-situ measurements and the cooperation with EEA
- agreements with SMHI and Belspo
- finalisation of the draft Internal Rules
- transition matters
- representation authority of the Secretary General
- support of ECOMF with regard to the future Copernicus marine service
- principles for support to and participation in externally funded projects
- joint working groups with the European Marine Board
- preparation of the EuroGOOS Conference 2014
- preparation of the first EuroGOOS AISBL Annual Meeting
- financial matters
- new EuroGOOS logo and website.

Important activities this year include the agreement with EEA on collaboration with regard to the access to in-situ data for marine services which I signed on behalf of EuroGOOS AISBL in April. By this agreement we are also strengthening the role of the ROOSs which we represent vis-à-vis EEA. In particular worth mentioning are also our participation in the GMES-PURE project and EMODnet physics as well as the cooperation with other European programmes and initiatives such as Horizon 2020 and JPI Oceans. On the global level EuroGOOS plays a significant role in the GOOS Regional Alliances and takes part in the work of IOC and JCOMM.

As the outgoing chairman I want to conclude my last report with a brief outlook. For the future it will be imperative for EuroGOOS to take over responsibilities and functions at European level. In particular EuroGOOS should play a major role in the context of the Copernicus marine service. My hope is that ECOMF will be mandated to operate this service and that EuroGOOS can take over coordination and advisory functions. In this context the ECOMF strategic partnership, initiated through the Nicosia Declaration, gains in importance. EuroGOOS should also continue its activities within EMODNET; in addition specific contributions with regard to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive should be taken into consideration. Closer contacts with marine research institutions, especially with the European Marine Board should be sought. It is very unfortunate, but probably characteristic that in the Final Report on "Towards European Ocean Observation" which the European Commission released in January EuroGOOS is little-noticed and does not play any real role. Hopefully the EuroGOOS Conference next year can be used to demonstrate the competencies, skills and expertise brought together by the EuroGOOS members. But EuroGOOS should also strive for closer contacts with the private sector as one of the main users of marine services.

Internally EuroGOOS should continue to strengthen its contacts with the ROOSs and to encourage more ROOS partners to become EuroGOOS members. We also need a better approach to the national Governments of our members. We have to learn more about their position towards European activities and we have to convince them that they should make use of our expertise and advice. In the end it would be highly preferable if our members will get the authorisation to speak and act also on behalf of their Governments.

Taking all in all I am leaving the chair with the feeling that EuroGOOS is no longer at a crossroads, but has found the right road. It is now up to you to tackle this route.