Underwater and surface drones, in particular gliders, have become essential vehicles for a comprehensive observing of the ocean and coastal environment and from the surface down to 6000m. An extensive set of sensor payload enables these drones operated in large numbers, to acquire key data from the marine environment and to support the blue economy.

In order to fully benefit from existing glider infrastructures and expertise, a distributed research infrastructure (RI) is required. GROOM II, a project supported by H2020, will define the overall organization of such a distributed European RI for gliders and surface drones (GERI). The envisioned GERI will enable exploiting these assets to fully meet the observing demands for research and monitoring of the marine environment, and for public services, and industry needs alike. The rapid evolution of observing and analysis technologies (e.g. robotics, sensors, artificial intelligence, big data) will find in the GERI a resource for R&D to ensure a fit-for-purpose structure that responds to future users' demands.

The strategic set up for the GERI shall ensure that complex hardware and information technology provide optimized access to its resources and R&D and seamless integration into the Global and future European Ocean Observing Systems. GROOM II leverages from the RIs that developed in Europe over the past decade and coordinated in Europe and globally. GROOM II will establish the organizational bases for the GERI and will enable the important step to overcome today's fragmented European marine RIs landscape.