

## ‘MALTA ROADMAP’ FOR SOUTHERN CLUSTERS COOPERATION

### CONTEXT FOR THE ROADMAP

#### **WestMED Cluster Alliance in support to maritime clusters**

The WestMED Cluster Alliance (WMCA)<sup>1</sup> is the initiative Accelerating Cooperation and joint actions by maritime clusters in the western Mediterranean. The WMCA includes all national maritime clusters active across the western Mediterranean region, but also involve dialogue with sub-national clusters as well as relevant innovation enablers (accelerators, etc.).

*To achieve its aim the WMCA works across a number of synergetic actions*

- *Intersectoral cluster dialogue*, to support exchange in maritime and non-maritime clusters
- *South-South cooperation*, to boost the development of southern clusters
- *North-South capacity support*, to upgrade cluster management skills
- *MedBAN*, to provide a platform for investments in innovative SMEs.

#### **Relevance of Maritime Clusters for a sustainable blue economy**

Maritime clusters play in fact an essential role as brokers between EU regions and neighbouring countries in EU seabasins. They act as ‘brokers’ in aggregating local SMEs and large companies across a range of sectors in the blue economy, including through synergies with enterprises involved in in-land activities across complex value chains.

Maritime clusters are also essential ‘enablers’ in the intermediation between blue economy stakeholders (businesses, associations, research bodies, etc.) and sustainable public and private investors. In doing so, they ensure access to know-how, technology and innovation to their associates, while supporting greater networking and internationalization for the sector.

#### **WestMED Cluster Alliance support to southern cluster development**

An essential component of the work of the WMCA is the support to south-south cooperation for the further development of maritime clusters in North Africa. This action is promoted by Tunisian Maritime Cluster, to date still the only national maritime clusters being active in the southern shore of the Mediterranean. In its role, the Tunisian cluster is actively supported by northern maritime clusters member of the WMCA, particularly the French Pole Mer Méditerranée and Italian national clusters CTN BIG and Federazione del Mare.

The aim of such stream of action is to support other western Mediterranean Countries in the set-up and management of national clusters, as well as fostering the set-up of a Maghreb Maritime Cluster – that may act as a platform for the national maritime cluster to federate,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://repatriation.westmed-initiative.eu/westmed-maritime-clusters-alliance/>

achieve further capacity and promote a coordinated action *vis-à-vis* other maritime clusters. The promotion of southern cluster aims to build – and reflect – upon the different country experiences in supporting local innovation ecosystems in the blue economy. In this respect, the approach chosen in Algeria to focus on accelerators and incubators to foster innovation uptake and support local SMEs, is already enriching the dialogue amongst clusters in the WMCA.

## CONTENT OF THE ROADMAP

### Outcomes of the hackathon held in Malta in June 2022

As part of the ‘hackathon event’<sup>2</sup> held under the Libyan/Maltese Co-Presidency, a dedicated session was organised to discuss and agree on the way forward in support of southern maritime clusters in the western Mediterranean. A number of concrete actions were agreed as a result of that session, that included participants from the southern WestMED countries.

The main actions and commitments taken as part of this roadmap are as follows:

- **Set-up national maritime clusters** in southern WestMED countries is essential, in order to boost a proper cluster cooperation across the region for a sustainable blue economy
- **Support cooperation with Mediterranean** countries in order to promote greater understanding and interest towards the uptake of North African maritime clusters
- **Create the ‘momentum’ for a Maghreb cluster**, as a way to foster greater pan-Mediterranean cooperation and the full involvement of African institutions (UMA<sup>3</sup>, AdB<sup>4</sup>).

All the above-mentioned action will also aim to be synergetic with the other streams of work promoted by the WMAC, and notably with the development of cluster cooperation through the Mediterranean Blue Acceleration Network (MedBAN) project starting in September.

### Milestones in the implementation of the ‘Malta Roadmap’ (indicative dates)

An illustration of the main (indicative) deadlines is presented in the table below.

WestMED Clusters	Maghreb Cooperation	Mediterranean Dialogue
<i>Set-up national clusters (Support of WestMED)</i>	<i>Start North African dialogue (Union of Arab Maghreb)</i>	<i>Engage MED countries (Support of UfM)</i>
Mauritania (Q4 2022)	Engagement with UAB and AdB	MedBAN (Q4 2022)
Morocco (Q3 2023)	Engagement with COMHAFAT <sup>5</sup>	Greece (tbc)
Algeria (2023 tbc)	Engagement with AU-IBAR <sup>6</sup>	Egypt (tbc)
Libya (2023 tbc)	African Summit/MENA (Q4 2023) <sup>7</sup>	Jordan (tbc)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.westmed-initiative.eu/events/westmed-hackathon-30-june-2022-hybrid-malta-online/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://au.int/en/recs/uma>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/towards-climate-resilient-ocean-economies-africa>

<sup>5</sup> <https://caopa.org/en/tangier-morocco-declaration-of-support-to-artisanal-fisheries-and-aquaculture/04/03/2022/news/3974/>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.au-ibar.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/sd\\_20200313\\_africa\\_blue\\_economy\\_strategy\\_en.pdf](https://www.au-ibar.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/sd_20200313_africa_blue_economy_strategy_en.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://blogs.worldbank.org/arabvoices/mena-blue-program-our-collective-response-saving-menas-coasts>