The Ocean InfoHub Project
Overview 14 December 2020

The Ocean InfoHub (OIH) Project aims to improve access to global oceans information, data and knowledge products for management and sustainable development. The OIH will link and anchor a network of regional and thematic nodes that will improve online access to, and synthesis of existing global, regional and national data, information and knowledge resources, including existing clearinghouse mechanisms. The project will not be establishing a new database, but will be supporting discovery and interoperability of existing information systems. The OIH Project is a three-year project funded by the Government of Flanders, Kingdom of Belgium, and implemented by the IODE Project Office of the IOC/UNESCO.

The OIH will support the development of the Ocean Data and Information System (ODIS) architecture, which will provide an interoperability layer and supporting technology to allow existing and emerging ocean data and information systems, from any stakeholder, to interoperate with one another. This will enable and accelerate more effective development and dissemination of digital technology and sharing of ocean data, information, and knowledge. As such, ODIS will not be a new portal or centralised system, but will provide a collaborative solution to interlink distributed systems for common goals. Together with global project partners and partners in the three regions, a process of co-design will enable a number of global and regional nodes to test the proof of concept for the ODIS.

The OIH will first work with IOC-associated online resources - including OceanExpert, OceanDocs/Aquadocs, the Ocean Best Practices System, the Ocean Biodiversity Information System (OBIS), the World Ocean Database (WOD) and Ocean Data Portal (ODP) – extended by partnerships with EurOcean, Marinetraining.eu, EMODNET, and other sources in the IOC ODIS Catalogue of Sources (ODIScat). Based on feedback from the three pilot regions, the initial thematic focus of OIH will be on (i) Experts and institutions/organizations, (ii) Documents, (iii) Spatial data and maps, (iv) Research vessels, (v) Education and training opportunities, (vi) Projects.

The project will benefit marine and coastal stakeholders across the globe, but its initial focus will be on responding to requests for data products and services from three regions: Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Pacific Small Island Developing States, to meet their unique user community (thematic and language) requirements. The initial priorities for the Project will be to develop communities of practice for the three pilot regions, as well as to formalize partnerships with other UN agencies and key international partners. Through these actions, the OIH will enable a digital ecosystem where users, from any entry point, can discover content and services that they require, while also having opportunities to become content creators themselves.

Matchmaking services would be an additional function of the OIH, particularly in support of the IOC Capacity Development strategy. Services would allow study and training or vessel survey opportunities to be identified, a peer-to-peer service would support scientific collaboration, and an automated/self-serve service would allow the search for specific human or institutional expertise. The project will also focus on the transfer of local knowledge, on supporting early career scientists, and on remedying gender disparity by increasing access to information, technologies and opportunities, in line with the IOC's Capacity Development strategy.

Ultimately, the OIH intends to meet the knowledge needs of national and regional requirements for sourcing marine data and information, as well as to assist countries in their reporting requirements for the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly goals 4,9, 14 and 17), contribute to key aims of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for disaster Risk Reduction and Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction. The OIH will also assist IOC member states to report on ocean science capacities through the Global Ocean Science Report (GOSR). The Ocean InfoHub Project will therefore provide an opportunity for partners and users to contribute to, and access the UN Ocean Decade global data ecosystem.

For more information
Please email Lucy Scott, UNESCO/IOC Project Office for IODE (Belgium): L.Scott@unesco.org