

## **SPEECH**

Mr Laros, Mr Kellerman,

Dear participants,

I thank you for your kind invitation. I am glad and honoured to open this "Fish and Ships" conference. The MARCOM+ and the EMAR2RES projects have undertaken an important and challenging task and I wish to thank you for your efforts to build cooperation among the wide range of marine and maritime research stakeholders.

I would like to address two issues in my speech.

Firstly I wish to recall the importance of a cross-sectoral approach in maritime affairs, and why it should be reflected in a cross-thematic cooperation between marine and maritime disciplines.

Secondly I will give you examples of issues of concern to research policy makers, which, we believe, can only be addressed through a cooperation mechanism bringing together marine and maritime stakeholders from science and industry.

One of the key drivers for the EU Strategy for Marine and Maritime Research is the need for an integrated management of maritime activities. There are many complex areas which require an approach cutting across several sectors and groups of stakeholders, but we believe that this need is compelling for ocean related activities.

Maritime activities whether they deal with energy, food, transport, biological or mineral resources compete for an increasingly crowded marine space, especially in coastal areas. They are inter-related by the combined impact that they have on the marine environment, compounded by the fluidity of the marine environment which spreads this impact in relatively short time over large areas. Similarly marine ecosystems are affected faster and over larger scale by climate change than on land while coastal areas are the most exposed to sea level rise and extreme events provoked by climate change.

Furthermore marine and maritime activities are also inter-related by the technological challenges that are common to all activities taking place in the sea, whether they are related to bio-fouling, corrosion, mechanical resistance, or stability of floating and offshore structures.

Marine and maritime research will be tackled in all relevant societal challenges of "Horizon 2020". All key marine and maritime issues and research needs have been properly covered in the Commission proposal. This concerns marine renewable energy, including remote offshore wind, in the energy challenge. The transport challenge will cover all maritime transport and logistics research and technology needs. It will also support specialised high technology ships and marine platforms to support diversification of shipbuilding activities towards new markets. The 'climate and resources efficiency' challenge will cover climate-ocean interactions, adaptation to climate change, the sustainable management of marine ecosystems, as well as the exploitation of deep-sea raw materials. The "food security, sustainable agriculture, marine and maritime research and the bio-economy" will cover fisheries, aquaculture and marine biotechnology.

But "marine and maritime research" is more than a collection of separate research issues, which take place in different thematic areas. It must in addition help us understand interrelations between ocean, climate and maritime activities,

as well as between different marine and maritime technologies, and generate synergies between them.

Let me give one example. In order to develop offshore wind energy, we need, in addition to the windmills themselves, marine sensors for a remote monitoring and management of wind farms, materials that can withstand the specific conditions of the marine environment, ships and maritime technologies to install and service the wind farms, ports with the logistics to handle immense windmills. We must select the best sites with regard to wind potential, stability of sea bed, wave height. We must also ensure minimal impact on the marine environment and other activities, as well as predict how climate change might affect the operating conditions in the long term. We can no longer afford to look at these issues separately. We need a strategic approach to tackle them in an integrated way from the outset.

This cross-cutting feature of marine and maritime research is now embedded in our research programmes. Our proposal for "Horizon 2020", calls for a *"strategic approach to programming ... to address challenges which cut across all of Horizon 2020's specific objectives, such as... marine sciences and technologies."*

How does a cooperation mechanism bringing together marine and maritime stakeholders from science and industry feature in this context?

There are two aspects in such a cooperation mechanism, which both MARCOM+ and EMAR2RES projects have addressed. One is an improved cooperation among the marine and maritime stakeholders from science and industry. The second one is an improved interaction between marine and

maritime research stakeholders and the European Commission, as well as other policy makers and public research funding bodies.

Cooperation among the marine and maritime research stakeholders can have several positive impacts. It can facilitate the transfer of marine and maritime technologies across the range of marine and maritime stakeholders, which can in turn promote innovative applications for these technologies. Such cooperation can also help industries internalise marine scientific knowledge, on the marine environment and climate change for example, which is important to meet the requirements of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive in particular or to adapt to climate change impacts.

Obviously it belongs primarily to marine scientists and maritime industries to identify issues of common interest and how they could be addressed in cooperative actions. But we believe that such cooperation can generate economic and societal value. We all know for instance that the huge endeavour of moving towards Good Environmental Status of our seas cannot be achieved by legislation alone, without a proper understanding of what industries can do to implement the legislation. The case studies you will have later today on underwater noise, arctic shipping, offshore aquaculture, and marine renewable energy are perfect examples of the value of such interactions.

This brings me to the second aspect, which concerns the need to improve interactions between marine and maritime research stakeholders and research policy makers.

The most pressing need is to have a mechanism for a consolidated interaction with marine and maritime research stakeholders concerning the implementation of cross-cutting marine and maritime research programmes. This is important at

all stages: the strategic programming of research, the identification of topics for calls, the implementation and the dissemination of research results.

The Commission is institutionally equipped to consult and interact with, for example, platforms such as the waterborne or the aquaculture technological platforms, or scientific organisations like the Marine Board or the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES). But we do face a clear gap when we need to consult the whole range of marine and maritime stakeholders on cross-cutting marine and maritime issues.

This is the case when we elaborate "Ocean of Tomorrow" calls, for which we lack a structured input reflecting integrated views of the whole spectrum of marine and maritime stakeholders concerned. Similarly, we need such a structured input when we undertake a strategic programming of marine and maritime research.

Furthermore, we believe that a strategic approach of "marine and maritime research" (and in member states) requires a regular analysis and dissemination of results achieved among marine and maritime research stakeholders.

If I take again the example of offshore wind energy, it is easy to see that progress in research and technology supporting this sector will come from several areas of research. It is important to keep an overview on relevant research results across several areas of research and priorities, and be able to provide an integrated analysis on progress achieved in such critical areas. Obviously offshore wind is only an example and this approach should be applied to other strategic areas such as marine food and biotechnology or the good environmental status of our seas in line with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are aware that setting a Marine and Maritime Science and Technology Forum is a new and challenging undertaking. You need to bring together a broad range of scientific and industrial stakeholders with different backgrounds and interests. You have progressed in building common understanding and cooperation between marine and maritime research stakeholders. This can have a strong economic and societal value, if it follows a pragmatic problem solving approach. This could help in building strong and complementary consortia which will put forward innovative proposals in response to the last FP7 calls which will be launched in July 2012, either thematic calls or joint calls. It should also respond to concrete needs for the European Commission, which I sketched out.

As you consider options, later today, for organising a mechanism to foster cooperation between Marine and Maritime Science and Technology stakeholders, you might think of different objectives and possible benefits. Being responsible for research policy and programmes, we are obviously interested in an effective cooperation mechanism with respect to marine and maritime research programming and implementation.

I wish you a fruitful conference and we look forward to your suggestions.