

Mediterranean Blue Economy Stakeholder Platform

Biannual Newsletter on Blue Economy

Welcome to the 16th issue of the biannual newsletter on blue economy in the Mediterranean region!

Explore the most updated information related to the work of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and its partners to promote the blue economy in the Mediterranean region.

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→ Read our [Quick user and onboarding guide](#) to get the most out of MedBESP.

Latest News

1. More than 350 join forces in Athens to forge a sustainable Blue Economy future for the Mediterranean (Athens, 19-20 February 2024)

The 2nd UfM Stakeholder Conference on Sustainable Blue Economy took place on 19-20 February in the Greek capital, bringing together over 350 Med SBE stakeholders to take stock of progress achieved since the adoption of the 2021 UfM Ministerial Declaration on SBE; to discuss joint challenges and transformative tools and pathways for the Sustainable

Development of the sectors and activities of the Mediterranean SBE; to feed the UfM Roadmap on SBE and the related next steps; and to set the path towards future deliberations at political level.

A very rich and dynamic cross-section of Med SBE stakeholders from across the basin took part in the Conference, affirming the strong collaborative spirit of the Mediterranean cooperation on Sustainable Blue Economy, at both technical and political level. [Learn more.](#)



Key outcomes and messages emerging from the parallel workshops dedicated to the priorities of the 2021 UfM Ministerial Declaration on SBE are summarized in the report [available here](#).

2. Tunisia and Greece join forces on the Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean (Athens, 19 February 2024)

A new strategic agreement between Greek and Tunisian maritime clusters represents an official gateway to boost the sustainable blue economy between the western and eastern Mediterranean. On 19 February 2024, during the 2nd UfM Stakeholder Conference on Sustainable Blue Economy, the Cluster Maritime Tunisien (CMT) and Greek Strategies Maritime ICT Cluster (SMICT), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a systemic collaboration framework for common projects and initiatives. [Learn more](#).



3. SFS-MED Webinar: Blue Transformation, Strategies and actions for more sustainable agrifood systems in the Mediterranean (20 March 2024)

On March 20, 2024, the UfM co-organized a webinar on sustainable blue agri-food systems in the Mediterranean, under the framework of the [SFS-MED Platform](#), a multi-stakeholder initiative launched by UfMS, FAO, and CIHEAM, aimed at promoting collaborative actions for the sustainable transformation of food systems in the Mediterranean.

The 7th SFS-MED webinar served as a valuable dialogue platform to exchange knowledge on the processes and enabling conditions required to make the shift towards more sustainable agrifood systems in the Med, as well as to share best practices and successful initiatives from across the region. The webinar also provided a valuable space to discuss the role of policymaking, research, capacity building, technology and finance in enabling the Blue Transformation. [Learn more](#) and access the [video recording of the webinar here](#).



4. 2024 Ocean Decade Conference (Barcelona, 10-12 April 2024)

The [2024 Ocean Decade Conference](#) united in Barcelona the Ocean Decade community and partners to take stock and celebrate achievements three years after the kick-off of the Decade. Around 1,500 participants, representing governments, universities, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders including the UfM, gathered for this three-day event to reflect on progress and set a collective vision and joint priorities for the rest of the Decade. Another 3,000 participants joined the meeting online. The main Conference outcome was the [Barcelona Statement](#), which identifies three sets of priorities: ocean knowledge and science generation to inform management decisions; improved infrastructure including for marine pollution monitoring and ocean observations; and cross-cutting issues such as co-designing initiatives and embracing all knowledge systems. [Learn more](#).



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5. 9th Our Ocean Conference (Athens, 16-17 April 2024)

The Our Ocean Conference (OOC) was first launched under the initiative of the U.S. Department of State in 2014. Since then, it has gradually become a forum for dialogue bringing together governments, international organizations, academia, the private sector, and NGOs that share a common vision for the protection of the oceans and take action to support this vision. To date and up until the last Our Ocean Conference which was held in Panama



in 2023, the Conference has gathered more than 2160 commitments worth almost US\$ 130 billion, distributed across the six thematic areas addressed by the Conference. The 9th OOC structured around six broad areas of action (*tackling the climate crisis; Advancing sustainable fisheries; Fostering sustainable blue economies; Promoting marine protected areas; Supporting maritime security; and Combatting marine pollution*) brought together a wide range of National Delegations and stakeholders, including the UfM, to scale up efforts for the Ocean we want. [Learn more.](#)

6. COP28: Blue Mediterranean Partnership pledging conference - European Commission commits €1 million to Blue Mediterranean Partnership

On 2 December 2023, at the [Blue Mediterranean Partnership's pledging conference](#), the European Commission committed to pledge €1 million to the recently established Blue Mediterranean Partnership. At [COP28](#), partners and donors involved in the BMP reinforced their support for developing the sustainable blue economy in the southern Mediterranean region. The parties involved signed a letter of intent to make their participation in the Partnership official and to make the Partnership operational in 2024.



This collaborative initiative is designed to catalyze sustainable blue economy investments in the non-EU countries of the Mediterranean region, with a focus on the Southern Neighbourhood. It is spearheaded by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the EU, through the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Investment Bank (EIB). The partnership's priority areas include plastic waste reduction, coastal resilience investments, sustainable tourism, circular economy, and marine biodiversity. [Learn more.](#)

7. 2nd International TouMaLi Conference (Marrakech, 8-9 November, 2023)

Plastics (in particular macro and micro) are ubiquitous in Mediterranean coastal and marine environments and leakage/discharge can occur at all stages of the production-use-disposal cycle. Plastics, mostly single use (SUP), make up 80% of all marine litter collected. Labelled by the 43 member countries of the UfM, the overall aim of TouMaLi is to minimize waste from the tourism Industry in Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt and provide sustainable solutions, including support to the development of legal frameworks, governance/organizational structures, financial tools, and technical approaches. The 2nd International Conference brought together in Marrakech project partners including the UfM, experts, and stakeholders to exchange on progress achieved, the state-of-the art, and experiences/best practices across the region. [Read more.](#)



8. 7th UfM Task Force on Environment addresses key Mediterranean issues and 2030 GreenerMed Agenda (Brussels, November 15-16, 2023)

The 7th UfM Task Force on Environment convened in Brussels and online, bringing together national representatives and regional stakeholders to deliberate on crucial environmental issues pertaining to the Euro-Mediterranean region. Chaired by the EU and Jordanian Co-Presidency alongside the UfM Secretariat, the meeting highlighted significant developments across various fronts as described in the [2030 GreenerMed Agenda](#).



Among other priorities, Delegates engaged in joint discussions focused on COP28 for Climate Change and COP16 for Biodiversity, including the implementation of the approved Global Biodiversity Framework. The status of the 2030 GreenerMed Agenda's implementation was also reviewed, referencing the 2023 Monitoring report. [Read more.](#)

9. European Commission's Smart Specialisation (S3) Forum 2023: A Resounding Success for Regional Innovation (Barcelona, November 29, 2023)

The event, held in Barcelona, Spain, provided a unique platform for participants to delve into S3 policy and implementation issues, with a particular focus on the I3 Instrument and the Regional Innovation Valleys Initiative. Plenary sessions, featuring speakers from the European Commission, managing authorities, and governmental bodies implementing S3, offered a comprehensive policy update and explored the interplay with clusters. [Learn more.](#)



10. MED MSP Community of Practice: Experts from across the Mediterranean unite to share experiences and align perspectives (26 January, 2023)

On 26 January 2023, CINEA together with DG MARE, launched the 'Community of Practice on Maritime Spatial Planning for the Mediterranean', with the support of the WestMED Initiative, the MSP Assistance Mechanism and Union for Mediterranean. This is a voluntary, enthusiastic group of experts from EU and non-EU countries working on MSP in the Mediterranean. It was established based on a growing need from the MSP Community for a continuous and structured dialogue at sea basin and sub-sea basin level. In its first year, 3 workshops and 4 thematic webinars have been organized – mostly online. Participants indicated the added value of this platform and plans are underway to continue with these meetings in the years ahead. [Learn more.](#)

11. Barcelona Convention COP23 commits to a green transition in the Mediterranean (Portoroz, 5-8 December 2023)

The 23rd Meeting (COP23) of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, which took place on 5-8 December 2023 in Portoroz (Slovenia), adopted important steps to protect ecosystems in the face of the rising impacts of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. [Learn more.](#)



12. Strong interest for WestMED Spain webinar on decarbonizing small ports and vessels (December 18, 2023)

On December 18, 2023, [WestMED's National Hub Spain](#) hosted a webinar titled "[Opportunities and experiences for decarbonizing recreational and fishing vessels and ports](#)". The meeting, organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, brought together 97 participants with representatives from authorities (regional, national), companies, SMEs, NGOs, scientists, clusters, fishing associations, FLAGs and universities.



The webinar supports the effort to decarbonize the fishing and recreational boating sector in the Western Mediterranean and help achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal, including the reduction of GHG emissions, while taking into consideration the profitability, sustainability and resilience of these sectors. [Learn more.](#)

13. Major Blue Economy Milestone in Libya with its First WestMED National Stakeholder Event (Libya, November 30, 2023)

For the first time in the five years of Technical Assistance, the WestMED Assistance Mechanism experienced a national Blue Economy event in Libya on Nov 30, 2023. This was achieved upon the initiative of the National Coordinators with the organization and support by the National Project of Aquaculture and the assistance from WestMED's Italian National Hub.

Besides a rich interaction on topics related to the fishery sector, the description of opportunities under the Technical Assistance provided by the WestMED Assistance Mechanism and by EU funded programmes accessible to Libyan stakeholders was an important point to encourage stakeholders to join partnerships and project proposals. [Learn more.](#)



14. European Commission to explore the future of fishers up to 2050

The European Commission has launched 'Fishers of the Future', an EU-wide participatory project that will examine the future role of fishers in society up to 2050. The project will delve into the hopes, challenges, expectations, and needs of fishers to understand how the profession is likely to evolve by 2050. 'Fishers of the Future' will also explore the expansion of fishers' role in society beyond providing high-quality seafood. The project will run until December 2024. A participatory kick-off event involving a wide range of stakeholders will be held in spring of 2024. [Learn more.](#)



15. Regional Workshop Towards Data-Driven Sustainability of the Mediterranean Blue Economy (23 November, 2023)

On 23 November 2023, the Union for the Mediterranean participated in a regional workshop organized by Plan Bleu in Marseille and online, titled "Towards Data-Driven Sustainability in the Blue Economy of the Mediterranean". Focused on the evolving Mediterranean blue economy, the workshop aimed to establish a comprehensive framework surpassing current indicators to gauge sustainability effectively. [Learn more.](#)



16. European Blue Forum, 2nd Deep-Dive Workshop (October 16, 2023)

The European Blue Forum's 2nd Deep-Dive Workshop titled "What does a fossil-fuel-free blue economy look like? How can we as a community support this transition?" took place on October 16th, 2023. It served as a platform for stakeholders from different sectors, sea basins, and organisational backgrounds to engage in an in-depth discussion regarding the future of the European Blue Economy. The primary goal of the workshop was to explore and discuss the challenges and obstacles the members of the European Blue Forum are facing and their unique aspirations and requirements in decarbonising their sector and eventually transitioning towards a fossil fuel sustainable blue economy in the future. [Learn more.](#)



17. Mediterranean fisheries and aquaculture: outcomes of GFCM high-level conference on MedFish4Ever initiatives (October 2023)

In October 2023, the European Commission and 20 EU and Mediterranean states renewed their commitments to deliver on their sustainability pledges made in the MedFish4Ever Declaration. The 2017 MedFish4Ever Declaration has been a cornerstone in regional fisheries governance, catalysing action to build a regulatory framework for sustainable management and development. Six years down the road, Mediterranean states met again in Malta to review progress and renew their commitment to live up to the promises of the Declaration, while looking into the future challenges that this region is facing in pursuing sustainable fisheries and aquaculture. [Learn more.](#)



Resources and Opportunities

1. 4th call for proposals of the Interreg Euro-MED programme

The Interreg Euro-MED Programme is launching its [4th Call for Projects](#), open for submissions between **12 March and 12 June 2024**.

Thematic projects supported under the call will tackle Priority 1: A Smarter Mediterranean and Priority 2: A Greener Mediterranean and will be of two types: 'test' and 'transfer' projects. [Learn more.](#)



2. New Pilot Project call for proposals will foster energy transition in fisheries

The European Commission has launched a new call for proposals for a demonstrator pilot project to foster the energy transition in the fisheries sector. The call - funded under the EU Pilot Project Funds with a budget of EUR 2.2 million and **open from 20 February until 11 June 2024** - seeks to finance a pilot project on a demonstrator fishing vessels that will be retrofitted with alternative propulsion technologies and other solutions to improve energy performance, cut emissions, and reduce underwater noise. [Learn more.](#)



3. The State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries 2023

This 2023 special edition of the GFCM's flagship publication, The State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries, updates statistics and figures on the status and management of fisheries in the region and includes, for the first time, an overview of regional indicators on the aquaculture sector in Mediterranean and Black Sea countries.

It also aims to deliver useful and reliable data to a wide audience as an essential source of information on fisheries and aquaculture in the region and a key tool to support decision-making and monitor progress towards the goals set by the GFCM. [Learn more.](#)



4. Energy Transition Partnership (ETP) for EU Fisheries and Aquaculture

On 21 February 2023, the European Commission adopted a [Communication on the energy transition in EU fisheries and aquaculture](#) as part of wider Fisheries and Oceans Package. One of the key actions proposed in the Communication is setting up an Energy Transition Partnership (ETP) for the energy transition in the sector together with a broad range of stakeholders. The objective of the ETP is to provide a broad multi-stakeholder platform that will promote and facilitate knowledge sharing, discussion and collaboration on some of the crucial topics for accelerating the energy transition, such as finance, skills, technology, and innovation. This should result also in the promotion and scaling-up of good practices throughout the EU. [Learn more here](#) and [here](#). Three [workshops](#) have taken place, namely on: financing the energy transition (November 2023), on innovation technologies (February 2024), and on skills (April 2024).



5. Launch of the S3 CoP Observatory

At the Smart Specialisation (S3) Forum 2023, the launch of the brand new [S3 CoP Observatory](#) was announced as an important service, serving as a central repository of information for S3s across the EU. The tool enables users to intuitively compare Smart Specialization areas of EU regions, while also providing essential contact points and links to the strategies. The project team has identified S3 priorities directly from regions' and member states' S3 documents and deployed tools from Artificial Intelligence (AI), including Generative AI. [Learn more.](#)



6. CLUSTER releases Policy Report on Blue Economy, Spotlights Opportunities for Youth and Women Employment in the Mediterranean

In a move towards addressing youth unemployment, the CLUSTER project published its policy report focusing on the Blue Economy (BE) in the Mediterranean. The report underscores the pivotal role of sustainable ocean resource management in creating employment opportunities, particularly for youth and women in the region. The policy report advocates for an action plan targeting regional policymakers to implement inclusive youth employment schemes in the Blue Economy sectors. Key strategies include substantial investment in blue careers and skills, leveraging European funding programs, and adapting learning schemes to modern needs. [Learn more.](#)



7. Interreg Euro-MED Academy: Shaping the Next Generation of Mediterranean Leaders

The Interreg Euro-MED Academy is an open-access learning space co-created by the eight Interreg MED Programme's Thematic Communities (Blue Growth, Green Growth, Social & Creative, Efficient Buildings, Renewable Energy, Urban Transports, Sustainable Tourism, Biodiversity Protection) and PANORAMED, the governance platform, that opened its virtual doors in February 2022. The Academy's main mission is to make the knowledge, the competences and the results of the Interreg MED Projects readily available to the next generation leaders of a sustainable, inclusive and resilient Mediterranean area. [Learn more.](#)



Upcoming events

1. [The Economist Regional Ocean Summit](#), 14-16 May 2024, Dead Sea – Jordan
2. [UfM Mediterranean Green Week](#), 14-16 May 2024, Istanbul – Türkiye
3. [Mission Innovative Sustainable Economy Innovation Camp](#), 28-29 May 2024, Barcelona – Spain
4. [THALASSA 2024 Marine Sciences Conference](#), 28-29 May 2024, Larnaca – Cyprus
5. [European Maritime Day](#), 30-31 May 2024, Svendborg – Denmark
6. [2nd European Blue Forum Annual Meeting](#), 30 May 2024, Svendborg – Denmark & Online
7. [Virtual celebration of UN World Oceans Day](#), 7 June 2024 – Online
8. [SBEP Workshop 'The key towards Mediterranean Regional Sustainability'](#), 7 June 2024, Athens - Greece & Online
9. [International Underwater Glider Conference](#), 10-14 June 2024, Gothenburg – Sweden
10. [UfM Webinars on MRE/MSP & Sustainable maritime and coastal tourism governance](#) (June)
11. [5th EU Macro-Regional and Sea Basin Strategies Days](#), 12-13 June 2024, Brussels – Belgium
12. [15th UfM Regional Platform on SBE](#), 27 June 2024, Brussels – Belgium
13. [CPMR Intermediterranean Commission General Assembly](#), 2-3 July, 2024, Valencia – Spain
14. [OTTERS Summer School](#), 30 June - 5 July 2024, Marathon – Greece
15. [37th Americas Cup](#), 22 August - 20 October 2024, Barcelona – Spain
16. [European Coastal Challenge Summit](#), 24 September – 27 September 2024, Constanta – Romania
17. [The 2nd High-Tech Summit for the Black Sea](#), 16 October 2024, Sofia – Bulgaria
18. [Sun & Blue - Blue Tourism Innovation Congress](#), 20-22 November 2024, Almeria – Spain
19. [SEAFUTURE 2025](#), 29 September-2 October 2025, La Spezia – Italy

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