National Systems in the European Ocean Observing System – the Malta case

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With Blue Growth we are nothing but repeating the efforts of our ancestors in reaching out to the sea for our livelihood, not exclusively on boats this time, but on highways connecting data and people, leading to technology-enabled futures. The notion of highways is appropriate to streams of big data, busting high performance cloud computing and services, data analytics creating and composing traffic, the Internet of Things and machine-to-machine communication automating flows, and artificial intelligence pumping more fuel into motion.

Data stands to be an essential asset. Like any other asset it has to be well organised and maintained. Data never becomes obsolete, but its value depends on its consistency, continuous updating, interoperability and open access to multiple users. It must trigger a multiplier effect. When a data asset matures into a resource for a number of products, it becomes an indispensable asset, namely it becomes core data and a building block of the highway. The value of data is then proliferated when data from different sources make a whole, merging lanes into a highway.

Ongoing funded activities are feeding an effort in Malta to systematise a prototype plan to shape the national system for marine data harvesting and harnessing, to fit the needs of the country in safeguarding marine ecosystem resources while perceiving to increase competitiveness in the marine economic sector. This complies to new realisations where national systems are given the relevance and backing needed to accomplish the local scale data resolution and detail required by local users. The overall setup under EOOS is envisaged to comprise a service of services, providing a fit-for-purpose system, supported by a network of compatible and interoperable national systems, and providing augmented services that integrate data over different scales, types and user levels.