# ERRIN & EUROPEAN COMMISSION STARFISH MISSION DIALOGUE REPORT

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Participation of regional and local actors in the Mission Area: Healthy Oceans, Seas, Coastal and Inland Waters

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**ERRIN** European Regions Research and Innovation Network

ERRIN (European Regions Research and Innovation Network) is a Brussels-based platform that gathers around 120 regional organisations in more than 20 European countries. ERRIN aims to strengthen the regional and local dimension in EU Research and Innovation policy and programmes. ERRIN supports members to enhance their regional and local research and innovation capacities and further develop their research and innovation ecosystems.

The ERRIN members primarily collaborate through 13 Working Groups (WG), covering both thematic areas and overarching policy issues. The Working Groups are based on members' priorities and current funding opportunities. The WG meetings are at the heart of ERRIN's activities, as this is where our members meet regularly to exchange information, present regional examples, build new partnerships, develop joint projects, network and much more.

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# 1. Introduction

On Friday 18th June 2021, ERRIN and the European Commission's Mission Secretariat co-organised a dialogue on the participation of regional and local actors in the Mission Area: Healthy Oceans, Seas, Coastal and Inland Waters. For ERRIN, the dialogue was organised in the frame of its Blue Growth Working Group, led by Saara Nuotio-Coulon (Turku Southwest Finland), Aki Ishiwa (Emilia Romagna Region), Martine Farstad (South Norway) and Pernille Dago (South Denmark).

The aim of the dialogue was to mobilise participation and support from regional and local stakeholders and to explore the candidate Mission's objectives in practice, with a particular emphasis on the area-based lighthouse demonstrators described in the Mission Board Report that proposes a Mission Starfish 2030: Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030. The meeting would serve as an opportunity for regional and local stakeholders from ERRIN's membership to learn more about the expectations of the lighthouses and share needs, priorities and barriers to be addressed by the Mission. For the European Commission it was an opportunity for the Mission Secretariat to learn about activities already taking place at regional and local level and to gather feedback on how this candidate Mission can be implemented in ways that support local actors in their contribution to the Mission's objectives.

This report will provide details of the discussions that took place and examples that were shared during the dialogue. It will be made available to the Mission Secretariat to continue their work on the inclusion of regional actors in the Mission and to ERRIN members, including those who were unable to attend the dialogue but remain interested in the Mission and the area-based lighthouses.

## 1.1. Participants

In May 2021 ERRIN launched a call to its members and their regional stakeholders to provide input to and contribute in the dialogue. More than 50 individuals were identified to take part from 12 countries. Norway, France, Italy and Finland were particularly overrepresented in the initial call, likely due to their advanced status in activities that could potentially be scaled-up for the Mission. ERRIN also received feedback from members from other regions and countries interested in participating in further discussions once the scale and scope of the lighthouse activities will be further defined.

36 ERRIN members and stakeholders joined the dialogue. In addition to participants from ERRIN's membership, two Latvian stakeholders were invited to observe via the Water Smart Territories Smart Specialisation partnership and three representatives joined from JPI Water. Fifteen individuals from the European Commission, from DG Research and Innovation, DG Maritime Affairs, DG Agriculture and Rural Affairs and DG Environment were also invited to take part. Four members of the ERRIN secretariat took part in the meeting.

## 1.2. Structure

The meeting launched with an introduction from ERRIN Director Pirita Lindholm before John Bell, the European Commission's Healthy Planet Director and Deputy Mission Manager, gave an introduction to the candidate Mission and its ambitions. John Hanus, from the Mission Secretariat, then presented the current state-of-play of the Mission, its anticipated structure and the next steps. The meeting then broke into three groups for two consecutive breakout sessions, reporting back to the wider group in between sessions. These breakout sessions were moderated by Helena Meyer (DG R&I), Evangelia Tzika (DG MARE) and John Hanus (DG R&I). Pirita Lindholm (ERRIN), Heidi Johansson (ERRIN) and Olivier Bouc (JPI Water) served as rapporteurs. The first session addressed the activities and scope of the area-based lighthouses while the second session discussed their scale and governance, as well as opportunities for synergies. Each of the breakout sessions began with 'teasers' from regional stakeholders on initiatives that could be inspiration for or scaled-up to become area-based lighthouse demonstrators within the Mission.

Following the final reporting session from the breakout rooms, Elizabetta Balzi, Head of Unit, Healthy Oceans & Seas at the European Commission, shared her takeaways and conclusion from the dialogue and, together with Pirita Lindholm, closed the session by focusing on the next steps needed to continue this open dialogue.

# 2. Plenary

Pirita Lindholm highlighted the role of a place-based approach in most of the Horizon Europe Missions. She also raised the point that most Missions are also putting a mechanism in place that will engage a number of local and regional stakeholders and require new forms of collaboration. John Bell outlined the mission objectives and introduced the Implementation Charter, which would be the delivery mechanism to mobilise and ensure commitment of the various stakeholders on the lighthouse activities.

John Hanus began with a reminder of the purpose of the Horizon Europe Missions as well as the ongoing stages of the process for candidate Missions. The Mission on oceans, seas and water was then presented, linking it to the European Green Deal and other initiatives including the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the EU Zero Pollution Action Plan, the EU Sustainable Blue Economy Strategy and others. The expected implementation phases were described, with phase I, where the lighthouses would occur, taking place from 2022-2025 and phase II, involving scaling-up and public engagement, lasting until 2030.

Next, the area-based lighthouses were presented, the discussion mostly considered the activities they will cover, their purpose and the focus on replication. John Hanus' presentation also discussed how regions can support the overall implementation of the missions, for example by aligning smart specialisation strategies to the Mission objectives, cooperating with other regions and opening dialogues with stakeholders.

Finally, a timeline was presented with the next steps being the adoption of the strategic work plan expected in summer 2021 and the opening of the first mission calls, the latter of which has since happened.

# 3. Examples from ERRIN members

**Pieter de Jong, WaterCampus Leeuwarden**

WaterCampus Leeuwarden is a place-based innovation ecosystem comprising multiple demonstration sites within a 50km radius in the Netherlands. Pieter presented why this existing demonstration site exemplifies a suitable scale to test and demonstrate innovations in practice. He also presented the key stakeholders that form the ecosystem and the variety of thematic areas tackled by WaterCampus Leeuwarden. Through his examples, such as biobased plastics, he also reminded that the scope of the mission covers not only marine but also fresh water innovations.

**Stein Arne Rånes, Troms and Finnmark County, North Norway**

Stein Arne Rånes shared examples from Troms and Finnmark County, where there is ambition to reinforce planning activities in the region through the creation of a digital twin with advanced visualisation techniques. This will, in turn, be used as a planning tool for the co-creation for innovative solutions to regional challenges. Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and water resource management would be a central activity, developed alongside the seafood sector to develop smart solutions.

**Robin Guillon, Region Sud**

Marseille's ecosystem was presented as a possible lighthouse demonstrator that could operate in the fields of regeneration, depollution and decarbonisation. Its strategic actors include institutional regional bodies, R&D organisations like the OCEAN Sciences Institute, economic actors like Marseille Fos Port, as well as environmental, civil society, naval and international actors.

**Beate Kvamstad-Lervold, Ocean Lab, Mid-Norway**

In her introductory pitch, Beate Kvamstad-Lervold described the Mid-Norway Ocean Lab, which is a full-scale research infrastructure. In her view, there are three criteria for the success of living labs: the capacity to attract and educate people; the capacity to maintain technology and develop blue economy solutions; and cooperation. In that respect, she explained that the existing research infrastructures should be the basis for sharing knowledge, data and the infrastructure itself.

**Piia Leskinen, Turku Southwest Finland**

Piia Leskinen, from Turku Southwest Finland, shared an example of an archipelago concerned with pollutant sources. The main challenges in her view are to strengthen collaboration; demonstrate new innovative

multifunctional solutions (e.g. for nutrient and water retention); monitor the effects of measures and assess their cost efficiency through multi-beneficiary approaches (including the benefits and ecosystem services).

### Ian Masters, Swansea University, Welsh Higher Education

An introductory pitch by Ian Masters (Welsh Higher Education) presented a framework resulting from the MARIBE project to select marine investments for blue economy, on the basis of the understanding of barriers for the development of each sector (i.e. risks, business planning, investment approach). He highlighted the need to consider the multiple uses of the sea. He went on to discuss the MUSICA project, which is working to provide replicable blue growth solutions for a small island.

### Olga Sedioli, Emilia Romagna

In her introductory teaser, Olga Sedioli presented the Interreg Adrion Portodimare project. The objectives of the project are to contribute to transnational cooperation in the macro-region to address common challenges of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP), and to support the EUSAIR Action Plan. The project has created a geoportal for the Adriatic-Ionian Region, which gathers data from several different projects and portals related to coastal and marine areas and to ICZM and MSP.

### Pernille Dagø, South Denmark

Pernille Dagø presented a regional project called 'Saving the Fjords', which is led by the University of South Denmark. The University of South Denmark is working on restoring and revitalising three fjords in the region, which have been damaged due to pollution. The University would be interested in creating a lighthouse project around a fourth fjord, which would constitute a larger project that would build on the experiences and network created with the three other fjords. This project would create a model which can be replicated and scaled-up on other fjords – on regional, national or transnational level.

### Roberto Montanari, Emilia Romagna

Roberto Montanari (Emilia Romagna Region) presented the Bologna Charter in his introductory pitch. The Bologna Charter is an initiative for the collaboration between regions in the Mediterranean area, which focuses on the protection and sustainable development of the coastal areas. The initiative currently comprises 29 coastal regions in the Mediterranean area. The work of the initiative is based on three pillars: Knowledge, research and monitoring of the status, evolution and risks in the Mediterranean coastal areas; Integrated planning for the sustainable development of coastal-maritime space; and Coastal works and solutions for climate change adaptation needs and resilience of coastal systems.

# 4. Breakout sessions on lighthouse activities

## 4.1. Group 1 – Moderated by Helena Meyer, DG R&I

Several participants in group 1 highlighted that it is important to start building on pre-existing work (examples, projects, initiatives). A mapping of interesting projects and examples should be done at the EU level but also regionally, as demonstrated by the example from Region Sud on their cartography (regional mapping of relevant actors and assets).

The scale of the lighthouse activities was identified as being important. The area-based lighthouse activities should be small enough to be manageable. A smaller scale than sea basin is important to avoid overcomplicating the lighthouse activities as the Mission approach already requires creating a new collaboration model and tackling multiple challenges at once.

Some regions have connected mission(s) and mission objectives to the regional Smart Specialisation strategies. Time, speed and making thoughtful investment choices are crucial. Smart Specialisation was presented as a suitable mechanism to support such choices. Making adequate investment choices was also linked to a need to better coordinate and align infrastructure investments. Certain investment coordination is necessary to ensure, for example, the compatibility of technologies (green technology was given as an example). This coordination is required also across the Atlantic.

Maximising funding and ensuring synergies with various funding instruments was also discussed by the group. Regions function at the level where funding sources come together in a form of concrete actions and measures. Regions can define what funding and support already exists and where the gaps are. Mission(s) could work as the 'glue' that brings funding sources together to fill the existing gaps. In addition, it is also important to link and find synergies with new and existing tools, instruments and initiatives such as the European Partnerships (e.g. Water4All partnership) and well as with the other missions (i.e. Adaptation mission).

## 4.2. Group 2 – Moderated by Evangelia Tzika, DG MARE

Group 2's discussion first highlighted the urgent need to build a system for data sharing that could be incentivised and regulated at the national level. This implies the standardisation of data packages and metadata, as comparing data frequently reveals huge problems. There is a need to integrate low resolution, global data with high resolution, local data. The challenge does not seem to be in data production but in data use by all stakeholders, bringing it to practical action up to the level of farmers or fishermen.

This moved the discussion to consider the engagement of the stakeholders in lighthouse activities. Being attractive to young people was identified as a key point of interest, with participants stressing that it involves coupling appealing technologies with the noble purpose of protecting the oceans.

Then the question of the right scale for lighthouses was raised and participants acknowledged the need for a sufficient scale for a systemic approach but that the scale should be small enough to ensure that solutions are local. There was consensus that basin scale may not be the most appropriate. Small islands were identified as an example of an appropriate size for lighthouses.

The discussion then highlighted the role of lighthouses for addressing barriers of all types to technological development such as social, technological, economic, business and environmental. Lighthouses offer an opportunity to identify solutions that can be replicated.

Finally, the role of research infrastructure was underlined. The development of sustainable infrastructures with funding mechanisms allowing for sharing and using each other's infrastructure was suggested. A first step towards this would be to share information about the available infrastructure, their status and capabilities.

### 4.3. Group 3 – Moderated by John Hanus, DG R&I

In the discussion on the lighthouses and their organisation, it was highlighted in group 3 that having a well-defined region where collaboration between the involved actors work is imperative to the success of the lighthouse. The demonstration area should not be too large and all areas included in a lighthouse should preferably be based in the same geographical area.

Additionally, the area should include a research infrastructure that is accessible to all involved partners. It was suggested that a mapping and identification of different ecosystems and ongoing projects could be a way to identify the areas that could be connected in potential lighthouses. Another suggestion that emerged in the discussion around the organisation of the lighthouses, is to rely on existing initiatives in a specific area which face similar challenges, in order to transfer the knowledge, methods and experiences between partners.

# 5. Breakout sessions on governance

### 5.1. Group 1 – Moderated by Helena Meyer, DG R&I

Group 1 discussed the Commission's proposal to create an 'Implementation Charter' as the mechanism to mobilise and ensure commitment of the various stakeholders on the lighthouse activities. The charter should go beyond 'business as usual' and connect stakeholders that are not necessarily working together already. The regional stakeholders should sign this charter together to confirm their joint commitment.

In addition to engaging multiple stakeholders, coordination between the levels of governance is also essential. A Swedish example was given where a region is facing issues with linking missions to their Smart Specialisation. Such an approach requires a certain mindset and flexibility, as the process needs to be open enough to allow bottom-up ideas to merge from it. This is not always in line with a national approach with specific requirements.

There was also a discussion on the level of formality required for the proposed Implementation Charter. There was certain consensus that such a charter should have a certain degree of formality without becoming overly complicated. A proposal of needing a dedicated legal structure (i.e. foundation) to co-sign such a charter seemed too complex. Using the model from 'pact of skills' was given as an example that could inspire development of the Implementation Charter.

There was an example from Norway where agreements to bring together the key stakeholders is already in place. The role of private sector was highlighted because the work on missions is linked to restructuring our economies and therefore their active engagement should be ensured. In this context, bringing also funders and financial institutions around the table was raised.

The mission work should be anchored into existing planning systems and processes. This link was also highlighted as a means to achieve the necessary impact from the mission. Furthermore, clear KPI's should be designed to ensure that the mission objectives are met.

Finally there was a discussion on the role that culture can play in engaging citizen into the discussions (going beyond the traditional consultation processes). The Leeuwarden European Capital of Culture – and several water related activities in that context – was presented as an example.

## 5.2.  Group 2 – Moderated by Evangelia Tzika, DG MARE

The discussion on the actors that should be involved in the lighthouses revealed the need for an inclusive approach. Regions, cities but also universities who might support local authorities are key actors, and states are necessary as well, as they also drive the strategy. In that sense, it was suggested that the Mission could become the driver for the local smart specialisation strategies, which would, however, require more clarity from the European Commission's ambition behind the Mission and its lighthouses. A concern was shared about the goal for the lighthouses to answer to all Mission's objectives at the same time: the actors cannot handle all these objectives in the same project. Therefore, it was suggested to focus the lighthouses to increase their functionality.

The participants underlined that there should be continuous work to bring all key actors together (industry, research, authorities, users). Authorities should accompany universities from the beginning so that they can understand technological developments. Communities should obviously be involved, through voluntary organisations, professional associations and direct representation of citizens.

Moving to the subject of funding needs, the participants shared the need to mix funds from various sources, including from the Commission and investors. There was a request for European funding calls to look for TRL 8-9 up to pre-commercialisation, to help the entrepreneurs take the risk for the 'Valley of Death'. The ocean energy example reveals that there is not a single answer, each blue technology should be reviewed to identify at which stage of maturity it is and what type of funding is needed accordingly. The participants illustrated that investing in technological development requires having a particular view of where the wider market will be at the end of

the development. The idea of a Coordination and Support Action was suggested to look at the barriers for commercial development, on the basis of a range of case studies.

Finally, regarding the potential for synergies across initiatives, a question was raised about the balance between the need for a healthy competition and the pooling of efforts and resources. It was suggested to hold a strategic forum for all lighthouses across the Horizon Europe missions, as there are obvious links to other missions (e.g. Adaptation mission), where the lighthouses representatives could discuss areas for common work. A participant from the Commission shared that there are ongoing discussions regarding joint actions between Missions as well as building links with European Partnerships.

## 5.3. Group 3 – Moderated by John Hanus, DG R&I

On the discussion around the key actors involved in the lighthouse, the following ones were mentioned as important: significant research institutes, universities, local innovation hubs, regional authorities, industries and clusters, and financial institutions. However, it was highlighted that the nature of the actors involved in the lighthouses may vary between countries.

As the discussion moved on to the support needed by the lighthouses, it was underlined that the support should come from the public and private sectors, who are responsible for coordinating with financial institutions. It was further highlighted that the European Commission should consider funding schemes through directed and targeted programmes rather than lump-sums, as it has to be competitive and there has to be a willingness to invest in the lighthouses.

Regions were seen as important actors for coordinating and linking up with other initiatives, in order to avoid duplications. Technical assistance should be provided to coordinate these discussions at the regional level, whereas common frameworks are needed to connect discussions between regions in different countries. It was emphasised that by ensuring an alignment of KPIs between ongoing initiatives at the local and regional level and the new lighthouses, synergies could more easily be established between them.

# 6.  ERRIN key outcomes & messages

## 6.1.  Scale & scope

The envisioned basin-based scale of the lighthouses was considered to be too large to be implemented in practice. There are current examples of collaborations at sea basin scale that were considered too complex. The lighthouses should be locally-implemented activities, focussing on one or more of the Mission's objectives. The participants acknowledged the need for a sufficient scale for ensuring a systemic approach but at the same time the scale should be small enough to ensure tailored solutions. As a second step the lighthouse activities could be replicated across the sea or river basin.

Finally, the participants also noted that the scope of the mission – covering also the inland waters – should be made a clearer priority within the Mission and lighthouse objectives.

## 6.2. Governance

The Mission implementation and the area-based lighthouse approach will inevitably require multi-stakeholder collaboration. During the first part of the event, the participants learned about the Commission's proposal to create an 'Implementation Charter' as the mechanism to mobilise and ensure commitment of the various stakeholders on the lighthouse activities.

Regional stakeholders should be consulted on the development of the Implementation Charter, which should ensure that new collaborations are established between previously unconnected partners and that all involved commit jointly to a set of commonly agreed objectives.

Whilst there was an agreement that certain formality of the Implementation Charter should be ensured, this process should not be too complex to carry out in practice. Some regions already have measures in place that ensure an active engagement of all stakeholders and the Charter could be based on those existing practices.

Finally, a framework should be established to clearly define how the fulfilment and impact of the Mission objectives will be measured and by whom. Links to existing planning practices should also be established.

## 6.3. Synergies

A mechanism should be developed to find synergies with existing programmes, partnerships and other Horizon Europe Missions working in the same or similar fields as those covered by Mission Starfish. This is both to make sure that the Mission fills existing gaps and builds on rather than repeats past or ongoing work, but also to guarantee that regions can make use of multiple funding instruments and partnerships to achieve most impact and achieve the Mission's objectives.

Thematic synergies should be explored especially between the JPI Water and JPI Ocean as well as the Mission of Adaptation to Climate Change. Further linking the Mission objectives in the Smart Specialisation Strategies would strenghten the synergies with regional funding.

# 7. Closing session and next steps

Elisabetta Balzi (DG R&I) closed the session by praising the meeting for demonstrating that regions have a key role to play in the implementation of the Mission but pressed that more connection is needed. Regions were encouraged to build on existing initiatives and connect them at the European level and to consider applying for the lighthouse call in Horizon Europe. Implementation Charters to set the governance framework would be considered and ERRIN expressed interest in being consulted on this process. There was also a clear consensus that the basin-based scale was too broad for regions to be able to effectively contribute to the Mission and that smaller lighthouses would be preferred. Other concluding remarks referred to making infrastructure accessible and using culture to ensure that citizens are actively engaged in the implementation of the Mission.

Pirita Lindholm (ERRIN) expressed ERRIN's strong interest to continue the dialogue and participate in the next steps of the Mission development process. ERRIN will share the meeting report with the Mission Secretariat and its membership and hopes to continue the discussion on the regional stakeholders' role and support needs in relation to the Mission. The first call for lighthouse demonstration sites is open until September and ERRIN members will be encouraged to use the network's resources to make use of this opportunity.