



Sustainable Blue  
Economy Partnership

# Kickoff meeting highlights

Marking the launch of this ambitious initiative

- ▶ 25 January 2023
- ▶ Accademia di Belle Arti,  
Via di Ripetta 222, Roma, Italy



accademia  
di belle arti  
di roma



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# HIGHLIGHTS

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- ◀ About 160 participants, in presence and on-line, from 32 different countries, including European and non-European
- ◀ 34 speakers

## Highlights from the welcome messages

- ◀ **Marcella Panucci, Head of Cabinet of the Italian Minister of Universities and Research**

«The Partnerships is a cooperation opportunity in terms of politics and R&I domains. When facing complex challenges efforts need to be joined. Investing in blue economy means to add value to marine and maritime existing activities and developing new ones. Traditional maritime sectors can indeed benefit from innovative solutions as well as environmental protection. Foundation of the New European Research Area will be posed also by this Partnership ensuring due development of synergies with relevant national and European initiatives, including the Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters. The Ministry of Universities and Research is honored to represent Italy as coordinator of this initiative, co-coordinated by Norway, as well as to mobilize relevant national partner institutions».

- ◀ **Bjornar Skjaran, Norwegian Minister of Fisheries and Ocean Policy**

«Norway is an ocean nation sharing a common history that relies on ocean environment and its resources. Many concerns are raising on ocean's health

and sustainability of economic activities. The Green Deal is the direction that can be achieved, including by investing in observations and research to inform industry and decision makers. As full member of the European R&I Framework Programme for decades, we believe that the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership can make Europe a driving force to deliver on global challenges and the Sustainable Development Goals. Efficient restoration and protection must be based on knowledge and Norway has developed national plans in this regard as well as investing in the Arctic and the Atlantic region following this approach. We are happy to co-lead the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership with Italy».

- ◀ **Mariya Gabriel, EU Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth (read message)**

«A milestone event has been reached by Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership, under the guide of the Co-coordinators from Italy and Norway, rapidly evolving with 60 partners from 25 countries and the European Commission pooling about half billion euros for a just transition of the blue economy. The

Partnership is key in identifying priorities and joint strategies and roadmaps. For this, flexible cooperation is needed, and implementation of synergies between policies, programmes and instruments at EU level, to enable national, regional and local R&I systems in an impactful, open and inclusive manner, for the benefit of territories and citizens. Forces can be joined also to support the Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters. I am expecting concrete results and you can count on my support».

← **Giuseppe Soriero, President Accademy of Fine Arts (Rome)**

«The function of artistic disciplines needs to be valorized in particular in this historical moment, since art research has a forward-looking approach and can ultimately contribute to reach peace. Cooperation and synergy are two meaningful words also in the perspective of the research developed by the Fine Art Academy».

← **John Bell, Director, European Commission (DG-RTD)**

«Scene setting starts from emphasizing the fate of the seas and ocean. The European Union is an ocean Union sharing coasts, ports, islands. The knowledge and solutions as well are shared and need to be translated to the people that need them. The Commission is stepping up to meet this challenge. The Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership is an extraordinary achievement and a major step forward for European people. Congratulations to co-coordinators and all partners bringing together broad communities in a key moment to create a sustainable blue economy through concerted research and innovation with

public and private actors. Science has responsibilities today. Innovation needs to be given an opportunity. Nature needs to be restored. Hope needs to be given to citizens. Courage to politics. Through this new strategic policy community instrument, Europe can navigate the transition, by quicker access to knowledge, improving the governance systems, giving the opportunity to countries to improve research portfolio, mobilize research capacity, deploying infrastructures, value the legacy of key ERA initiatives, including the activities coordinated by the Joint Programming Initiative Oceans, and the projects cofounded by MaTERA, BlueBio and OceanERA. The EU policy objectives of the Green Deal and Digital transition are critical for European economic recovery. A target of 5% expenditure of national public funding on joint research and development programmes has been set. Connecting with countries and regions, those that had less opportunities to develop their research system, to fully develop their capacities is a must. As well as cooperating with other Horizon European Partnerships. The European Union blue arm of the Green Deal represented by this Partnership has an important role to address the technological and the social and environmental dimension in the R&I activities to well design the science-policy interface. Another significant value lies in structuring the relation with the Digital Twins of the Ocean and with the Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters, including at the Lighthouses' sea-basins scale. In this decade of tipping points and decisions, R&I is ambitiously called to meet dilemmas.»



## Presenting the Partnership and showcase key activities

### ◀ Vision and structure by Margherita Cappelletto (MUR)

To address the ambitious vision of boosting the transformation towards a climate-neutral, sustainable, productive, and competitive blue economy by 2030 and contribute to the EU policy objectives of the Green Deal, the Digital transition, and the post Covid recovery and ultimately the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the European Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership will mobilize investments of 25 countries and the European Commission for 450 M€ over 7 years. From the Strategic Research and Innovation agenda published in 2021, following consultation with countries on priority objectives, five impact oriented thematic areas of intervention have been identified. Structuring activities and connectivity at geographical, sectoral, disciplines level and with other EU initiatives underlies the overall strategy.

### ◀ Intervention areas by Benjamin Kuerten (FZJ)

The five intervention areas that inform the first co-funded call for proposals are Digital Twins of the Ocean at sub- sea-basin scale, Blue generation marine structures, Planning and managing sea-uses, Healthy 'Blue Food' under a 'One Health' approach, Enabling the green transition of 'Blue Food' production.

### ◀ Announcing the first transnational co-funded call for proposals by Renato Pires (FRCT)

The first transnational co-funded call for R&I proposals entitled

'The way forward: a thriving sustainable blue economy for a better future' will be launched on 13 February 2023. Pre-proposal submission deadline is 14 April 2023 and following the evaluation process, projects will kickoff in February 2024. 37 Research Funding Organizations from 23 countries together with the European Commission commit over 50 M€ flagging five broad priority areas, to maximize the participation while reinforcing European blue economy sectors. Impact-driven projects, formed by at least three different countries, are expected to be implemented pan-European and in the different European sea-basins and to contribute to the transformation into a resilient, carbon neutral blue economy.

### ◀ Monitoring by Sylvain Pasquier (ANR) and Abraham Truyillo (FECYT)

The Partnership is expected to deliver impact and its results need to be fully exploited. In this view, and in line with the European Union focus on impacts, co-funded projects are requested to develop an impact pathway together with the data management plan as well as to promote the Open Science principles. Three key moments, the kickoff, the mid-term, and the final reporting will be organized. A monitoring mechanism, supported by independent experts will be put in place to follow up funded projects, to manage and compare information, including e.g., analysing thematic and geographical participation, consortia composition as well

as obstacles encountered in reaching the set targets. The aim is to further enhance the process and impact. Technically, a set of indicators will be developed, including general Key Performance Indicators, common to different European Partnerships and to be interfaced with the Biannual Monitoring Report of the European Commission and Partnership-specific indicators. To further stimulate exchange and clustering, community of projects will be promoted within a single joint call and across the six joint calls of the Partnership and together with projects stemming from other relevant European initiatives.



### **Connecting the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership across countries, regions, initiatives, and disciplines to deliver impact, moderated by Thorsten Kiefer from JPI Oceans**

- ◀ **Leveraging funding streams, with panelists Magda De Carli from the European Commission DG RTD and Ariane Blum, Chief Executive Officer of the Water4All partnership moderated by Viorel Vulturescu from the Romanian Ministry of Research**

“Things that were not possible in the past are possible now”, said Magda De Carli. The European Commission is removing administrative obstacles for synergistically combining different funding streams with Horizon Europe and enabling wide participation of countries and regions in Horizon Europe partnerships. This relates to the use of structural (including regional) funds with limited administrative burden when

linked to regional or national objectives. It also relates to funds from the Recovery and Resilience Facility. Integration of these funding streams, plus recent improvements in state aid regulations, may also enable better engagement of industry and SMEs. While joint calls across partnerships may still be difficult to realise, Ariane Blum suggested joint Knowledge Hubs as a feasible format for thematic cross-partnership collaboration.

Further and deeper discussion on this will be needed. Meanwhile, requests for clarification can be addressed to the EC or in the framework of ERA-LEARN.



- ◀ **Synergies with other Partnerships and the Ocean Mission, with moderator Maurice Heral, French National Research Agency (ANR), in dialogue with Alexander Grablowitz, Partnership Knowledge Hub co-president from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and, and Kestutis Sadauskas, Deputy Director-General DG MARE of the EU Commission and Manager of the Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030**

“There is no green without blue.” Kestutis Sadauskas stressed that the partnership is key to Europe’s Green Deal ambitions and well-placed to support the EU’s Blue Economy for a Sustainable Future concept. Co-creation implies synergies with EU Missions, other Partnerships, Interreg Programmes, Horizon Europe, and national projects.

The Ocean Mission and Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership were conceived around the same time. Accordingly, they were co-designed to be interconnected and synergetic, and Mission objectives are closely linked with the Intervention Areas of the partnership. Both the partnership and the Mission build on Research & Innovation but also on citizen engagement and blue investments, and on Lighthouses with a sea-basin test case approach.

The pan-European approach is important for addressing ocean challenges successfully. In addition, the partnership was considered suitable for equally important co-design of R&I at international level. Overall, panelists converged on the statement of Alexander

Grablowitz that “there can be no successful Mission without a partnership providing substance and cooperation”.

- ◀ **Sea-basins and Atlantic Ocean, with Wendy Bonne, EC, in dialogue with Kathrine Angell-Hansen, RCN and SBEP sea-basins nodes for the Mediterranean from (MT and GR), Black Sea (TR, BU), Atlantic (IE, PT) and North (BE, NL) and Baltic Seas (EE, PL)**

The partnership follows a pan-European approach but is rooted in regional agendas and networks. Regional seabasin nodes ensure that the partnership builds on the legacy of regional seabasin agendas and the priorities of seabasin conventions. The panel, composed of the appointed nodes representatives, filled the stage. Informed by a series of regional workshops, they chorally shared their respective sea-basins perspectives on the various aspects of the quintuple helix approach.

Panelists highlighted the value of regional approaches for effective interaction with stakeholders, in particular when it comes to industry and SMEs, but also policy actors such as mayors. The regional seabasins are also well positioned to enable collaboration in the partnership among research infrastructures and for addressing regional specificities for balancing ecology with economic development. Their geopolitical settings position seabasins well for connecting the partnership with non-EU and non-European countries and regions. Finally, and very importantly, regional seabasins offer a context to strengthen the ultimate matrix for a cohesive partnership: “Trust is a key for cooperation”.

- ← **Engaging all disciplines, with Willem de Moor, Joint Programming Initiative Oceans, in dialogue with Gabi Lombardo, European Alliance for Social Science and Humanities (EASHH) and Siri Granum Carson, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)**

“Food is culture and tradition”, was one of many prominent statements in this panel when elaborating on the role and potential of the multidisciplinary basket of social sciences and humanities (SSH). In international comparison, social sciences are particularly strong in Europe, which offers a massive but woefully underused competitive advantage.

SSH can add crucial value in many ways, such as by scientifically assessing the effectiveness of innovative policy interventions like subsidies, or the feasibility of implementing technological innovations. They are also key to addressing dilemmas inherent in the partnership, like how we can ramp up the use of the marine resources at the same time as improving their restoration in the context of a precarious economic and geopolitical situation.

A green transformation of the blue economy is impossible without change of cultural values and feelings, for example with respect to blue food, underpinned by ethical debates on humans’ relation to nature under a One Health concept, and societal discourse about how transitions can be done in a just way. Arts, ethics, philosophy, and sociology have key roles to play here.

Panelists concluded that the partnership would benefit substantially from involving SSH

beyond just adding the acronym to tick a box when designing the Intervention Areas, the research questions, the call texts, and the proposals that respond to the calls.





# WATCH IT AGAIN

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◀ Recording available on [YouTube](#).



