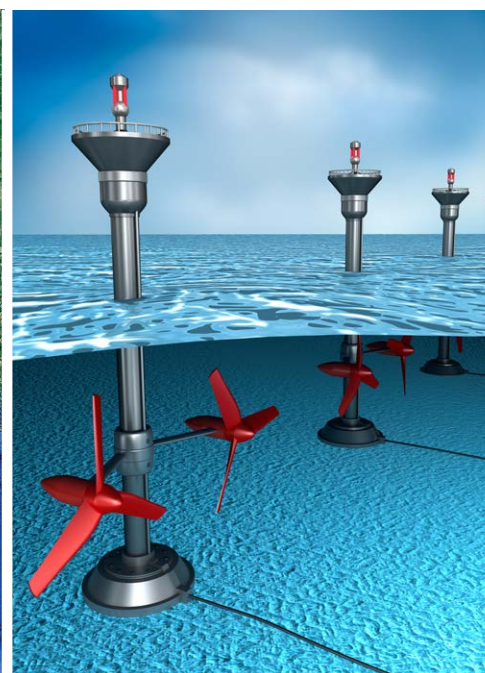


# STAKEHOLDER CONFERENCE: TOWARDS AN INITIATIVE FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BLUE ECONOMY IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN

*Barcelona, 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 2017*

## Briefing Note – Panel 1A

**A smart and innovative:  
western Mediterranean basin**



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## PANEL 1A: A SMART AND INNOVATIVE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN BASIN

### Introduction and framing the activity of the panel

#### Objectives of the panel

Innovation and knowledge creation and sharing is an essential element in ensuring a future-proof blue economy in the western Mediterranean, and make the region more competitive and able to build on technological and market opportunities always in the context of global environmental policies<sup>1</sup>.

This panel discusses how to create blue growth and jobs in the western Mediterranean region, by fostering integration of knowledge and by promoting joint actions for research and innovation including coordination, planning and programming of relevant research and innovation policies and instruments.

#### Introducing the speakers

##### Co-chairs:

- Amb. Delphine Borione, Deputy Secretary General for Higher Education and Research, Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean
- Ms Sigi Gruber, Head of Unit Marine Research, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission (tbc)

##### Panellists:

- Mr Patrick Baraona, Director of Pole Mer Méditerranée, France
- Mr Fabio Fava, Chair, Strategic Board of the BLUEMED Initiative, IT Representative for Bioeconomy in Horizon2020, Professor, University of Bologna, Italy
- Mr Nuno Lourenço, Vice-Chair, Strategic Board of the BLUEMED Initiative, Portugal
- Mr Laurent Mortier, Professor, ENSTA-Paristech, Sorbonne University, France
- Ms Saloua Sadok, Professor, National Institute of Sciences and Technologies, Tunisia
- Cap. Luigi Sinapi, Director, Navy Hydrographic Institute, Italy
- Ms Maria Snoussi, Professor, University Mohammed V in Rabat, Morocco
- Mr Joaquín Tintoré, Physical Oceanographer, Balearic Islands Coastal Observing and Forecasting System (SOCIB), Balearic Islands, Spain

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<sup>1</sup> G7 May 2016 leaders statement, COP21 Paris Agreement, UN SDG's and in particular SDG 14

## Setting the topic of the panel

### What is the challenge at stake?

Already in 2012, the EU Blue Growth study<sup>2</sup> referred to the need to overcome challenges to assure a sufficiently future-proof maritime economy. This is also the case for the western Mediterranean region. On the one hand, activities historically at the forefront of the EU Blue Economy in the region (e.g. tourism, transport) require greater innovation, new technologies and diversification to remain competitive through time, and ensure high levels of qualified employment. On the other hand, a number of emerging and “niche” sectors and activities (e.g. climate services, blue biotechnology, marine renewable energy technologies, sea infrastructures, agro-tourism, smart underwater robotics) require support to gain an adequate critical mass across the region and foster more tailored R&D as well as to allow for piloting/testing investments, so to deploy their full potential. All this, well aligned with the preservation of the health of the western Mediterranean in a global change environment that has out emphasis on observing systems delivering data to respond to science, technology and society needs.

### What are the persisting problems and gaps identified?

A limited availability of comparable and aggregated socio-economic data-series is preventing further knowledge sharing and cooperation amongst businesses, researchers and policymakers across the region. Joint observatories and monitoring processes are certainly an essential element to boost a sustainable growth for the region, and yet, even if well-established international and open observing systems are in place, these are still ineffective in a global western Mediterranean perspective due to institutional and sectoral fragmentation (Report 2, Chapter 2.1<sup>3</sup>). This limited amount of data prevents a proper understanding of the natural variability and the economic performance of the region, and limits the ability of policy makers to put in place effective support actions. A range of important initiatives are available to support greater blue innovation across the region, such as the BlueMED Initiative, but they do not cover yet the whole western Mediterranean region.

Although some trends in clustering initiatives have emerged, with greater potential for growth with respect to the overall performance across the Mediterranean (ibid.), clusters in the Western Mediterranean are still limited. Those weaknesses are also reflected by the limited synergies amongst traditional and emerging sectors of the Blue Economy in the region, for example through the development of clustering initiatives (Ecorys 2013b<sup>4</sup>).

The low uptake of aquaculture research in a number of Western Mediterranean countries, particularly in the southern shore, and the still limited (although increasing) cooperation amongst researchers and businesses across the two shores, is therefore hindering the potentials for greater sustainable aquaculture deployment across the region (ENETMAR 2014<sup>5</sup>, Ecorys, 2015<sup>6</sup>). Also, more innovation in process and technology is required to boost the whole marine biotech value chain, including for food production, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, ship maintenance (anti-fouling) and environmental applications, such as oil remediation and marine micro-plastics biodegradation<sup>7</sup> (ENETMAR 2014). Development in

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<sup>2</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/documentation/studies/documents/blue\\_growth\\_third\\_interim\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/documentation/studies/documents/blue_growth_third_interim_report_en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 2

<sup>4</sup> [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/sites/maritimeforum/files/Med%20clusters%20-%20Annexes%20def\\_0.pdf](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/sites/maritimeforum/files/Med%20clusters%20-%20Annexes%20def_0.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/sites/maritimeforum/files/Report\\_1\\_full\\_final.pdf](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/sites/maritimeforum/files/Report_1_full_final.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> IMP-Med mini-study (2015) conducted by Ecorys for the EU Commission and not yet publicly available

<sup>7</sup> Amongst those, opportunities should be assessed in obtaining new and more robust micro-algae species, eukaryotic and prokaryotic marine microbial communities, and strains from the area to be exploited in the production of new bio-based products and fuels and greening the local chemical industry. Another priority for research and innovation is to evaluate the impact of marine litter and its in situ biodegradation and management, and possible in situ strategies for remediating oil spills and contaminated sediments.

Marine Renewable Energy Technologies (MRETs) could well support internal energy demand in the region (Med Maritime 2014<sup>8</sup>, SAGE 2016<sup>9</sup>, MEEA 2014<sup>10</sup>).

## **Discussion on potential interventions to be supported by the initiative**

### **Improve the availability of comparable and aggregated socio-economic data-series.**

- How can existing data and information be systematically collected, updated and disseminated across stakeholders in the region?
- What is needed to address existing asymmetries and gaps?
- How to develop new services based on open-data? What are the bottlenecks to be addressed?

### **Improve cross-sectorial coordination in research and strategic cooperation across the region**

- Which are the R&I areas where greater North-South cooperation is required in the WestMED region?
- How can the BlueMED Initiative also support such investment and ensure that the existing gaps in southern partner Countries are addressed as well?
- How can brain circulation between research, education/training and business communities be promoted in the region and notably throughout the North-South and South-South axis?

### **Foster innovative start-ups and maritime clusters amongst traditional and new activities in the region**

- Which are the areas where strategic investments are required? And what type of investments?
- How can clusters help to achieve the necessary critical mass for investing in research and innovation and what kind of support is needed to improve North-South cooperation and networking in this area?
- What kind of start-ups and scientific spin off could be promoted in the WestMed and how they should be supported?

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.medmaritimeprojects.eu/download/MyTemplate/Pdf/20150127\\_Blue\\_Energies\\_Preliminary\\_Conclusions.pdf](http://www.medmaritimeprojects.eu/download/MyTemplate/Pdf/20150127_Blue_Energies_Preliminary_Conclusions.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <http://ocs.sagepub.com/content/early/2016/06/15/1759313116645822.full>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.luc.edu/orgs/meea/volume16/pdfs/Hong.pdf>