

The Commission's entrepreneurship: tracing the steps towards integrated maritime governance¹

Isabel Camisão
CICP and University of Évora,
Portugal
iafc@uevora.pt

*Paper prepared for the AECPA XIII Congreso,
Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 20-22 September 2017*

Abstract: In 2007 the European Commission proposed an Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union as the building-block of a governance framework aimed at coordinating all sea-related EU policies. Using as theoretical framework Multiple Streams Approach, particularly the concept of “policy entrepreneur” (Kingdon 1984; 2003), the goal of this paper is to assess the importance of Commission's entrepreneurship to the adoption of IMP. We will trace the Commission's actions between 2004 and 2007, in order to answer three empirical questions: Has the Commission contributed to problem definition? Has the Commission engaged in a softening up process? Has the commission seized the policy window to push its pet proposals forward?

Key words: European Commission; Integrated Maritime Policy; Policy Entrepreneur; European Union

1. Introduction

Europe's maritime spaces and shores are crucial sources of well-being and prosperity. However, as the volume of activity directed to extract value from the sea was increasing, it became evident that the existent compartmentalized policy development and decision-making were no longer effective to prevent conflicts of use and the deterioration of the marine environment. On October 2007, the European Commission (hereinafter Commission) proposed an integrated maritime policy (IMP) for the European Union (EU). The aim of IMP, as stated in the document,

¹ I would like to thank my colleague José Palmeira (University of Minho) for his very helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

was to foster a collective view on the maritime and coastal economy, therefore allowing the EU to take advantage of the full potential of all maritime sectors for sustainable growth and employment in Europe (European Commission 2007d).

Using as theoretical framework the Multiple Streams Approach, particularly the concept of “policy entrepreneur” (Kingdon 1984; 2003), the goal of this paper is to assess the importance of the Commission’s entrepreneurship to the edification of EU integrated maritime policy. We will trace the Commission’s actions between 2004 (when the Barroso Commission first took office) and 2007 (when the Commission adopted the IMP proposal) in order to answer three empirical questions: Has the Commission contributed to problem definition? Has the Commission engaged in a softening up process? Has the commission seized the policy window to push its pet proposals forward? The analysis focuses on the Commission’s IMP related-documents, namely proposals, work documents, speeches and press releases. The interplay with other actors is also acknowledged.

The paper is structured as follows: the next section explains the theoretical model. Section 3 traces the Commission’s actions in order to see if and how the Commission has used its resources to push forward its pet proposal; discusses the importance of the main findings; and highlights some clues for future research. Section 4 concludes the paper.

2. Theoretical framework: the Commission as a policy entrepreneur

According to Kingdon (2003, 16-17) the processes by which agendas are set and alternatives are specified involves three fairly independent streams: the problem stream that involves the recognition of problems pressing in on the system; the policy stream in which policy solutions are formed, rejected, improved and selected; and the politics stream which includes public opinion and demands from interests groups. Eventually, the three streams joined together, thus opening a policy window. Crucial to the joining of the streams are the role of *policy entrepreneurs*, i.e. actors with access, resources, time and energy and who are

willing to invest them all in trying to get their pet proposals approved (Zahariadis 2007, 5; Kingdon 2003, 122).

Policy entrepreneurs are active in both problem and policy streams, and they must act quickly when the policy window opens, or the opportunity will pass them by (Zahariadis, 2007). A distinctive characteristic of policy entrepreneurs is that they are committed to promote significant policy change (Mintrom and Norman 2009: 651). In order to succeed they must have knowledge of the policy-making process and substantive knowledge of the issue. The first guarantees that they know how to behave strategically to call attention to their preferred issues and proposals; the later is crucial as policy entrepreneurs need to convince the political audience that their package of problem and solution is the most appropriate one (Zahariadis 2007, 5).

Due to its position and role in the EU governance, the Commission has privileged information and knowledge of the policy process. As a result of its power of initiative and its capacity as a “think tank for the Union as a whole” (Laffan 1997, 423) the Commission has the opportunity to frame the debate by defining the problems, goals and the preferred solutions, namely via the submission of working documents, memoranda, studies, reports and other documents. The process of fixing attention on one problem rather than another is a chief part of agenda-setting (Kingdon 2003: 115). So a central role of policy entrepreneurs (Kingdon 2003: 93) is to show the existence of a problem to which one particular solution can be attached. Problems came to the attention of decision makers through a variety of means; they could be self-evident by the indicators; they could be disclosed by a focusing event like a crisis or they could be highlighted by the feedback about the operation of existing programmes. For Kingdon the choice of which problem gets attention is normally not random. Also, problem definition involves high political stakes. Indeed, getting people to see new problems or to see old problems in a renewed way is a “major conceptual and political accomplishment” (Kingdon 2003, 115).

Looking at the EU policy-making, the Commission frequently uses problem definition to “politicize” or “depoliticize” the issue (Vahl 1997, 50-51) depending on what best serve its purpose. The use of “apolitical technical terms” is often used to mask difficult political questions and improve the acceptability of the Commission’s

proposals (Camisão 2015). Often the Commission stresses the relevance of the proposed shift in policy, by highlighting the losses of non-reform for the European economy. But the Commission might also politicize the issue by stressing the costs of the non-decision for the future of the European project in order to urge the decision.

3. The road to IMP: tracing the Commission's steps

3.1. Step 1: problem definition and agenda-setting

According to Kingdom (2003, 109) policy entrepreneurs play an important role in getting people to recognize the existence of a problem. Once a problem is perceived as real and important, policy entrepreneurs' proposals to solve the problem have enhanced prospects for moving up on the agenda. The Barroso Commission was not the first to acknowledge the need of policy change in the maritime domain. For example negotiations over the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), which is considered the environmental pillar of the IMP, began in 2002 during the Prodi Commission. However, two particular factors converged towards policy change in maritime affairs during the mandate of the first Barroso Commission. The new President of the Commission was a former Prime Minister of Portugal, a country that had rediscovered the strategic value of the oceans and that was steadily consolidating its role in the EU: "During the 2000s, Portugal begin to play a more active role in the EU and to influence policy development, for example maritime affairs" (OECD 2011, 12). Also, Barroso Commission was keen in exploring the growing international consciousness regarding the importance of the oceans and the need to achieve a holistic approach to deal with all the challenges related to maritime affairs.

All in all, the Barroso Commission was crucial to put an issue already in the national and international agendas into the *European* agenda:

"This is an ambitious development, as for the first time in the history of the European Union the sea as a whole is becoming the subject of our focus, and Europe's maritime dimension is becoming a strategic priority for the Commission. With this forward looking initiative we are also responding to international commitments for better ocean governance and in the process, affirming Europe's leadership in world maritime affairs" (Barroso 2006, 2).

Indeed, despite the fact that the majority of EU Member States are maritime states, as regards EU policy-making maritime affairs were for decades very much synonym of fisheries. Gradually this narrow vision was put aside, but maritime issues continued to be handled in a fairly fragmented way, under a range of EU policies such as industry, transport, fisheries, or regional policy. In the 1990s, the question of maritime security entered the agenda, leading in 2002 to the set up of the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), a development triggered by serious maritime incidents such Erika (1999) and Prestige (2002). The agency was temporarily based in Brussels, but afterwards relocated to Lisbon.

Arguably, important to the decision to choose Portugal as the final location of EMSA (when France and Greece were among the candidates) was Portugal's historical relation with the sea (as a former ultramarine power), and the fact that the country is seen as a bridge between the European and the American continents. Furthermore, the mid 1990s early 2000s also witnessed Portugal's "return" to the sea: "Portugal has been a key player on the international maritime scene for almost fifteen years. In 1995 Portugal stepped up its action on oceanic diplomacy" (Saliou 2008, 16). Among several initiatives that marked Portugal's reconciliation with the oceans² two particular events are milestones worth to singularize. The first was the World Exhibition that was held in Lisbon in 1998 under the theme "*The Ocean, a heritage for the future*", commonly known as EXPO 98. The second was the set up of a special committee – Strategic Ocean Committee (SOC) – by José Manuel Durão Barroso, when he was the Prime Minister of Portugal. This committee, which delineated the first National Strategy to the Sea in three decades³, was chaired by a recognized Portuguese specialist in maritime affairs, Tiago Pitta e Cunha⁴, whom during the Barroso Commission, joined the Cabinet of the newly European

² This return was initiated in late 1990s. In 1997 Portugal ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. In 1998, the report entitled "*The Ocean: our future*" was approved by the Independent World Commission on Oceans, under the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. In that same year the World Exhibition was held in Lisbon under the theme "*The Ocean, a heritage for the future*" and was also established the Intersectorial Oceanographic Commission (IOC), of the Inter-ministerial Commission for the Delimitation of the Continental Shelf and the Program for the Promotion of Ocean Sciences and Technology (Portugal Government 2013, 15).

³ "The Ocean, a national goal for the XXI Century" was published in 2004.

⁴ For example, Pitta e Cunha had been Portugal's representative in the negotiations of UNCLOS.

Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs in Brussels. In this office Pitta e Cunha was in charge of the development of the new IMP: “[a]s a policy maker he was a member of the Cabinet of the European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs, from November 2004 to February 2010, and was a key player in the European Commission on the development of the EU Integrated Maritime Policy”⁵.

Considering the above-mentioned events, it seems fair to conclude that Barroso’s experience as Prime Minister of Portugal, and even before that as Portuguese Foreign Minister, in a time when Portugal was reaffirming the strategic importance of the oceans, had influenced his vision regarding the salience of maritime affairs and the need to replace EU’s fragmented approach in this domain. Barroso himself acknowledged this influence in the opening speech of a Dutch conference on an all-embracing maritime policy:

“As Foreign Minister of Portugal I campaigned for Lisbon as the site for EXPO 98, which was devoted to the theme of the oceans and the future. At that time Portugal hosted several important international conferences on oceans and seas affairs and was instrumental in establishing the UN's 1998 International Year of the Oceans. These experiences convinced me of the importance of both oceans governance and the role of oceans for the future of mankind” (Barroso 2005, 3).

In his message included in the 2006 Commission’s brochure “Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union: A European vision for the oceans and seas”⁶, Barroso again confirms this influence:

“As a Portuguese, it is only natural that maritime issues are close to my heart. That is why the sustainable use and governance of our oceans has been, for a long time, a matter of considerable importance to me. I find it striking, therefore, that while the oceans are an essential element of life-support for our planet, even influencing our climate, they remain relatively unknown. Equally, their importance to our lives is often underestimated (Barroso 2006, 2).

Furthermore, as highlighted above, a growing international consensus was forming around the idea of applying a cross-sectoral and participatory approach to

⁵ See http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/sede/dv/sede190313audcvpittaecunha_/sede190313audcvpittaecunha_en.pdf

⁶ This brochure was the official publication of the Green Paper on maritime policy.

ocean governance. Actually, the idea of a comprehensive strategy to deal with the problems of ocean space was already stated in the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)⁷. However, only in the 2000s the subject gained renewed salience. In 2003 the United Nations set up the “UN Oceans” to ensure closer coordination of UN activities, organisations and agencies related to oceans and coasts, as well as to define joint action and to promote integrated management (European Commission 2008, 4). Subsequently, the issue captured the attention of a number of countries, including USA, Canada, Australia, Japan, but also Norway and Portugal that, although recognizing the economic potential of sea-based activities, acknowledged the dangers of uncontrolled development of these activities and started to build new integrated policy frameworks for sustainable use of the oceans and seas.

The decision to give visibility and coherence to maritime affairs was thus part of a larger international trend (Gambert 2015, 496), which gave the newly appointed President of the Commission the perfect opportunity to push forward its pet idea. It is also worth noting that in the role of EU representative, the Commission participates in international debates and summits on maritime affairs⁸. It is also a member of important international institutions in this field, like the UNESCO’s International Oceanographic Commission. Gradually, through the Commission’s ideas the new understanding about maritime affairs that was emerging during international meetings was transmitted to European political circles (Saliou 2008, 5). The importance of the international context is highlighted in the 2005 Barroso and commissioner Joe Borg’s joint communication to the Commission:

“There is growing international recognition that ocean and sea affairs are interlinked and require a comprehensive approach, and there is a clear move towards such an approach in many parts of the world. A strong case can be made for Europe to look at ocean and sea affairs in a more coordinated way, rather than in the current sectoral manner” (2005, 2).

Notwithstanding, the Commission also stressed that its proposal resulted

⁷ The UNCLOS entered into force on 16 November 1994. It is frequently described as the “constitution of the oceans” as it represents an unprecedented effort of codification and development of the international law of the sea.

⁸ One example being the discussions on UNCLOS.

from the diagnosis of a real problem the EU was facing: “[t]he move towards a more integrated approach to maritime affairs in the EU is not being taken just because this is the trend in other parts of the world, nor because it is the natural evolution of the governance framework in the prevailing context of sustainable development” (European Commission 2008, 6). Indeed, in the 2000’s the low salience of maritime affairs within a continent that is geographically and economically a maritime one was a paradox increasingly difficult to understand (Gambert 2015, 495), particularly as the EU had adopted in 2000 the so-called Lisbon Strategy under which the Union committed itself to “become the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010 capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion and respect for the environment” (European Commission 2010, 2). More than two thirds of the Union’s borders are coastal and maritime spaces under the jurisdiction of EU’s Member States are larger than their terrestrial territory. The economic potential of maritime sectors is also highly relevant. Between 3 and 5% of Europe’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is estimated to be generated by marine based industries and services, without including the value of raw materials, such as oil, gas or fish. Also, the maritime regions account for over 40% of GDP (European Commission 2006b, 3). But as technology and know-how allowed to explore this economic potential by extracting ever more value from the sea, a maritime governance fragmented between different Commission’s services, Member States’ structures and entities, and private stakeholders was far from responding efficiently to the cumulated effect of all this activity, namely conflicts of use and the deterioration of the marine environment. Therefore, the need to reframe European maritime policy (or policies) is in line with the narrative of sustainable development and growth supported by the Commission and encapsulated both by the Lisbon and Gothenburg⁹ strategies: “Sustainable development lies at the heart of the EU policy agenda. The Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) has a central role to play in achieving this objective” (European Commission 2009a, 1).

⁹ See Communication from the Commission Sustainable Europe for a Better World: A European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development (Commission's proposal to the Gothenburg European Council). COM(2001) 264 final, 15.05.2001.

Not surprisingly, when Barroso took office in 2004 the plan of designing a comprehensive approach to overturn EU's long lasting piecemeal approach to the management of its maritime assets appeared as one of the goals of his Commission. Specifically, the Barroso Commission's strategic objectives for the 2005-2009 period referred:

“a particular need for an all-embracing maritime policy aimed at developing a thriving maritime economy and the full potential of sea-based activity in an environmentally sustainable manner. Such a policy should be supported by excellence in marine scientific research, technology and innovation” (European Commission 2005a, 9).

Importantly, even though some Member States were later strong supporters of the Commission's IMP proposal, the idea of an IMP was not the result of Member States' pressures but was a Commission's initiative driven by the action of the President and a small group of people: “In order to solve existing problems and anticipate new ones, to explore economic opportunities and rise to the challenges ahead, the Commission is building a European vision for the oceans and seas based on a new, all inclusive and more integrated approach” (Barroso 2006, 2). The same reference to the Commission's activism can be found in the communication proposing the IMP:

“On the one hand technology and know-how allow us to extract ever more value from the sea, and more and more people flow to Europe's coasts to benefit from that value. On the other hand, the cumulated effect of all this activity is leading to conflicts of use and to the deterioration of the marine environment that everything else depends on. Europe must respond to this challenge; in a context of rapid globalisation and climate change the urgency is great. The European Commission has recognised this and launched a comprehensive consultation and analysis of how Europe relates to the seas” (European Commission 2007d, 2).

Barroso's input in particular was crucial to turn this goal into reality: “[u]nder the leadership of President Barroso attention is being focused on the potential of the seas and oceans for sustainable growth in the European Union” (European Commission 2005c, 1). Central for policy change was the process of institutionalisation of the maritime issue through the establishment of political and administrative structures. Arguably, Barroso's first crucial decision to push forward

the idea of an IMP was the creation within the first Barroso Commission of a new portfolio on “Fisheries and Maritime Affairs” allocated to Joe Borg, the Maltese Commissioner:

“In 2007, to boost Europe's maritime economy, I launched the Integrated Maritime Policy. In fact, already in 2004 I thought it would make sense to have one Commissioner fully dedicated to Maritime Policy and not only to Fisheries, so that we could build on the experience of countries in setting a maritime strategy and frame a European Policy in this field. I am very proud of the early leadership which the Commission showed in this increasingly important sector” (Barroso 2012).

On the 25 March 2005, President Barroso and commissioner Borg issued a Communication¹⁰ highlighting the general lines of what they called a “European vision” for the oceans and seas and the major steps to achieve a holistic approach to maritime affairs. This communication, which is frequently seen as the birth of IMP (Saliou 2008, 2), included a critical decision to set the process in motion. It established a *Maritime Policy Task Force* (MPTF) within the Commission and attached to Directorate-General (DG) Fisheries aimed to launch a wide consultation on a future maritime policy for the Union. At this point it is worth noting that DG Fisheries was renamed Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, a symbolic resolution clearly to stress the idea that maritime affairs were far more complex than fisheries alone. Chaired by Commissioner Borg, MPTF brought together the seven commissioners whose portfolios touched upon maritime affairs – the so-called Steering Group – afterwards expanded to ten commissioners¹¹, again a sign that maritime affairs was a transversal domain that affected more than one third of the Commission’s portfolios. The mandate of the MPTF was broad and very ambitious, but the idea, as Barroso putted it, was not to reinvent the wheel since many elements of a future integrated policy already exist at EU and Member States’ level (Barroso 2005, 4). Therefore, the Task Force was assisted in its work by a group of experts from Member States and had numerous contacts with a large number of stakeholders in

¹⁰ Communication to the Commission from the President and Mr Borg Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union: A European vision for the oceans and seas, 25 March 2005.

¹¹ Commissioner Borg (Chair), Vice-Presidents Verheugen and Barrot and Commissioners Dimas, Hübner, Piebalgs and Potočnik. Upon adoption of the Green Paper in 2006, Vice-President Frattini and Commissioners Špidla and Ferrero-Waldner joined this Steering Group on Maritime Affairs.

order to listen to their suggestions and share the Commission's ideas. The MPTF also engaged in extensive analyses of studies and reports and organised visits to third countries, including Canada, Australia, the US and Japan. During this pre-consultation phase, it received 72 written contributions from stakeholders (European Commission 2007b, 7).

Furthermore, the Commission had set up an Interservice Coordination Group on Maritime Policy (that included a broad range of DGs and services) to jointly prepare a Green Paper on maritime policy. This Group met on a monthly basis to outline the structure and overall orientation of the Green paper. Under this group, sub-groups led by sectoral DGs prepared detailed proposals to be included in the Green Paper, which were published as Background Papers to the Green Paper (European Commission 2007b, 7).

Before moving on to the next section, it is worth noting that the establishment of task forces or other types of temporary services is a strategy sometimes used by the Commission to deal with short-term or time-limited issues needing attention. Even though some of these structures are discontinued when the problem is solved, this was not the case of the Task Force established for proposing and overseeing policy development in maritime affairs. Indeed, in early 2008 the DG Fisheries and Maritime Affairs was reorganized in order to reflect the new integrated approach to maritime affairs. The reorganization created three new directorates and upgraded the MPTF into a directorate for policy development and coordination (Nugent and Rhinard 2015, 194).

3.2. Step 2: Softening up or "getting the ducks in a row"

Once the problem is on the agenda, policy entrepreneurs start to pave the way for their preferred solutions by "softening up" policy communities and larger publics. They start discussions of their proposals and push their ideas in many forums: "they write papers, give testimony, hold hearings, try to get press coverage, and meet endlessly with important and not-so-important people" (Kingdom 2003, 205). This process, that according to Kingdom is well captured by common language expressions such as "greasing the skids" or getting your ducks in a row", is essential

for the success of the proposal, but it can take several years (Kingdon 2003, 128). Generally, when the Commission wants to bring attention to a particular issue it is repeatedly referred in the speeches of the President or the commissioners whose portfolios are related to the policy domain. The Commission also frequently holds hearings with major stakeholders, supports different initiatives on the theme, and puts in place broad public consultations. In the end, the Commission's proposal is the result of several actors' input. This was precisely the path towards the IMP. The inputs from the Steering Group of Commissioners, the MPTF, and the Interservice Coordination Group resulted in the publication of a *Green Paper on a future maritime policy for the Union*, adopted by the Commission on 06 June 2006. The Green Paper explained the links between EU maritime-related activities and suggested questions for a wider public consultation on an all-embracing EU Maritime Policy anchored within the Lisbon Strategy, "whilst reflecting the principles of and ecosystem-based management" (European Commission 2006a, 3).

Accordingly, with the publication of the Green Paper a one-year consultation was launched on 7 June 2006. The Commission's justification for launching a wider public consultation was three-fold: the need to enhance European citizens involvement in the EU's important decisions; the importance of expert input, particularly of those who spend their lives in the maritime world, namely the business community; and the need to overcome the habit of looking at maritime activities in a narrow sectorial way, a goal that could be achieved more easily through a vigorous wide-ranging debate. All in all, the Commission wanted to make sure that its proposals for a future Maritime Policy were both solidly grounded in reality and based on a broad public consensus (Barroso 2005, 4). Although some consider this a "cautious approach" (Wendel 33), the use of public consultations to serve as the basis of proposals is not unusual. Indeed, the Commission frequently adopts this strategy to improve the potential of support for its proposals and as a way of enhancing its expertise on the subject. Actually, the chances for a problem to rise on the decision agenda increase greatly if a solution perceived as feasible and acceptable (as regards values) is attached (Kingdon 2003, 143).

The consultation involved a wide range of actors including third-country governments, business representatives, non-governmental organisations,

companies, representatives of science and academia, and citizens. During the consultation process members of the Task Force were asked to attend external meetings in order to explain the Commission's goals. Also, both Barroso and Borg personally attended several initiatives on the IMP and repeatedly stressed in their speeches the opportunities offered by a EU strong maritime policy: "[m]y special thanks go to Joe Borg who as Commissioner in charge of the IMP during the last five years provided a very important new policy, competently steered it during its initial phase and never tired in spreading the message and motivating a wide range of maritime stakeholders to engage and contribute" (Barroso 2010, 5).

The results of the public consultation were published in a Report on October 2007¹². The consultation process was described by the Commission as having had "unprecedented response", with a total of more than 490 written contributions received from various actors (namely national governments, industrial groupings and environmental NGOs) and over than 230 events held to discuss maritime policy with stakeholders (European Commission 2007a, 2). From the group of Member States three states - Portugal, Spain and France - were particularly involved in the process of influence the MPTF thinking. They even issued a joint contribution that endorsed the Commission's proposals (Saliou 2008, 24). Also worth to mention is the role played by some regions. This regional involvement was embodied by the action of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), a lobby created in 1973 to promote the interests of its 160 member regions. The members of this group were very active during the consultation process namely by producing documents and organizing meetings on maritime affairs (Teigny 2012, 54).

As anticipated by the Commission, despite fewer criticisms (mainly concerned with the perils of EU re- or over-regulate, or to overcentralise), the overall results of the consultation supported the Commission's vision for an IMP:

"the stakeholders overwhelmingly agreed that the EU could not continue to manage its policy towards the oceans and seas through a series of unconnected sectoral policies. Decisionmaking is slow, potential synergies are not exploited and no-one has a clear authority to resolve conflicts across sectors, to deal with cumulative effects or to look at the wider picture" (European Commission 2007b).

¹² COM(2007) 574 final, 10.10.2007. The contributions were also posted on a dedicated website.

The importance of public support to the adoption of a proposal leading to policy change is highlighted by Kingdon (2003, 163):

“[t]he political stream is an important promoter or inhibitor of high agenda status. All off the important actors in the system (...) judge whether the balance of forces in the political stream favors action. They also judge whether the general public would at least tolerate the directions pursued at the elite level”.

The favourable response of the public to the Commission’s vision has therefore significantly strengthened its position vis-à-vis other EU institutional players, as the institution was able to present a proposal that was “overwhelmingly” endorsed by the major stakeholders:

“The Maritime Policy Green Paper has struck a chord throughout Europe. After ten months of intense public consultation it is fair to say that there is broad support, and indeed enthusiasm, for the main ideas put forward. Encouraged by this debate, the Commission will present in October a package of proposals towards a new integrated maritime policy for the Union that will cut across all policy areas and link them together” (Borg in European Commission 2007d).

The European Council of June 2007 welcomed the wide debate that had taken place in Europe on the future Maritime Policy and invited the Commission to come forward with a European Action Plan to be presented in October. Accordingly, on 10 October 2007, the Commission presented its proposal for an IMP, the so-called “Blue Book” package (based on the consultation report and on several working documents).

The Blue Book Package included a paper presenting the integrated approach to maritime affairs within EU policy-making and its key elements as well as the main goals for future action¹³, and a detailed Action Plan¹⁴ containing the first set of actions that aimed to improve the maritime economy, protect and restore the marine environment, strengthen research and innovation, foster development in coastal and outermost regions, provide leadership in international maritime affairs, and enhance the visibility of Europe’s maritime dimension (European Commission

¹³ COM(2007)575 final, 10.10.2007

¹⁴ SEC(2007) 1278.

2009b, 6-7). Ultimately, together these specific actions formed the first steps towards the new Maritime Policy (European Commission 2007b, 11). The detailed plan also set out implementation mechanisms for the following years, including new working methods and cross-cutting tools. It is worth noting that the Commission’s actions towards an IMP followed a precise time-line that established as deadline for the adoption of the specific actions the fourth trimester of 2009 (see table 1). Actually, fixing specific timelines for the adoption of legislation or other actions is an approach often used by the Commission in order to put pressure in the decision-making actors.

Table 1. Time-line for the procedural steps towards a Maritime Policy

ID	Task Name	2005				2006				2007				2008				2009			
		Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
1	Barroso Commission	[Timeline bar from Q4 2005 to Q4 2009]																			
2	Task Force set-up	◆ 14/03																			
3	Green Paper issued	◆ 7/06																			
4	Consultation Period	[Timeline bar from Q2 2006 to Q4 2006]																			
5	Blue Book and Action Plan	◆ 10/10																			
6	European Council	◆ 13/12																			
7	Actions	[Timeline bar from Q4 2008 to Q4 2009]																			

(Source: European Commission 2007b, 10)

3.3. Step 3: Seizing the window of opportunity

The policy window is an opportunity for advocates of a proposal to push their pet solutions (Kingdon 2003, 203). A window could open for different reasons, such as a change of administration, a problem that becomes pressing, a crisis, or a turnover of any of the political actors. As noted above, the Commission presented its solution for the problem on 10 October 2007, during the Portuguese presidency of the EU. Arguably, considering the salience of the maritime affairs for Portugal and the country’s activism in maritime affairs since the 1990s, this presidency offered an opportunity to push for the on-going issue of maritime policy: “The maritime domain calls for an integrated approach. We will work towards the definition of a European Maritime policy to be based on the Action Plan to be presented by the Commission” (Portuguese Presidency of the EU 2007, 5). In a speech in Lisbon during the Portuguese Presidency Ministerial Conference, Barroso also noted Portugal’s historical relation with the sea:

“Just two weeks ago, the Commission put forward an Integrated maritime Policy for the EU.

With this new policy, for the first time the EU has forged a genuine strategic approach to Europe's maritime affairs and coastal areas. This policy recognises the important but often forgotten maritime dimension of Europe. A dimension that has played a remarkable role in shaping our history, including the one of our host, Portugal” (Barroso 2007).

Among other initiatives, the Portuguese presidency supported the seminar held by the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions and held a ministerial conference to present and discuss the results of the Green Paper. The importance of the Portuguese Presidency's work is highlighted in a Commission's communication:

“... the Portuguese Presidency held a first informal ministerial meeting dealing with maritime policy in the broadest sense. Under the Portuguese Presidency, the Commission's proposal for an Integrated Maritime Policy was also discussed in the General and External Affairs Council, given its horizontal and across-the-board remit” (European commission 2008, 6).

Portugal also played an important mediation role between the Council and the European Parliament (EP) in the negotiations on the MSFD, which was crucial for reaching agreement in 2007 on this environmental arm of the IMP. As Kingdon (2003, 163) noted, once in the political arena, consensus-building takes place through a bargaining process, rather than through persuasion. The actors try to reach toward a winning coalition, involving a process of granting concessions in return for support of the coalition. That being said, as regards the adoption of the Blue Book this bargaining process was less relevant. Even though not all Member States were enthusiastic about the IMP, the fact that the Blue Book was a communication and not a legislative piece made its approval much easier. The Commission's proposal on IMP was endorsed by the European Council on 14 December 2007 and by the European Parliament on 20 May 2008. The December 2007 European Council also asked the Commission to report on the achievements of the policy at the end of 2009 (European Council 2007, 17). As requested, the Commission issued its report in 2009¹⁵. By then, according to the report, 56 out of the 65 actions in the plan have been launched or completed (mostly in the form of Commission or Council acts). Several initiatives have been undertaken on 9 actions various, although no formal documents were adopted. The Commission therefore

¹⁵ Cf. SEC(2009)1343.

recognized the need to focus efforts on effective implementation on the ground. Also, the Commission acknowledged a change in the economic context, with the Union having to deal with a severe economic and financial crisis that affected all sectors including the maritime ones. Hence, the report also sets out the areas where further action would be required in order to unlock the undeniable potential of our oceans, seas and coastal regions, as well as to address the economic problems affecting maritime sectors (European Commission 2009b, 7).

3.4. Towards policy change: the Commission and coupling the streams

Policy entrepreneurs play an important role in coupling the streams. They have their pet proposals ready, and push them at the favourable time: “they perform the function for the system of coupling solutions to problems, problems to political forces, and political forces to proposals” (Kingdon 2003, 205). The paper shows that the Commission’s activism in problem and policy streams was crucial for agenda-setting. The IMP was presented as a solution for a problem that was already in the international community’s agenda but that strangely was not in the European one. The Commission repeatedly highlighted the potential of IMP, which would enhance Europe’s capacity to face the challenges of globalisation and competitiveness, climate change, degradation of the marine environment, maritime safety and security, and energy security and sustainability. From the start, Barroso linked the IMP to the Lisbon strategy for jobs and growth and to the Gothenburg strategy for sustainability, making the IMP narrative consistent with the Commission’s (and indeed the EU’s) overall narrative.

Barroso’s vision for maritime affairs was institutionalised through the creation of a new portfolio on Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, the reorganization of Commission’s services, and the creation of new administrative and political structures including a Task Force on Maritime Affairs. Commissioner Borg’s support was instrumental for putting Barroso’s idea into practice. During the process of softening up, Barroso and Borg personally attended several initiatives aimed to discuss the Commission’s plans for a new IMP with major stakeholders. Also, the Commission put forward a flow of documents, including a Green Paper that paved

the way for a Europe-wide public consultation.

Despite some scepticism, the convergence of opinions in the political stream along with the support of some Member States helped the Commission to succeed in achieving its goal. The results of the consultation process reinforced the Commission's position, as its plans for an integrated, inter-sectoral approach to maritime affairs were strongly endorsed by the major stakeholders. The Portuguese Presidency of the EU during the second semester of 2007 represented the perfect opportunity for the Commission to put forward its pet proposal on the IMP.

In sum, it seems fair to conclude that the actions of the first Barroso Commission were crucial for policy change in the EU maritime policy: "The IMP was a major undertaking of the first Barroso Commission, developed through the production of a Green Book, and later, of a Blue Book (Wegge 2015, 536). What is more, the IMP proposal adopted in 2007 has laid down the foundations for a European maritime governance framework. That being said, ten years later the IMP is still a working progress. Therefore, a note of caution must be sounded. Even though we can conclude that the first Barroso Commission has paved the way for the edification of an integrated EU maritime governance framework, further research on the IMP developments¹⁶, and particularly on the importance of the Commission's activism for those subsequent developments, is needed in order to fully grasp the significance of the Commission's actions to the existence of a cohesive, completely operational and truly integrated EU maritime policy.

4. Concluding remarks

¹⁶ For example, on 8 October 2008, the European Ministers for maritime policy and the European Commission (represented by President José Manuel Barroso and Commissioner Maria Damanaki at a conference in Limassol organised by the Cypriot Presidency) issued the Limassol Declaration that proposed an European agenda for creating growth and jobs in the marine and maritime sectors. Also, the IMP reappeared as one of the Barroso Commission top priorities for the second term in office. Accordingly, On 15 October 2009 the Commission presented a communication Developing the international dimension of the Integrated Maritime Policy of the European Union - COM(2009)536 final – aimed to explore how the IMP should be extended into the wider international arena. Specifically, it envisaged the creation of an EU framework for a global integrated approach to maritime affairs. Also, on 12 March 2013, the Commission published a proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal management.

In the EU, maritime affairs (with the exception of fisheries) were for many years considered essentially a national issue. The Barroso Commission aspired to transform the management of maritime affairs from a patchwork of vertical sectoral policies into an integrated, intersectoral and multidisciplinary policy that would embrace all aspects of the oceans and seas. This paper traced the initiatives of the Barroso Commission from 2004 to 2007 in order to assess the importance of its entrepreneurship to the establishment of a more cohesive EU maritime policy.

The analysis of the Commission's actions highlighted the importance of the institution's activism under the leadership of President Barroso. The findings show that IMP was Barroso's pet idea and that the Commission's vision was greatly influenced by Barroso's own vision. The President of the Commission with the help of a small group of people that included the commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs managed to put the IMP on the European agenda. For the process of agenda-setting was key the Commission's ability to seize the window of opportunity open by the growing international awareness regarding the need of an all-embracing maritime governance. Barroso then institutionalized its vision through the creation of several administrative structures within the Commission.

The Commission's position was enhanced by an overwhelming positive response to its vision for the oceans and by the support of some Member States, including Portugal who held the presidency of the EU during the second semester of 2007. Seizing the window of opportunity, the Commission presented its proposal for an IMP on October 2007, which was endorsed by the European Council of December 2007 and by the European Parliament on May 2008. The adoption of the IMP laid the foundations for the governance framework and cross-sectoral tools necessary for a EU IMP. However, further research, particularly on the subsequent developments, is needed in order to entirely grasp the salience of the Commission's role for the edification of optimized EU maritime governance.

References

Barroso, José Manuel Durão. 2005. Opening Speech. In European Maritime Policy Conference: Proceedings. Dutch Maritime Network.

Barroso, José Manuel Durão. 2006. Message from the President of the European Commission. In Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union: A European Vision for the Oceans and Seas. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

Barroso, José Manuel Durão. 2007. "Key note speech - European Maritime Policy". Speech 07/645, 22 October 2007.

Barroso, José Manuel Durão. 2010. Forward to Integrated Maritime Policy Progress Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2010.

Barroso, José Manuel Durão. 2012. "A strong maritime pillar for the Europe 2020 strategy". Speech 12/696, 8 October 2012.

Camisão, Isabel. 2015. Irrelevant Player? The Commission's role during the Eurozone crisis. *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, Vol. 11, Issue 3, pp. 268-286.

Gambert, Sylvain. 2015. The Integrated Maritime Policy of the European Union. In *Routledge Handbook of National and Regional Ocean Policies*, edited by Biliiana Cicin-Sain, David L. VanderZwaag, and Miriam C. Valgos. Oxon: Routledge

European Commission. 2005a. Strategic Objectives 2005-2009 Europe 2010: A Partnership for European Renewal Prosperity, Solidarity and Security. COM(2005)12 final, 26.01.2005.

European Commission. 2005b. Commission to Consult on Future Maritime Policy for the Union. IP/05/231. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-05-231_en.htm

European Commission. 2005c. European Commission President Barroso to open international conference on challenges and opportunities of a new integrated Maritime Policy in the European Union. IP/05/1430. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-05-1430_en.htm

European Commission. 2005d. Communication to the Commission from the President and Mr. Borg Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union: A European vision for the oceans and seas. 2nd March 2005.

European Commission. 2006a. Green Paper Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union: A European Vision for the Oceans and Seas. COM(2006)275 final Volume I.

European Commission. 2006b. Green Paper Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union: A European vision for the oceans and seas. COM(2006)275 final Volume II – Annex, 07.06.2006.

European Commission. 2007a. Conclusions from the Consultation on a European Maritime Policy. COM(2007) 574 final, 10.10.2007.

European Commission. 2007b. Accompanying document to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, An Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union, Impact Assessment. SEC(2007) 1279, 10.10.2007.

European Commission. 2007c. Accompanying document to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, An Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union, Impact Assessment Executive Summary. SEC(2007) 1280, 10.10.2007.

European Commission. 2007d. An Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union. COM(2007) 575 final, 10.10.2007.

European Commission. 2007e. Europe to take another step towards a new maritime policy in Bremen. IP/07/595. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-07-594_en.htm?locale=en

European Commission. 2008. Guidelines for an Integrated Approach to Maritime Policy: Towards best practice in integrated maritime governance and stakeholder consultation. COM(2008) 395 final.

European commission. 2009a. Developing the international dimension of the Integrated Maritime Policy of the European Union. Communication from the Commission to the European parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. COM(2009)536 final, 15.10.2009.

European Commission. 2009b. Progress Report on the EU's integrated maritime policy. Report from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

SEC(2009)1343.

European Commission. 2010. Lisbon Strategy evaluation document. SEC(2010)114 final, 02.02.2010.

European Council. 2007. Presidency Conclusions 14 December 2007. 16616/1/07, Brussels, 14 February 2008.

European Union. Portuguese Presidency. 2007. A Stronger Union for a better world. July-December 2007.

http://www.presidenciaue.parlamento.pt/ingles/documentos/2007_Priorities.pdf

Kingdon, John W. 2003. *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*. 2nd ed. New York: Longman.

Laffan, Brigid. 1997. From policy entrepreneur to policy manager: the challenge facing the European Commission. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 4:3, pp. 422-438.

Mintrom, M. and Norman, P. (2009) 'Policy Entrepreneurship and Policy Change'. *Policy Studies Journal*, Vol. 37, No. 4, pp. 649-67.

Nugent, Neil, and Mark Rhinard. 2015. *The European Commission*. 2nd edition. London: Palgrave.

OECD. 2011. *OECD Environmental Performance Reviews: Portugal 2011*. OECD Publishing. DOI:10.1787/9789264097896-en.

Portugal Government, DGMA. 2013. *National Ocean Strategy 2013-2020*. http://www.dgpm.mam.gov.pt/Documents/ENM_Final_EN_V2.pdf

Saliou, Virginie. 2008. *Setting the Agenda of the European Maritime Policy: Multi-level transfers of ideas and legitimacy*. Cyprus Center of European and International Affairs, Paper No 2008-05.

Teigny, Laure. 2012. *The role of France in the elaboration of the Integrated Maritime Policy of the European Union*. Master thesis MSc European Spatial and Environmental Planning, Radboud University Nijmegen.

Vahl, R. 1997. *Leadership in Disguise: the Role of the European Commission in EC Decision-Making on Agriculture in the Uruguay Round*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Wegge, Njord. 2015. *The European Union's Arctic Policy*. In *Handbook of the Politics of the Arctic*, eds. Jensen, Leif Christian, and Geir Honneland. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Wendel, Philipp. 2008. "The 2004 Report of the United States Commission on Ocean Policy: A Prototype for a European Maritime Policy". In *Maritime Policy of the European Union and Law of the Sea*, edited by Peter Ehlers and Rainer Lagoni. Munster: Lit Verlag.

Zahariadis, Nikolaos. 2007. Ambiguity and Choice in European Public Policy. Paper presented at the biannual meeting of the European Union Studies Association, Montreal, Canada, May 17-19.