

BLUE ECONOMY WORKING GROUP

ANNUAL PLAN 2022

WORKING GROUP LEADERS

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OBJECTIVES

The Working Group focuses on the blue economy covering both marine, maritime and water systems research and innovation areas with the intention to support members with their regional strategies in the field. Sustainability and the digital challenges related to the ocean, seas and water sectors are key issues. The group aims to foster participation in European funding programmes and initiatives and to build partnerships between members.

CONTEXT

- The key EU level priorities, strategies, and events that the Working Group aims to follow up in 2022:
 - Horizon Europe Mission to restore our ocean and waters
 - Horizon Europe Mission on adaptation to climate change
 - European Partnerships
 - Zero-Emission Waterborne Transport (ZEWT)
 - Sustainable Blue Economy
 - Water4All
 - Water smart territories S3
 - European Green Deal & Fit for 55 – in frame of maritime transport
 - Zero pollution action plan
 - European Maritime Days, 19-20 May 2022, Ravenna (IT)
 - European Week of Regions and Cities, October 2022
- Important funding programmes for the Working Group and how the WG aims to facilitate project development:

- Horizon Europe
 - Ocean and waters mission call on role of regions in lighthouses
 - HORIZON-MISS-2021-OCEAN-04-02: Baltic and North Sea basin lighthouse CSA – coffee meeting in February 2022
- European territorial cooperation programmes
- Interregional investments for innovation I3
- How the group supports partnership building and collaborate with other European organisations or networks:
 - Through the organisation of webinars, the connection with European institutions, brokerage events and disseminating opportunities
- Topics and tailored activities proposed for less active regions, for example tackling topics directed to widening countries:
 - Expand pool of regional examples used to less active regions
 - Trying to engage widening countries in project development work around the Baltic and North Sea lighthouse CSA call

ACTIVITIES

Coffee Meeting: Ocean & Waters Mission lighthouse call – Baltic & North Sea basin **8 February | Online meeting**

Following the Blue Economy's continued engagement with Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters, this informal discussion will allow members interested in applying to the CSA call for the lighthouse in the Baltic and North Sea basin (HORIZON-MISS-2021-OCEAN-04-02) to explore possibilities for collaboration. Proposals under this call should bring together complementary public and/or private organisations and networks, and integrate expertise to support the rolling out of a 'lighthouse' in Baltic and North sea basins. They should provide a broad portfolio of services ensuring the development and deployment of innovative solutions addressing the objectives of the Mission Ocean, seas and waters in the lighthouse area. Members interested in the call will be encouraged to participate in the hope that the exchange could lead to a consortium of ERRIN members.

European partnerships on water: Water4All and Water Smart Territories (S3) **3 May | Online meeting**

This meeting will explore the current status of the relevant water related European partnerships, namely Water4All under Horizon Europe and S3 Partnership on Water Smart Territories. The Water4All partnership will organise six calls during 2022-2027, and the session will provide an insight to the coming call topics. Finally, this meeting will aim to establish how regions can participate in and shape Water4All.

Water scarcity & reuse

15 June | Hybrid meeting

Climate change and extreme weather conditions, such as rainstorms and droughts, pose an enormous risk to water management in many regions. Drinking water is becoming a scarce resource as the groundwaters dry out or are damaged. In many regions there is not enough groundwater to cover all consumption. In this meeting, organised together with the Energy & Climate Change WG, DG ENV will give an overview of the current policy framework. Challenges connected to water scarcity on a broader scale and innovative solutions to address these challenges will be shared by ERRIN regions.

Towards zero pollution in the blue economy

21 September | Online meeting

In May 2021, the European Commission adopted the EU Action Plan ‘Towards a Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil’ as part of the Green Deal. The zero-pollution vision for 2050 is translated into key 2030 targets to speed up reducing pollution at the source. These targets include improving water quality by reducing nutrient losses and the use and risk of chemical pesticides (by 50%) and microplastics released into the environment (by 30%). This meeting will explore how marine and water systems are working towards these targets, linking to the mirrored goal in the Ocean and Waters Mission, by sharing examples of innovative solutions to address nutrient discharge and micropollutants in regions. The European Commission will present EU policies targeting pollution in the blue economy.

Input to the Mission: Restore our Ocean and Waters

Autumn

The WG will aim to share some concerns and input with the Mission Secretariat to address some elements in the implementation of the Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters that remain unclear and unrealistic in light of the current situation on the ground in the regions. This will be done through meetings with the Mission Secretariat and, if needed, an input paper.

Producing and using clean energy in the maritime sector

10 November | Physical meeting

In the Fit For 55 package, the European Commission proposed to raise EU’s renewable energy target from 32% to 40% by 2030 (RED II revision). This proposal aims to increase the production and use of renewable energy and to enhance energy systems integration. The amendments are expected to have positive effects on economic growth and investments by creating quality jobs, reducing fossil fuel imports, and reducing energy costs for consumers and business. This session will look at the EU approach to harness the potential of offshore renewable energy within the union and the uses of hydrogen energy in the maritime sector, with examples of best practices from ERRIN members.



Governance and scaling up in Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters

December | Online meeting

This meeting will be a chance to follow up with the European Commission on the status of Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters, looking especially at how lighthouses will function in 2023 and beyond, opportunities for regions and the governance model. The PREP4BLUE project, which aims to support the development and pilot phase of the mission, will be invited to present its work.