

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE BLUE ECONOMY IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

ACTION PLAN

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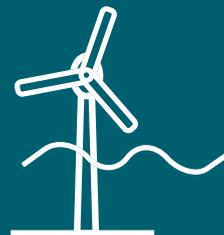
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1

Introduction



The importance of Blue Economy



Blue Economy is an important part of the economy in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR), directly employing more than 700,000 persons¹. It includes all marine-based and marine-related economic activities, such as coastal tourism, fisheries, maritime transport, shipbuilding and port activities. In recent years, emerging sectors like ocean energy, blue bioeconomy and coastal protection have gained significance. However, the Blue Economy is not only of great importance in terms of employment. Emerging sectors have a high potential for entrepreneurship and, thus, for tomorrow's economy, when new products, services and business models will replace old structures. Furthermore, the Blue Economy is a crucial element in light of the European Green Deal, which sets ambitious goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 % by 2030. Sustainable forms of transport and tourism, as well as food and fuels produced from algae, can have a substantial impact on achieving this goal.

Blue Economy is of particular importance in the BSR as some of the traditional established sectors in coastal regions of the BSR (e.g. fishing², in many countries also shipbuilding and repair¹) are diminishing. Particular growth can be seen in the marine renewable energy sector, as the share of offshore wind in new wind capacity installed increased from 11.5 % in 2016 to 27 % in 2019 and the offshore wind energy bid prices are generally decreasing. From 2009 to 2018, the EU coastal tourism turnover increased by 18 % and maritime transport sectors turnover by 31 %. The Blue Economy's share of national employment in the BSR ranges from 0,9 % in Poland to 6.6 % in Estonia. Most of the jobs are related to coastal tourism.¹ Additionally, several Blue Economy sectors have been impacted by COVID-19, especially the distribution of tourism flows to the local Baltic seaside instead of the Mediterranean.

EU and macro-regional political framework



Within the European political framework, the Blue Economy as an overarching approach bringing together all of the sectors above is relatively new, although some of its subsectors have existed for hundreds of years. The EU started to promote the Blue Economy via its long-term [Blue Growth strategy](#) (COM/2012/0494 final) launched in 2012. It aimed to foster sustainable development in the marine and maritime sectors by (1) supporting sectors with high potential for jobs, (2) providing knowledge and a legal basis and (3) developing sea basin strategies to strengthen cooperation between countries.³ In 2021, the EU Commission published its [New approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU](#) (COM/2021/240 final), shifting the focus from “Blue Growth” to “Sustainable Blue Economy” to account for the European Green Deal's aims of a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy. Other strategic documents in synergy with the new approach are [Farm to Fork Strategy](#) (COM/2020/381 final), stating that shift to sustainable fish and seafood production must also be accelerated and the Biodiversity strategy.

1 European Commission (2021). The EU Blue Economy Report. 2021. Publications Office of the European Union. Luxembourg
 2 Total fishing effort has declined since 2003, according to 2019 ICES Fisheries overviews. Baltic Sea Ecoregion https://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Advice/2019/2019/BalticSeaEcoregion_FisheriesOverviews.pdf
 3 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Blue Growth opportunities for marine and maritime sustainable growth /* COM/2012/0494 final */
 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Innovation in the Blue Economy: realising the potential of our seas and oceans for jobs and growth /* COM/2014/0254 final/2 */
 Commission Staff Working Document: Report on the Blue Growth Strategy Towards more sustainable growth and jobs in the blue economy SWD(2017)128/F1

In addition to EU documents, three macro-regional strategic documents set the policy framework for the Baltic Sea Region:

- The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) is divided into three objectives, representing the three key challenges: saving the sea, connecting the region and increasing prosperity. [EUSBSR renewed Action plan](#) of 2021 has defined priority areas related to Blue economy: PA Tourism, PA Transport, PA Bioeconomy, PA Energy, PA Innovation, PA Nutri, PA Ship.
- [The updated HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan](#) of 2021 is HELCOMs strategic programme of measures and actions for achieving good environmental status of the Baltic Sea.
- [VASAB Long Term Perspective](#) identifies the most important assets, development trends and challenges affecting the long-term development of the Baltic Sea Region. It aims to develop intelligent sea transport corridors, integrated energy networks, offshore wind power, and to link the planning and management on land and at sea.

EU financing mechanisms



Next to the political framework, financing instruments are crucial for the success of established Blue Economy sectors and, especially, emerging sectors that rely on start-up financing for research and upscaling. The EU provides several funding possibilities, which are either directly or indirectly dedicated to the Blue Economy. The main initiative is the BlueInvest Fund, which was launched by the European Investment Fund and the European Commission in 2020 and offers loans, guarantees and equity investments for projects related to the Blue Economy. A further source of financial support is the Clean and Sustainable Ocean Programme facilitated by the European Investment Bank Group. Apart from lending, it also provides technical and advisory support and includes the Clean Oceans Initiative and the Blue Sustainable Ocean Programme. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development provides funding via the Sustainable Infrastructure Group and Property and Tourism investments. Moreover, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and the European Regional Development Funds as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds also touch upon Blue Economy. As the Blue Economy is also affected by the COVID-19 crisis and has a high green transition potential, it also draws funds from the Recovery and Resilience Facility. Research is financed via Horizon and INTERREG programmes. A further programme that is not explicitly directed towards the Blue Economy but is still helpful for entrepreneurs, in general, is the COSME programme for small and medium enterprises.

Action Plan for a sustainable Blue Economy in Baltic Sea Region



Although today Blue Economy is acknowledged as an integral part of the European economy and is accompanied by a political framework and several funding possibilities, additional actions are still necessary to prepare for current and future challenges. This Action Plan aims to give guidance for innovative and sustainable economic growth approaches while also accounting for the ecological ambitions of the EU and the goal of increased entrepreneurship in the Baltic Sea Region.

The actions presented in the following chapter have been drawn from the results of a survey of Blue Economy experts in the Land-Sea-Act ⁴case study regions, the case study reports, a workshop for planners from the Baltic Sea Region and a review of projects dealing with the Blue Economy. These actions are not exhaustive but highlight crucial topics. The Action Plan is directed towards policy-makers and authorities at the EU, national and regional levels.

⁴ Project #R098 Land-Sea-Act Land-sea interactions advancing Blue Growth in Baltic Sea coastal areas (InterregBaltic Sea Region) – for more information about the project, case studies and results visit <https://land-sea.eu/>

2

A common vision

Taking into account the EU policy documents and macro-regional initiatives, the Action Plan lays out a vision for unlocking the potential of Blue Economy in the Baltic Sea while preserving marine ecosystems in Baltic sea region, focusing on five thematic Pillars and relevant Actions summarised in Table 1.

Table 1.

Overview of Pillars and Actions

Pillars	Actions
1. Ports and maritime transport	Action 1.1 Strengthen the network of ports and hinterland connections for more efficient and environmental transport Action 1.2: Establish ports as meeting points for entrepreneurs Action 1.3: Initiate decarbonisation strategies in regional ports
2. Sustainable coastal tourism	Action 2.1: Establish regional tourism Action 2.2: Promote better use of existing infrastructure and space for coastal tourism Action 2.3: Improve cooperation among tourism enterprises and other stakeholders
3. Blue bioeconomy	Action 3.1: Facilitate basic research and upscaling in blue bioeconomy Action 3.2: Improve financing conditions for bioeconomy start-ups and investors Action 3.3: Create conditions for a market for blue economy products
4. Marine renewable energy	Action 4.1: Improve the involvement of the local community in development planning and offshore renewable energy development Action 4.2: Improve international cooperation to establish a transnational energy infrastructure Action 4.3: Strengthen research and upscaling of floating offshore wind turbines
5. Provision of information and capacity building	Action 5.1: Improve spatial planning practices and governance of the Blue Economy Action 5.2: Foster cooperation among municipalities Action 5.3: Improve the provision and accessibility of economic and spatial data

3

Pillars and actions

Ports and maritime transport, sustainable tourism, blue bioeconomy, renewable energies, and the provision of information and capacity building have been defined as crucial pillars for action. These pillars encompass established (ports and maritime transport, tourism, renewable energies) as well as emerging sectors (blue bioeconomy), which either include a large share of the total number of Blue Economy jobs or have a high potential for future sustainable growth. Information and capacity building is an overarching pillar, which is directly linked to all of the economic sectors. Within each pillar, we define a set of actions with more detailed recommendations and good practice examples to foster a prosperous and sustainable Blue Economy. Apart from a purely economic point of view, some activities will pay special attention to entrepreneurship and environmental sustainability.

3.1 Ports and maritime transport

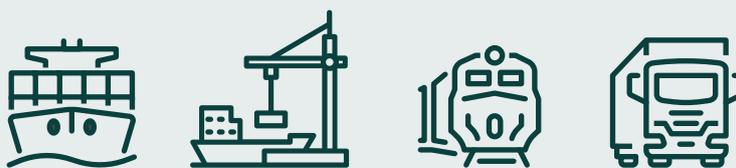


In the Baltic Sea Region, traded goods with countries outside the EU come mainly via the sea. Concerning the Blue Economy, this directly relates to port activities and maritime transport. Employment in ports makes up 14 % of the total Blue Economy workforce. In Poland and Germany, it even amounts to more than 20 %. Similarly, the maritime transport sector covers 15 % of the jobs in the Blue Economy⁵. Apart from this direct employment, ports are a crucial part of the trade, tourism and fishery infrastructure, and thus, are responsible for substantial indirect employment.⁶

At the same time, they face severe challenges by the demands of ever-growing container ships and stronger environmental regulation. Moreover, especially small ports are in danger of not being able to cope with these increased demands. However, structural changes also offer opportunities for entrepreneurial activities. Therefore, the port and the transport sector have a high potential for sustainable economic development.

5 European Commission (2021). The EU Blue Economy Report. 2021. Publications Office of the European Union. Luxembourg.

6 Zaucha J., Matczak M., (2018) Role of maritime ports and shipping in the creation of the economic value of the sea areas, SHS Web of Conferences 58, 01033



Action 1.1:

Strengthen the network of ports and hinterland connections for more efficient and environmental transport

Challenge:

Although much of the trade with non-EU countries comes in via the sea, transport within the BSR is dominated by road transport chains with trucks and semi-trailers, which is neither efficient nor environmentally friendly.

Tasks:

- Increase knowledge about climate change effects on ports
- Strengthen intermodal traffic/combined transport (waterways, rail)
- Digitalize intermodal transport chain communication
- Ensure mechanisms against cyber-risks
- Optimise change of transport modes via automation
- Introduce mandatory use of optical character recognition and electronic freight documents
- Promote zero emissions vessels

Expected benefit:

- More adaptive and preventive planning
- Increased trade capacity
- Reduction of carbon emissions
- New business areas for entrepreneurs in an established sector

Good practice/further information:

- [COMBINE project](#)
- [BLUE RESILIENCE BRIEF: TOWARDS A MORE RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY](#)



Action 1.2:

Establish ports as meeting points for entrepreneurs

Challenge:

Small ports located centrally in coastal cities face the problem that they cannot compete with larger container ports and harbour locations with extensive industry facilities. Therefore, small ports are in danger of being unused despite their great potentials for developing alternative businesses.

Tasks:

- Provide facilities and infrastructure
- Support start-ups with business plan development
- Organise events
- Initiate dialogue between stakeholders
- Provide support for internationalisation

Expected benefit:

- Test grounds for entrepreneurs
- Value creation
- Attractivity for investors
- Physical forum for exchange between stakeholder

Good practice/further information:

- [Creative Ports project](#)
- [Holbaek case study \(LINK to case study report\)](#)
- [Gothenburg case study \(LINK\)](#)



Action 1.3:

Initiate decarbonisation strategies in regional ports

Challenge:

International shipping volume increases, and port operations have high energy demands. Often port equipment and machinery using fossil fuels are required to maintain port operations and adequately function at a critical point within supply chains.

Tasks:

- Switch to equipment which runs on electricity
- Shorten transport distances
- Increase overall energy efficiency
- Establish green port management
- Use economic instruments (taxes, subsidies, carbon emission schemes)

Expected benefit:

- Increased occupational health and safety
- Reduction of carbon emissions
- Medium-term economic benefits
- Long-term competitive advantages
- Efficient regulation via market mechanisms

Good practice/further information:

[Dual Ports Low Carbon project](#)

[Port of Gothenburg tranzero project](#)



Coastal tourism is the largest Blue Economy sector in the Baltic Sea Region. It accounts for more than 330,000 jobs. In Latvia, Estonia, Sweden and Denmark, more than 60 % of the Blue Economy jobs are in coastal tourism. For the individual, this sector provides important opportunities for recreation and education. However, it is also directly linked to travelling and, thus, also the production of carbon emissions and the interference with nature. Therefore, tourism strongly affects the land- and cityscape in coastal areas.



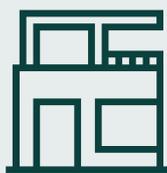
Action 2.1:
 Establish regional tourism

Challenge:
 During the COVID-19 pandemic, regional tourism has gained importance. Coastal areas around the Baltic Sea Region suffered much less from COVID-19 related restrictions than, e.g. Spain and Greece, which strongly rely on international tourists. However, with restrictions being loosened, long-distance travels pick up pace again.

- Tasks:**
- Promote cultural heritage as part of the travel experience
 - Support tourism companies with digital tools and apps
 - Improve education about the effects of tourism and travelling
 - Establish a place identity

- Expected benefit:**
- Lower dependence on international tourism
 - Reduction of travels via plane
 - Focus on quality instead of mass tourism
 - Awareness of historical and cultural background of the region

- Good practice/further information:**
- [Polish case study](#)
 - [Fehmarn case study](#)
 - [Estonian Case study](#)



Action 2.2

Promote better use of existing infrastructure and space for coastal tourism

Challenge:

Space for coastal tourism facilities and activities is limited, but cooperation between different Blue Economy sectors is rare. Therefore, a holistic approach for efficient use of space with a focus on business potentials is necessary.

Tasks:

- Promote all-year use of space/facilities
- Train fishers in pescaturism
- Create networks between tourism stakeholders and aquaculture operators
- Involve local tourism stakeholders in Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) to discuss cooperation possibilities early in the planning process
- Strengthen cooperation between ports and tourism stakeholders to provide easy access to the sea using public infrastructure

Expected benefit:

- Reduction of environmental impact
- More efficient use of space
- Maximisation of economic benefits
- Development of new business fields/income sources
- Increased awareness of local products
- Possibilities for businesses to capitalise on smart sea and coastal resource use

Good practice/further information:

[MUSES project](#)



Action 2.3:

Improve cooperation among tourism enterprises and other stakeholders

Challenge:

Although all regions and stakeholders in the tourism branch face similar challenges, the sector is characterised by patchwork structures and many local and regional strategies and approaches.

Tasks:

- Better monitor tourism flows
- Establish smart forms to cluster SMEs
- Encourage exchange with other EU regions
- Promote benchmarking on Good practices
- Ensure that international funding is in line with regional tourism strategies

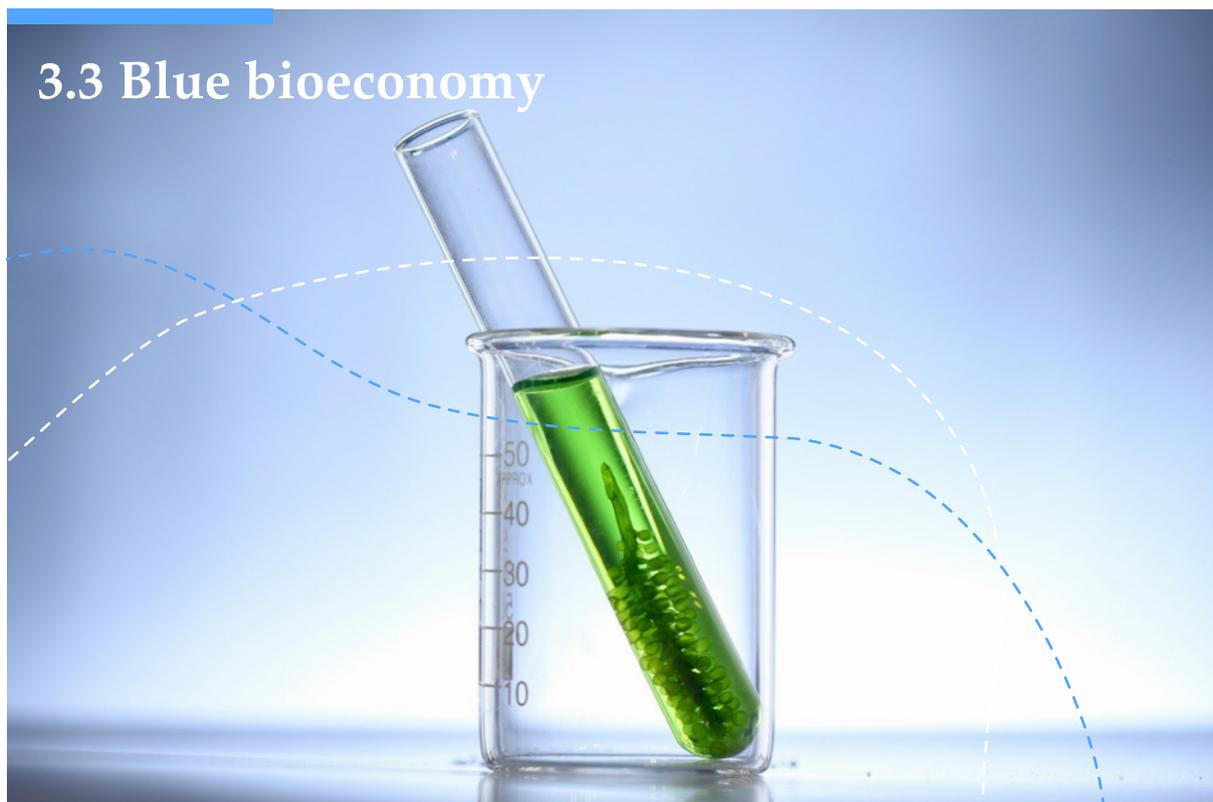
Expected benefit:

- Exploitation of synergies
- Better preservation of natural assets
- Increased capacity to react to external shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic
- More efficient development and use of digital services

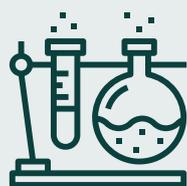
Good practice/further information:

[Baltic Sea Tourism Center](#)

3.3 Blue bioeconomy



Bioeconomy is an emerging Blue economy sector entailing biomass application of marine organisms such as algae, bacteria, fungi and invertebrates. It is used for different applications ranging from food to cosmetics and biofuels. Within the Baltic Sea Region, Denmark, Estonia, Germany and Sweden are active in algae production (Blue Economy Report 2021). Although it currently is a small sector in regards to employment, it has a high potential for growth and entrepreneurship. It can contribute to the European Green Deal goals of reducing carbon emission, producing sustainable food and establishing a circular economy. Despite discoveries and the founding of new companies in recent years, a lot of investment in further research and upscaling mechanisms is still necessary. Moreover, shortages of labour and raw materials have severely affected the industry.



Action 3.1:

Facilitate basic research and upscaling in blue bioeconomy

Challenge:

Although “blue” products have a high potential for many industrial applications, basic research is still incomplete. Even though different products have proven their technological readiness, upscaling is problematic and risky, preventing a wide-ranging spread of blue products.

Tasks:

- Promote study programmes focussing on blue bioeconomy
- Develop green-tech hubs
- Provide open-access facilities for aquaculture trials
- Provide funding for demos
- Enable and support efficient small-scale aquaculture production capacity financially, and professionally
- Train local facilitators with scientific and business expertise and knowledge of the local communities

Expected benefit:

- Increased capacities for entrepreneurs, planners and policy-makers
- Pilot production with low financial risk for entrepreneurs
- Sharing of experience between small and medium-sized enterprises
- Development of profitable business models
- Stronger acceptance of bioeconomy facilities among local stakeholders

Good practice/further information:

- [Blue Biotechnology Master for a Blue Career](#)
- [Baltic Blue Biotechnology Alliance project: Supporting Blue Biotechnology Product Development in the Baltic Sea Region](#)
- [BLUE RESILIENCE BRIEF: TOWARDS A MORE RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY](#)



Action 3.2:

Improve financing conditions for bioeconomy start-ups and investors

Challenge:

As described above, the EU provides several ways to finance blue economy projects. To further boost the blue bioeconomy, private capital needs to be attracted. However, despite its growth potentials, private investments are perceived as too risky.

Tasks:

- Establish a regulatory framework at the EU level
- Increase awareness of existing financing mechanisms
- Develop a thematic investment platform
- Create an information and knowledge sharing platform

Expected benefit:

- More efficient use of financing possibilities
- Reduction of risk for entrepreneurs
- Better information for promoters and investors
- Better knowledge about the benefits of the blue bioeconomy

Good practice/further information:

- [Investments in Bio-Based Industries and the Blue Economy](#)
- [Baltic Blue Biotechnology Alliance+](#)



Action 3.3:

Create conditions for a market for blue bioeconomy products

Challenge:

Products of the blue bioeconomy have been researched and are at stages of high technological readiness. Entrepreneurs and investors are ready to utilise these business opportunities. However, regulatory authorities often hinder or delay the process of market access. Additionally, the provision of products is in danger of being affected by supply shortages.

Tasks:

- Increase knowledge of public authorities about products and their benefits
- Improve market access
- Remove regulatory obstacles for innovative products
- Establish local branding and fully traceable products
- Monitor supply chains through digitisation and share this data for improved resource planning

Expected benefit:

- Development of new products
- Faster approval of new products
- Attraction of entrepreneurs and investors
- Identification with products from blue bioeconomy
- Avoidance of raw material supply shortages

Good practice/further information:

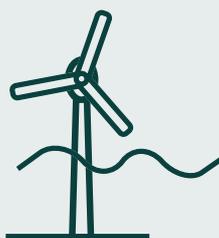
- Ten Trends for the Sustainable Bioeconomy
- GRASS project
- [BLUE RESILIENCE BRIEF: TOWARDS A MORE RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY](#)
- [SUBMARINER ROADMAP beyond 2021](#)

3.4 Marine renewable energy



Marine renewable energy, which includes offshore wind energy and ocean energy (wave/tidal energy), has a strong potential to produce clean energy and, thus, contribute to the [European Green Deal](#) goals and foster economic growth. The offshore wind market has enormously increased in recent years, with 14,6 GW offshore wind capacity installed in 2020. Even though employment in the sector is low compared to other Blue Economy sectors (less than 1% of jobs in the Blue Economy, it has attracted significant investments and will much likely strongly grow over the next years. The market is dominated by European companies (SiemensGamesa Renewable Energy, Vestas and Senvion), which also play a leading role in the global economy (Blue Economy Report 2021).

However, several reforms are necessary to unlock these environmental and economic potentials as the sector's growth is still often hindered by low acceptance by local communities and stakeholders, lengthy approval procedures, and the lack of an international infrastructure.



Action 4.1:

Improve the involvement of the local community in development planning and offshore renewable energy development

Challenge:

In general, approval for renewable energies is high. However, when locating a wind park in the immediate neighbourhood, citizens and other stakeholders are more reluctant to accept such construction projects (Not in My Backyard Phenomenon).

Tasks:

- Use MSP to consider perspectives from different stakeholders early in the planning process
- Promote community energy
- Ensure financial benefits for local communities and citizens
- Promote multi-use of offshore wind parks
- Develop public awareness of the environmental impacts of renewable energies

Expected benefit:

- Higher acceptance of wind parks
- Faster approval and fewer lawsuits against plans
- Economic benefits for other stakeholders and local citizens
- Potential for employment and new business fields

Good practice/further information:

- [Roadmap to Integrate Clean Offshore Renewable Energy into Climate Smart Marine Spatial Planning](#)
- [Co2mmunity project](#)
- [MUSES project](#)
- [Latvian Southwestern Kurzeme Case Study of Land-Sea-Act project](#)
- [UNITED project](#)



Action 4.2:

Improve international cooperation to establish a transnational energy infrastructure

Challenge:

Historically, transmission systems were national systems with few connections to other markets. Therefore, they were regulated by national regulatory frameworks. Often transmission system operators are state-owned. However, with fluctuating energy feed by renewable energies, international transmission systems become essential to increase energy security and facilitate efficient market allocation. Therefore, international cooperation and a regulatory framework at the European level is necessary to build a transnational energy infrastructure.

Tasks:

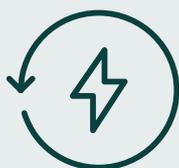
- Establish a framework for international cooperation in MSP
- Set up pan-Baltic clusters to represent common interests
- Provide a legal framework for the construction and operation of a meshed offshore grid
- Integrate offshore wind farms in Baltic Sea interconnectors planned in the Ten-Year Development Plan

Expected benefit:

- Lower system costs
- Larger energy market with more suppliers and better market mechanisms
- Higher energy security
- Increased employment in a growing market
- Higher acceptance due to lower number of cables
- Economic benefits for ports and manufacturers, which are well represented in the BSR

Good practice/further information:

- [Baltic Integrid project](#)
- [ELWIND project](#)



Action 4.3:

Strengthen research and upscaling of floating offshore wind turbines

Challenge:

According to the Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy, the European Commission aims to increase the current level of 14,6 GW offshore wind capacity to 60 GW by 2030 and 300 GW by 2050. However, focussing on nearshore wind parks in low water depth alone can hardly achieve this goal. Although the BSR offers many locations near the coast with shallow waters and has already installed 2,2 GW, the potential for floating wind turbines in water depth above 60 meters is even higher and less prone to conflicts of use. But so far, they are not economically viable.

Tasks:

- Focus Research and Innovation funding on new technologies with high potential for climate neutrality
- Ensure EU State aid rules to foster investment
- Develop concepts for up-scaling and industrialising floating offshore wind power
- Provide funding for offshore wind turbines in combination with electrolyzers
- Digital solutions
- Place manufacturing sites near the coast

Expected benefit:

- Competitive prices of electricity generated by floating offshore wind power
- Expansion of the market leader position of European wind power companies
- Fewer conflicts with coastal stakeholders
- Lower infrastructure costs through integration into a Baltic offshore wind electricity grid
- Local value creation, even in remote areas

Good practice/further information:

- [COREWIND project](#)
- [FLAGSHIP project](#)
- [FLOOWER project](#)
- [Getting fit for 55 and set for 2050](#)

3.5. Provision of information and capacity building

The Blue Economy sectors, although partly very old and deeply rooted in our economic system, are highly complex and require ongoing research, especially given the challenges related to climate change. What makes it even more complicated is that these sectors compete for very limited space. The key to overcoming these issues is to apply an overarching approach to accounts for the different needs and bases decisions on a solid base. However, governance, planning and cooperation structures are not ideally suited to address the specific Blue Economy challenges, as the provision of information, capacities of institutions and the underlying processes reveal.



Action 5.1:

Improve spatial planning practices and governance of the Blue Economy

Challenge:

Although business plays a crucial role in coastal and maritime areas, there is a lack of systematic involvement of blue entrepreneurship' perspective in coastal and marine planning coordinated by public institutions and communication between businesses and governmental authorities is weak.

Tasks:

- Define clear objectives for the Blue Economy
- Develop business indicators regarding the MSP processes
- Establish monitoring and reporting of indicators
- Develop interregional RIS3 strategies
- Provide finance to form business clusters

Expected benefit:

- Evidence-based decision making
- Input from stakeholders to increase the quality of the planning process
- Collective ownership of the outcome
- Easier communication towards stakeholders and policy-makers
- Sharing of experiences
- Awareness of future trends
- Internationalisation of small and medium enterprises

Good practice/further information:

- [CAPACITY4MSP project](#)
- [European MSP Platform, Handbook for Visions in MSP](#)
- [SmartBlue Regions project](#)
 - [Monitoring of indicators](#)
 - [RIS3 implementation](#)
- [LSA Synthesis report](#)
- [Swedish case study](#)



Action 5.2:

Foster cooperation among municipalities

Challenge:

Political decisions often have a cross-boundary impact. Nevertheless, cooperation between municipalities is low due to competition and the lack of political will and formal mechanisms for collaboration.

Tasks:

- Establish departments/officials within municipalities dedicated to cooperation with neighbouring municipalities
- Support/provide funding for collaboration projects
- Establish regional/national fora of collaboration between municipalities

Expected benefit:

- Information and interest exchange
- Increased awareness of strategies of other municipalities
- More efficient use of resources
- More manageable application for EU funding and projects by collaboration

Good practice/further information:

- [Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments](#)
- [SmartBlue Regions project](#)



Action 5.3:

Improve the provision and accessibility of economic and spatial data

Challenge:

Blue Economy is a relatively new concept, and it is not well captured in European statistical databases. The employment and gross value added of the Blue Economy are not directly represented in the NACE classification⁷. Therefore, the calculation is complex and requires data from different sources. The very detailed methodology makes it nearly impossible to apply at the regional and local level using freely available data sources. Additionally, spatial data (including spatial distribution of resources, ecosystem services and management restrictions as well as demand for space of blue businesses etc.) is necessary for effective and sustainable long-term blue economy development.

Tasks:

- Identify gaps in knowledge about the Blue Economy
- Make the concept of measuring Blue Economy less complex and easier to apply
- Require statistical offices at the national and regional to report aggregate employment and GVA information for the national Blue Economy as a whole, as well as for the seven established and six emerging sectors separately
- Require regional statistical offices to report economic data at the NUTS-2 and NUTS-3 level
- Provide funding for applied research necessary for Blue Economy development
- Share economic and spatial data openly and transparently
- Include the industry in the dialogue about data standardisation

Expected benefit:

- Status quo of regional Blue Economy
- Comparison with other regions
- Development over time
- Assessment of the effectiveness of policy measures
- Calculation of input-output effects
- Lower barriers to entry for new and innovative businesses capable of producing products with higher added value
- Avoidance of conflicts between sectors of Blue Economy

Good practice/further information:

- [“The maritime economy in Poland” by Statistics Poland](#)
- [BLUE RESILIENCE BRIEF: TOWARDS A MORE RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY](#)
- [Indicator system connected to the Swedish Maritime Strategy](#)

⁷ Industry standard classification system used in the European Union.

4

Conclusion

The Action Plan reveals that the Blue Economy faces many challenges in all of the five pillars that we have been defined as crucial for developing an economically and environmentally sustainable Blue Economy. These challenges deal with the use of scarce space, environmental and legal issues, financing and the lack of knowledge and data. However, these challenges also provide chances for new businesses, new business models, and entrepreneurship, on the one hand, and for achieving the goals of the European Green Deal.

We have shown fields of actions with specific tasks, derived their expected benefit and linked those tasks to good practice cases or further information. Although these actions touch upon a wide range of economic sectors within the Blue Economy, they all show certain commonalities. As Blue Economy is a relatively new concept, information about its sectors, the relationship between these sectors and the political and planning processes is underdeveloped.

—
THEREFORE,



RESEARCH AND EDUCATION,



STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT,



COOPERATION, AND



COMMUNICATION

are crucial general actions that need to be incorporated in all measures to foster Blue Economy and entrepreneurship and account for the urgent needs related to climate change. Therefore, the Blue Economy must be given special status and support on all policy levels, starting with the EU and going down to the local municipality level. MSP has been mentioned as an essential tool, but it cannot solve all problems of the Blue Economy. The EU must increase its efforts to promote sustainable Blue growth and develop structures and regulatory and financial framework which meets the great importance of the Blue Economy for future economic, social and environmental development.

The project partners invite transnational bodies to endorse the Action Plan and to take the necessary steps to implement the measures and tasks stipulated by this Action Plan.

The project Land-Sea-Act (#R098 Land-Sea-Act Land-sea interactions advancing Blue Growth in Baltic Sea coastal areas) aims to bring together stakeholders involved in coastal management and planning, to find solutions to Maritime Spatial Planning and Blue Growth challenges around the Baltic Sea and to elaborate Multi-level Governance Agenda on Blue Growth and Spatial Planning in Baltic Sea Region. The project will guide national, regional and local authorities, as well as stakeholders of various sectors to:

- improve transnational cooperation and facilitate knowledge exchange to foster Blue Growth
- raise awareness, knowledge and skills to enhance Blue Growth initiatives and integrated development in coastal areas
- balance development of new sea uses with coastal community interests by improving coastal governance

Project implementation duration:	January 2019 – December 2021
Project budget:	2.21 million EUR, including European Regional Development Fund co-financing 1.76 million EUR
Project is financed by:	Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme

Our project homepage: www.land-sea.eu
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EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

