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Strategic Agenda for Future Stakeholder Engagement



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Introduction | 1 |
| 2. Overview of stakeholder engagement activities performed | 2 |
| 2.1. Categories involved..... | 3 |
| 2.2. Activities..... | 3 |
| 3. Future Stakeholder engagement activities | 5 |
| 3.1. Up to the end of the project | 5 |
| 3.2. Categories to be involved | 6 |
| 3.3. Activities planned..... | 7 |
| 4. Beyond the end of project | 9 |
| 4.1. Categories to be involved | 10 |
| 4.2. Activities planned..... | 11 |
| 5. Conclusion..... | 13 |

1. Introduction

The "Strategic agenda for future stakeholder engagement" describes planned activities of international relevance to reinforce the European EUROFLEETS+ strategic significance, this document is the second release, as foreseen in the EUROFLEETS+ Description of Action, and has been updated based on stakeholder needs identified through a steady dialogue to agree on challenges to be addressed in the long-term (10 years) through the research vessel infrastructure. This deliverable, the second release with respect to [D5.1](#), is composed of two parts (chapters 2 and 3). The second chapter describes the stakeholder engagement activities performed, while the third chapter depicts the Future Stakeholder engagement activities, up to the end of the project and beyond it.

The overall aim in the first version of the Strategic Agenda (D5.1), was to position the Consortium activities into a broader spectrum of critical global challenges, having defined its potential usefulness for different types of actions related to Research Vessels (RVs). This process ultimately led to a definition of outlined priorities reflecting a vision of the future co-designed by several actors from science, industry, technological services and by social and economic realities. This path has facilitated the Consortium to design services via a broad multi-stakeholder strategic dialogue mainly to highlight their needs, and set around the Grand Societal Challenges which has enabled the Consortium to maximise the benefits associated with its activities, as well as, to ensure efficiency and policy consistency.

Furthermore, the identification of significant stakeholders was not separated from the need of addressing Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), Water Framework Directive (WFD), and UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specific contributions to SDG targets have been identified mainly for the following: SDG9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure); SDG13 (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts); SDG14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development). All these are in a cross-connection with relevant targets for the SDG17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development).

This Strategic Agenda frames stakeholder engagement and defines common priorities between the different players. The agenda is a living document, to define key global challenges, scope, potential for different types of joint actions and clustering, geographical coverage, and survey durations: Short (less than 3 years), Medium (5-6 years), and Long (10 years) term. The Strategic Agenda in this second release (D5.6) has been updated based on stakeholder needs identified through the interactions both remotely and online contacts, such as the two International stakeholder workshops (see for references D5.2 and D5.4 reports of the two events) in order to agree on Global Challenges to be addressed in the long-term (10 years). It takes into account EU directives and International policies, such as MSFD, WFD, SDGs and Ocean Investment Platform from the World Ocean Council (WOC), and key initiatives promoted by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and UNESCO, such as UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030).

2. Overview of stakeholder engagement activities performed

One of the key aims of the EUROFLEETS+ project has been to involve a wide range of stakeholders to raise awareness on the development, operation and strategic direction of the large and well-equipped European RV fleet. A register of stakeholder needs has been created, of relevance to a catalogue of high-quality and integrated services.

Stakeholder dialogue has been fostered through three main approaches: a) semi-structured interviews, b) web-based discussion forum, and c) two international workshops. Additionally, a series of virtual meetings were carried out, to prepare various stakeholders for fruitful information exchanges and coordinated actions to foster the cross-fertilization between different research infrastructures in the Marine Domain.

The EUROFLEETS+ stakeholder engagement plan is a circular process, following what was already defined in the first release of the Strategic Agenda (D5.1). The starting point is the strategic agenda and the consistent dialogue with stakeholders' categories to foster their engagement and interaction. The aim of this approach is to focus on their needs, and then to find suitable solutions, planning actions to solve them (Figure 2.1 depicts this cycle).

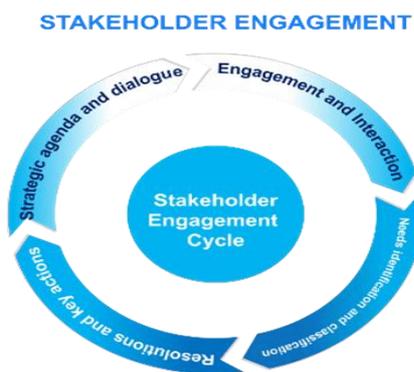


Figure 2.1. Stakeholder engagement cycle

Stakeholder Engagement has been conducted with the purpose of continuous improvement and the approach should be cyclical and unbroken. Although many variations of the paradigm have emerged four key steps remain key to a successful engagement process:

- Engagement and Interaction with Stakeholders.
- Stakeholder issues identification and clarification.
- Development of resolutions and key actions.
- Outcomes and dialogue.

In developing the stakeholder engagement process, since the issue of the first release of the Strategic Agenda (D5.1), the focus has been on stakeholder's key to the success of EUROFLEETS+. With the added value of the success of a future long-term and sustainable coordinated system of European RVs. In this view, we defined our stakeholders as "Any organisation, group, entity or people with an interest or stake in the EUROFLEETS+ results and the success of a long-term and sustainable coordinated system of RVs".

2.1. Categories involved

The target stakeholders of interest for EUROFLEETS+ were classified in the following categories:

- Governments
- Research and Education
- Industry
- Civil society
- European and International networks and programs.

Figure 2.2 illustrates each of these categories.



Figure 2.2. Target stakeholders

A deeper analysis of the EUROFLEETS+ stakeholders identified the following sub-categories:

1. Pan-European Research Infrastructures
2. Projects (EU, National, International)
3. Networks, Organisations and Frameworks
4. Research and Education
5. Industry
6. Governments
7. Media
8. Public
9. NGOs.

These sub-categories of stakeholders have been described in D5.1.

2.2. Activities

The EUROFLEETS+ stakeholder engagement plan has included the following steps:

1. Stakeholder database and analysis
2. Semi-structured interviews
3. Web-based discussion forum
4. International workshops.

1. Stakeholder database and analysis

A mapping exercise has been carried out, following the criteria and the database structure as described in D5.1. The database contains 358 entries for 37 countries and divided in the 9 sub-categories¹.

2. Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews focused on the identification of stakeholders' needs and offers, on overlaps between stakeholder and EUROFLEETS+ mission and strategy, and on mutual collaboration opportunities. The semi-structured interviews aimed at establishing a direct contact with the stakeholder to identify a first list of specific needs that were further elaborated during the international workshops.

On the basis of the stakeholder analysis it was decided to begin the interviews with the most relevant sub-categories for EUROFLEETS+. The main stakeholders' needs, derived from the analysis of the interviews, can be summarised as follows:

- to have a coordination entity constituting an entry point to bridge the RV operators and the stakeholders to better fulfil their needs. This entity could favour an optimised use of shiptime and vessels in terms of geographical location limiting too long transits. This should consistently reduce the management costs;
- to collaborate on the development of new technical solutions, such as data (e.g., real-time data transfer, artificial intelligence, satellite data acquisition), communications (e.g., underwater wireless communications), equipments (e.g., monitoring devices and systems, acoustic sensors), vessel facilities (e.g., dynamic positioning, moon pool). ERICs and industry emerged as the stakeholders primarily focused on these needs;
- to foster Transnational Access activities. Two areas were particularly highlighted: 1) technical needs, because there is often a gap between the demand for instrumentation and the capacity of the vessels in terms of handling; 2) organisational needs, due to the added value of having a shared calendar for the RV fleet. ERICs and Research Institutions and Education outlined their interest in several aspects of Transnational Access, while some industries highlighted specifically their needs for the use of vessels for sensor/equipment testing;
- to establish common training activities (such as training programme, master programme). The improvement of communication among the different communities has been recognized as a useful tool to promote further cooperation.

3. Web-based discussion forum

To extend the interactions with these stakeholders during the interviews we were asking if they would be interested to participate in a web-based discussion forum (<https://www.eurofleets.eu/forums/forum/stakeholder-forum/>).

¹ https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1zPOFRwdFU78jIWfagCdyYgpFicJF2fgq/edit?usp=share_link&oid=116117271137291599635&rtpof=true&sd=true

All interviewees expressed in principle their interest to participate in this web-based forum for continuing and deepening discussions, but in reality participation was not effective and continuous. Despite great efforts in stimulating dialogue via the forum, engagement was minimal. This was a result of many factors including having to register, login, and to keep up to date on comments via notifications. In an already crowded communications arena an additional tool did not deliver the expected outcome. In the interest of maintaining direct dialogue with stakeholder's efforts were redirected to meetings, workshops, webinars and other channels across the project.

4. [International workshops](#)

Two Stakeholder International workshops took place.

- *1st Stakeholder International Workshop "Combining fixed and mobile ocean observing systems and their link with satellite observations".*

This workshop, held in virtual mode on 13th April 2021, aimed at connecting the main operators and stakeholders for the benefit of greater coordination and integration and anticipated that it would translate into efficiency in data collection and connecting to public/society concerning climate change. The main outcomes identified were related to the importance of the workshop as a vehicle of information, on the crucial role of EUROFLEETS+ initiative as a place for improving collaboration and coordination among the different observing networks and RVs operators.

Fully reported in [D5.2-Report and recommendations from International Workshop 1.](#)

- *2nd Stakeholder International Workshop "Synergies with the Atlantic Mapping program linking with AORA-Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance, EMODnet-European Marine Observation and Data Network bathymetry and Belém statement".*

The workshop, held in virtual mode on 26th September 2022, aimed at promoting synergies with the Atlantic Mapping program linking with AORA, EMODnet bathymetry and Belém statement. In particular, the workshop contributed to:

- strengthening synergies with Atlantic Mapping programmes and the research vessel community;
- best connect with Atlantic Programmes such as Mission Atlantic, EMODnet Bathymetry and other Benthic Mapping stakeholders, including industry;
- discuss how to facilitate access to bathymetric data (EMODnet) and support all scientific stakeholders towards a reliable access to an Open Science System (EOSC-European Open Science Cloud).

Several different outcomes were identified and also expectations vs. takeaways. All of them are fully described in [D5.4-Report and recommendations from International Workshop 2.](#)

3. Future Stakeholder engagement activities

3.1. Up to the end of the project

3.2. Categories to be involved

A key focus for stakeholder engagement in the final months of the project will be policy-makers. The reasons it was decided to involve this category later, towards the end of the project: is to allow for the proposal of the EUROFLEETS RI legal status to be presented.

The key stakeholders who will be engaged will be very interested in and invested in the success of the establishment of the EUROFLEETS community as a legal entity (named EUROFLEETS RI).

They are:

- Pan-European Research Infrastructures
- Research and Education Institutions
- Industry
- Government.

As illustrated in the previous paragraphs, some representatives of the first three categories of stakeholders, listed above, had been engaged already, so the objective up to the end of the project is to maintain and increase the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement activities.

Major efforts will be addressed to explore the perception of policy makers with regard to EUROFLEETS RI both at International/European and national level. Four years after the start of the EUROFLEETS+ project, the consortium is ready to engage policymakers, and to identify its most critical issues and challenges toward the establishment of EUROFLEETS RI as a legal entity in their perspective, and derive some recommendations regarding the:

- General Assessment and main challenges toward EUROFLEETS RI
- Governance: effectiveness of the governance structure and resources
- Priority-setting and resource concentration.

At International/European level, preliminary contact will be established with representatives of the:

- European Commission DG Research and Innovation, Unit RTD-B4
- European Commission, DG Research and Innovation, Healthy Seas and Oceans Unit
- European Commission, DG MARE, Maritime Innovation, Marine Knowledge and Investment Unit
- G6 Research Infrastructure Task Force
- Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission
- ESFRI Executive Board
- Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership.

At National level, preliminary contact will be established with:

- funding agencies and research policy coordinators
- experts of Strategic Configuration of the Horizon Europe Programme Committees
- delegates in ESFRI.

3.3. *Activities planned*

Addressed to the stakeholders already engaged, the planned activities consist of an overall follow-up of the relations with them; in particular, the effective stakeholder management processes/strategies will aim to:

- Maintain their enthusiasm and interest in EUROFLEETS RI
- Ensure they are on the same page about their individual influence and responsibilities and how their roles fit into EUROFLEETS RI
- Provide them with information, invite them to presentations, involve them as much as resources allow
- Seek their input and possible contributions.

Tools to be adopted will be:

- Website
- Newsletter
- Project reports and publications
- Workshops organisation
- Open presentation of EUROFLEETS RI
- Opinion polls.

Regarding the stakeholder engagement of policy makers, “two-way communication” will be implemented through formal meetings, fostering a regular dialogue throughout a negotiation process, that will lead to a better understanding of their perspectives on EUROFLEETS as a legal entity.

This kind of approach will foster the credibility of EUROFLEETS RI with policy-makers and contribute to the development of relationships based on trust and respect and the evolution of win-win scenarios.

In addition, tailored ongoing actions will be finalised; in particular:

- drafting the EUROFLEETS RI visual identity
- drafting a Policy Brief focusing on the EUROFLEETS RI, noting the key and multiple roles it can play in supporting marine science and ocean observing
- organising a workshop, titled “Sustainable Long-term Access to Our Seas and Oceans” during the European Maritime Day 2023 in Brest; the rationale of the event in the following.

EUROFLEETS RI is key to delivering the related European Union Missions by providing access to our Seas and Oceans and contributing to the implementation of EOOS-European Ocean Observing System. Facilitating multidisciplinary science teams tackling changing climate, supporting ocean monitoring, sustainable fisheries, bio-medical research, advancing the European Green Deal and the European DTO-Digital Twin of the Ocean. A planned workshop during European Maritime Day 2023, will gather key stakeholders, scientific and academic, not only from Marine Science domains, Pan-EU Research Infrastructures, Industry and Policy Makers, the workshop will identify gaps in sea exploration and the best solutions for the long-term mobilisation of EUROFLEETS RI capacities in Europe to deliver sustainable access now and into the future. Key stakeholder groups will introduce their needs followed by group activities

utilising active participation methods such as World Café or Disney method to engage attendees, identify service gaps and map user needs to inform EUROFLEETS RI activities to deliver sustainable Research Vessels access and guide collaboration across user categories. Representatives from both advanced and emerging marine science communities will come together to identify key synergistic opportunities for delivering the Mission Restore Our Oceans and Waters by 2030 working closely with European DTO initiatives.

4. Beyond the end of project

EUROFLEETS RI will consolidate activities to better coordinate and optimise European funded research fleets into the future.

It is planned that EUROFLEETS RI will be inaugurated in Q1 2024 as an *Association Internationale Sans but Lucrative* (AISBL) as an international non-profit organisation as it moves into its Preparation Phase. (see Figure 3.1). At this point it will be necessary to review and revise all aspects of stakeholders' engagement strategy to ensure that it is still fit for purpose and that it takes into account the changing landscape of the European Research ecosystem.

A primary objective of the EUROFLEETS RI will be the continuation of the Transnational Access Programme and its extension to annual calls will improve sustainable access to our seas and oceans through better coordination to achieve maximum impact for each expedition thus delivering better return on investment for all. The provision of enhanced training and education programmes will identify and deliver key skills & capacities needed to meet emerging challenges of the blue economy along with informing the public of the key role that RV's play in the observation and monitoring of our seas and oceans through participation in Ocean Literacy activities. Additionally, EUROFLEETS RI will represent its members collectively, with one voice to government research ministries, EC Directorates, EU and International Funding Agencies, and many other marine-related groups to facilitate new links with related initiatives and infrastructures worldwide.

In order to meet all of these objectives stakeholder engagement will be viewed through a sustainability perspective considering economic, environmental and social outcomes both for the EUROFLEETS RI and for its stakeholders and will include the continuous engagement, mapping and monitoring of user's needs.

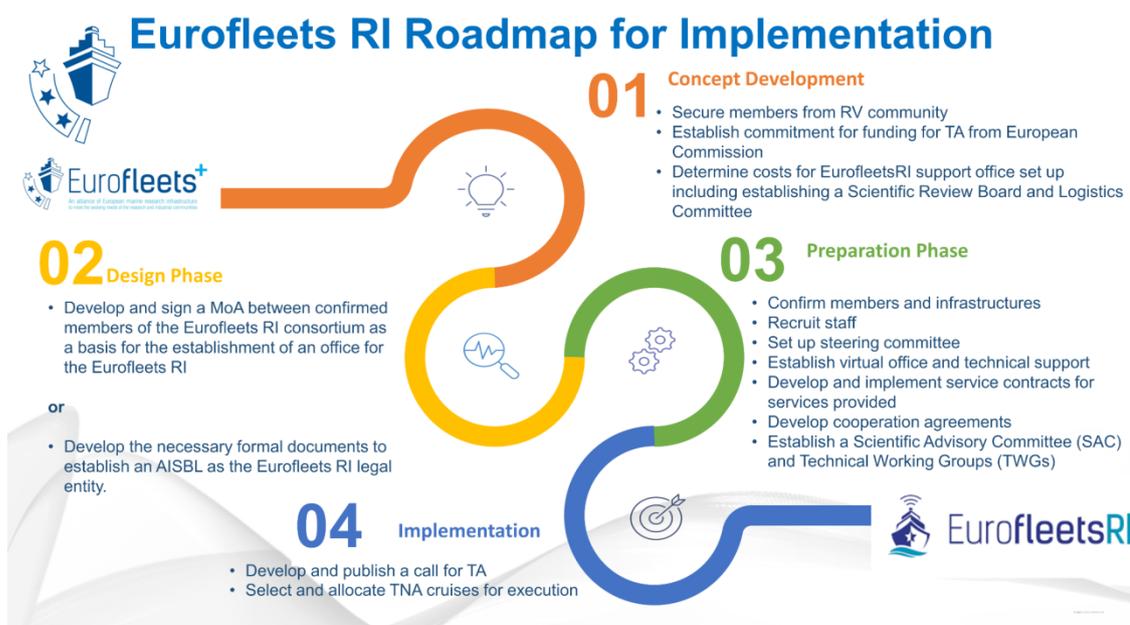


Figure 3.1. EUROFLEETS RI roadmap for implementation

In the short term (1-3 years) the focus will be on the immediate needs of the EUROFLEETS RI direct users and members in order to build a firm foundation on which to develop access programmes. The user community will include engagement with established and developing RIs, such as EuroArgo ERIC, EMSO ERIC, ICOS-ERIC, JERICO-RI, GROOM, EURO GOSHIP RI, EMODnet, SeaDataNet, EOOS, EuroGOOS.

In the Medium term (5-6 years), the agenda will be updated based on new stakeholders to be engaged and their needs identified through dialogue in order to agree on Global Challenges to be addressed in the long-term (10 years) through the research vessel infrastructure. It will consider EU directives and international policies, such as Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), Water Framework Directive (WFD), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Ocean Investment Platform from the World Ocean Council (WOC), and key initiatives promoted by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and UNESCO, such as UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030).

The current landscape as we know it, will change in the coming years. There is a drive, led by the European Commission towards consolidation and integration of the Research Infrastructures across all domains which is being embraced by the RI community. This will result in substantial changes over the next ten years which must be monitored and anticipated to continue to meet user expectations. EUROFLEETS RI will remain open and agile to ensure that it continues to deliver the expectations of all stakeholder categories.

4.1. Categories to be involved

EUROFLEETS RI will engage all stakeholder categories required to keep involved in the future of EUROFLEETS RI.

Moving towards the establishment of EUROFLEETS RI and advancing in the process, the stakeholders database will be updated and reviewed in term of contacts and categories; possible new categories are:

1. Scientists
2. Students
3. Industries
4. Public Institutions
5. Universities
6. Pan European Infrastructures (e.g., EuroArgo ERIC, EMSO ERIC)
7. RV Operators
8. Technicians
9. Land-based staff
10. NGOs
11. International/ EU Networks and Projects
12. National Governments
13. Environmental Agencies
14. International and EU Organisations
15. European Commission DGs and UNESCO-IOC.

Based on the business idea beyond EUROFLEETS RI the main needs of these categories are:

- Provision of a "market-place" for those offering access to RVs and/or LEXIs, and those looking for charter, barter or in-kind contribution to research projects, monitoring activities, logistical. functions, etc.
- Provision of education and training courses, activities, opportunities, programs, summer schools, etc. (both theoretical and practical)
- Provision of easy access to up-to-date information on the European RV Fleet
- Provision of funded TA opportunities on board high performing RVs flying various national flags, on the basis of scientific excellence, in addition to promoting innovative e-access to RVs during scientific cruises
- Optimise integration, develop a European approach to address common challenges through the provision of single point transnational access to our Seas and Oceans.

4.2. Activities planned

Activities will be carefully planned and developed so that it is the most effective and appropriate channel to meet the expectations of each stakeholder category outlined above. EUROFLEETS RI will devise a time bound strategy of targeted stakeholder engagement through all stages of development and ensure that the correct and expected tools are utilised for the target audience so stakeholders are reached through the expected channels. Figure 3.2 below maps the levels of engagement against stakeholder's interest and influence.

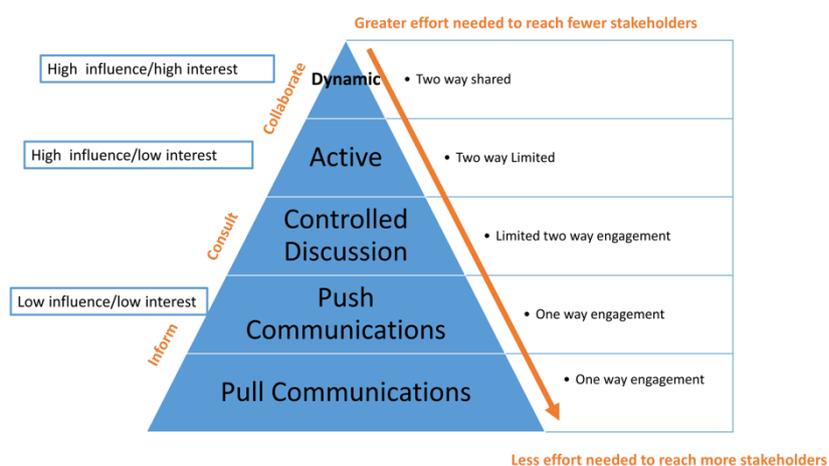


Figure 3.2. Level of engagement vs. stakeholders' interest/influence

It recommends the different types of engagement these categories expect and would be familiar to them. Based on this, Table 3.1 describes how each of the categories will be reached both digitally and using more traditional methods such as interviews, surveys, workshops and formal working groups.

| Pull Communications Channels | Push Communications Channels | Controlled Discussion Channels | Active Engagement Channels | Dynamic Engagement Channels |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| One-Way Inform | One-Way Inform Consult | Two-Way Consult | Two-Way Consult/ Collaborate | Two-Way Collaborate |
| Website Brochures Social Media Video | Policy Briefs Newsletters Webcasts Infographics | Online Surveys Social Media feedback Requests polls Webinars Face to Face Meetings | User Needs workshops Conference Exhibition Formal Training Groups | Face to Face meetings Working Groups Advisory Groups Intranet |
| Target User Group | | | | |
| All Stakeholders including the public, educators, media, policy makers, international and EU organisations | All Stakeholders including the public, educators, media, policy makers, international and EU organisations | All Stakeholders including the public, educators, media, policy makers, international and EU organisations | Scientists, Users, Ship Operators, industry, Funding Agencies and other RIs and projects | Scientists, Users, Ship Operators, industry, Funding Agencies and other RIs and projects |

Table 3.1. Reaching modalities of the different categories

Finally, the list of events and activities planned has been outlined below, which is dynamic and will be updated and adjusted in line with progression through the various stages of the inauguration of the EUROFLEETS RI. A legacy plan has been developed for the EUROFLEETS+ website which will remain active beyond the lifetime of the project, as well as the established social media channels.

List of activities planned beyond the lifetime of the EUROFLEETS+ Project:

- ✓ EUROFLEETS RI Launch - In person launch event with members and invited guests
- ✓ Press Releases/Policy Brief aimed at appropriate audiences
- ✓ RI Website - One stop shop for all RI activity and services
- ✓ Newsletters - Informative newsletters keeping stakeholders up to date, target newsletters specifically aimed a user category
- ✓ Social Media Channels- such as LinkedIn, Twitter, You Tube
- ✓ Stakeholder Events, workshops and consultations:
 - User Needs Workshops
 - TA Funding Consultations with European Commission
 - ESFRI Roadmap Consultations
 - TA Call Design consultations
 - Training Course Design Consultations
 - Working Groups Workshops
 - Conferences

- Exhibitions
- ✓ Corporations with European Marine Board
- ✓ Joint Collaborative Actions with other RIs.

5. Conclusion

The Strategic Agenda frames stakeholder engagement and defines common priorities between the different players. The agenda is a living document, to define key global challenges, scope, potential for different types of joint actions and clustering, geographical coverage, and survey durations: Short (1-3 years), Medium (5-6 years), and Long term (10 years).

The Strategic Agenda indicates the way to maintain the stakeholders' engagement up to the end of the project (see paragraph 3.1) and - above all - beyond it (see paragraph 3.2) continuing this activity through EUROFLEETS RI.

EUROFLEETS RI is key to delivering the related EU Missions by providing access to our Seas and Oceans and contributing to the implementation of EOOS. Facilitating multidisciplinary science teams tackling changing climate, supporting ocean monitoring, sustainable fisheries, bio-medical research, advancing the European Green Deal and the European DTO. Gathering key stakeholders, scientific and academic, not only from Marine Science domains, Pan-EU Research Infrastructures, Industry and Policy Makers for the long-term mobilisation of EUROFLEETS RI capacities in Europe to deliver sustainable access now and into the future.