



EUROPEAN CLIMATE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT EXECUTIVE AGENCY (CINEA)

CINEA.D - Natural resources, climate, sustainable blue economy and clean energy  
D.3 - Sustainable Blue Economy

## Synergies and Clustering between Maritime Projects (EASME/EMFF/2020/3.1.12) – SI2.850620

### Workshop Report: “Sea-basin dimension”



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**Credits:** Report written by lead workshop organiser and consortia member Cogea.

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## 1. Executive Summary

CINEA, the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency is implementing an initiative titled **“Synergies and clustering between maritime projects”** with the aim to provide a platform for exchange of information, best practices and synergies between EMFF funded projects as well as with other funding programmes in support of the Integrated Maritime Policy’s goals. Running from June 2021 for two years and supported via a consortium of consultants through a tender contract, a key component of the initiative is to run a series of workshops to facilitate and foster networking, cooperation, sharing of experiences and to maximise the impact of relevant thematic clusters of EMFF funded projects.

The fourth workshop, on **“Sea-basin dimension”** took place on Thursday, 7 July 2022 (10:00-13:00 CET). The workshop sought to explore synergies and clustering between EMFF and EMFAF projects at sea basin level. It presented success stories, information and funding options for project coordinators to consider with the objective of establishing synergies and increasing cooperation within and between sea basins.

The EMFF funded a sea-basin specific call in 2015: “EASME/EMFF/2015/1.2.1.7: Projects in the context of the Integrated Maritime Policy in the Black Sea and/or Mediterranean Sea regions”. 6 projects were funded. In 2017, a specific topic also addressed skills, networking and local coastal communities in the Western Mediterranean, resulting in 5 projects to be funded such as DEEP BLUE or ENSAMBLE, while in 2020 a specific call was launched on ports clusters in the Atlantic. A new €5,441,293 million call for proposals was closed in January 2021 under the EMFAF. The call will support “Flagship projects” (pilot strategic initiatives) that strengthen sea basin-level collaboration in the Atlantic, the Black Sea and the Western Mediterranean to achieve the goals of the relevant sea basin strategy.

Besides these calls, other projects, albeit funded under non-sea-basin-specific calls, addressed a sea basin dimension nonetheless. This is the case, for example, of blue careers projects such as MarENet, MENTOR or the STARFISH 4.0 project under the Blue Economy call for proposals in 2018.

A total of 59 attendees participated in the workshop. A mixed methodological approach was used to drive engagement and participation in the virtual setting.

While not all EMFF-funded projects lend themselves neatly to cooperation at sea-basin level, it is believed that several of them might benefit from increased cooperation with other projects from the same or even from other sea basins.

The workshop featured presentations from sea-basin assistance mechanisms and Interact. Further, an interactive session aimed to encourage synergies and cooperation between project beneficiaries.

## 2. Introduction

This was the fourth in a series of thematic workshops being held under the “Synergies and Clustering between Maritime Projects” initiative. The ‘Sea-basin Dimension’ workshop took place on Thursday, 7 July 2022, and aimed to explore options and opportunities for cooperation within and across EU sea basin.

A comprehensive agenda included an overview of the policy context and landscape, as well as a series of presentations from sea-basin Assistance Mechanisms and Interact. In particular, the sea-basin Assistance Mechanisms and Interact also presented from their portfolio of projects best practices related to synergies and cooperation between project beneficiaries. Further, the workshop was supported by an interactive session to enable participants to share their own experiences on whether, to what extent and when cooperation is better pursued at sea-basin or at EU level.

### 3. Workshop Objectives

The objective of the workshop was to utilise a co-creation and participatory approach to achieve a common understanding as well as gain insights and knowledge on the following elements:

- **Clarity:** Understanding of the direction of EU policies going forward and how future projects should be orientated to support this.
- **Foresight:** Insights to help inform the work of the future, centralised, Assistance Mechanism.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Sharing between beneficiaries on experiences and insights focused on legacy/impact.
- **Synergies:** Identify opportunities for collaboration among beneficiaries for future collaboration.

### 4. Target Participants

For this thematic workshop the following groups were the primary targets:

- a) **EMFF- and EMFAF-funded project beneficiaries**
- b) **Coherence Panel members** from EC funding mechanisms
- c) **Sea-basin Assistance Mechanisms**

A total of 59 participants attended the workshop, out of 101 who registered. Attendance consisted of members of the coherence panel, representatives from other EU funding programmes, and beneficiaries from both EMFF funded projects and other funding mechanisms.

#### Breakdown:

<b>Total Participants: 59</b>
Coherence Panel Members: 13
Project Beneficiaries: 25
Assistance Mechanisms: 9
Other: 12

### 5. Workshop Methodology

The three-hour workshop took place online via Zoom. Participation was free and open to all relevant stakeholders. The event was advertised via multiple channels.

In order to engage all participants and encourage participation, the methodology included a mix of presentations, plenary discussions and breakout sessions.

The workshop began with an introduction on the purposes of the workshop and an overview of sea-basin and regional cooperation in the EU. Subsequently, three presentations were given by the Assistance Mechanisms for the Atlantic Ocean, the Black Sea, and the West-Med. The presentations focused on the sea-basin strategy – and the macroregional strategy when relevant – the work of the Assistance Mechanisms, funding opportunities in the sea basin, and best practices of synergies between project beneficiaries. A similar presentation was given by Interact, which also covered examples of cooperation between project beneficiaries outside of the blue economy. In the first session, interaction with the audience was mainly via chat.

In the breakout session, participants were split into two groups, based on the preferences stated in the registration form. A group included projects mainly focusing on research and innovation, whereas another group included projects focusing on cooperation. Two facilitators stimulated interaction by asking questions on whether, to what extent and in what case cooperation is better pursued at sea-basin or at EU level. Google Jamboard was used to collect feedback from participants.

The agenda for this workshop can be found in [Annex 1 – Event Agenda](#).

## 6. Workshop Execution

The workshop took place as scheduled on Thursday, 7 July from 10:00-13:00 CET. The workshop had two parts - Part 1 focused on policy context, landscape and Assistance Mechanisms, while Part 2 facilitated networking for project beneficiaries.

A short narration of the presentations and case studies delivered during Part 1 of the workshop are provided below. A recording of the whole workshop and copies of each presentation are available on the [Maritime Forum](#).

### Part 1: Sea-basin Assistance Mechanisms and funding opportunities

Title	Name and Affiliation of speaker
<b>Introduction to Initiative &amp; Purpose of workshop</b>	<b>Patrizia Busolini, DG MARE</b>
<p><b>Ms Patrizia Busolini</b> introduced the initiative and purpose of the workshop, which was to explore implementation synergies among EMFF-funded projects with a forward-looking take on cooperation within and between sea basins. Special attention was also paid to synergies between different sectors of the blue economy in order to promote cross-sectoral dialogue as well.</p> <p>The overarching objective of the sea-basin strategies is to support a medium-long term coordinated and integrated approach to maritime affairs and sustainable blue economy in the concerned areas, through an structured collaboration among different stakeholders in planning and aligning relevant EU and national and regional policies, projects and funds. Sea is shared among different countries, so the need for regional cooperation, including the non-EU countries is imperative. In particular EU supports 3 SBS: Atlantic (only EU), WESTMED and Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea.</p> <p>The sea-basin strategies were launched at different times and in different contexts, so these are not likely to meet in the same state of progress. Despite differing priorities due to different geographical</p>	

and economic contexts, nevertheless, these often face common challenges. Opportunities to exchange best practices and projects

will facilitate this process, and this is also the reason why DG MARE is willing to further promote the dialogue among sea basins.

For example, the [AspBAN](#) project is related to the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0; however, it is being looked at as a best practice in the other sea basins, and it has a ‘twin’ project in the WestMed, reflecting the specificities of the Mediterranean sub-basin.

Ms Busolini stressed that it is important to involve all stakeholders, both at sea basin and at national level in terms of implementation priorities.

The SBS in fact rely on a circular top down-bottom up dynamic, where the goals and priorities are defined by the policy level of the involved countries and they are implemented also by the stakeholders who define and implement projects, as a bottom-up process. The outcomes of these projects in turn feed into the policy process that takes place among countries.

Finally, Ms Busolini informed that, as of September 2022, the 3 sea basin strategies will be supported by a unique assistance mechanism that, among its tasks, will also include the horizontal activity of promoting synergies with other relevant initiatives, as well as with projects.

Title	Name and Affiliation of speaker
<b>Introduction to Assistance Mechanisms</b>	<b>Mariana Taylor de Jesus, AM for the AAP</b> <b>Thanos Smanis, Black Sea AM</b> <b>Matteo Bocci, AM – WestMED Initiative</b> <b>Ivano Magazzù, Interact</b>
<p><a href="#">Ms Mariana Taylor de Jesus</a> introduced the Assistance Mechanism for the Atlantic Action Plan, presenting its operation and major features in terms of synergies.</p> <p>The Atlantic Action Plan 2.0 includes four pillars that represent a practical way to make the common vision a reality. All pillars are integrally interconnected and transregional by nature; they address key challenges and aim to foster sustainable blue growth and contribute to greater territorial cooperation and cohesion in the EU Atlantic area.</p> <p>The activities of the Assistance Mechanism focus on workshops, communication, project monitoring, implementation of the AAP 2.0 &amp; ASC support and National Hub Support.</p> <p>Four best practices of projects implemented in the Atlantic Basin were also presented: Atlantic Smart Ports Blue Acceleration Network, Mari4_YARD, SafeWAVE and Clean Atlantic.</p> <p><a href="#">Mr Thanos Smanis</a> presented the Assistance Mechanism for the Black Sea. The mechanism has been put in place to support the Common Maritime Agenda (CMA) for the Black Sea, a strategic reference framework that promotes green, smart and resilient transformation of blue economy sectors. The activities of the assistance mechanism include provision of expertise at regional and national level – through its network of national hubs – support to the monitoring of CMA implementation, project development and communication.</p> <p>Three examples of good practices of projects and initiatives implemented in the Black Sea basin were also presented: preparation of the informal Working Group on Underwater Cultural Heritage, and MINE-EMI project.</p> <p>4BIZ and DBAN Projects have recently been launched in the framework of the 2021 EMFAF call for proposals for flagship projects supporting the sea basin strategies.</p>	

**Mr Matteo Bocci** presented the Assistance Mechanism for the WestMed Initiative. The Central Team coordinates all technical activities of the initiative, coordinates and implements regional activities and supports the WestMed Steering Committee. National hubs support stakeholders in the involved countries, organise national/local events, implement communication activities and support stakeholders in the definition of bankable projects and related applicable funding opportunities. The WestMed Initiative has six priorities: maritime safety and the fight against marine pollution, maritime cluster development, skills development and circulation, sustainable consumption and production, biodiversity and marine habitat conservation and restoration, development of coastal communities and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture. At the level of synergies, 3 examples were presented: 'Level 1' synergies: among projects (capitalisation), 'Level 2' synergies: areas of strategic relevance (Technical Groups), 'Level 3' synergies: among programmes (e.g. INTERREG).

**Mr Ivano Magazzù**, presented the process of project capitalisation set up by Interact, which aims to promote the sustainability of projects and the durability of their results, enabling projects to obtain resources beyond the initial funding, improve coordination and identify synergies between projects and programmes, and promote dialogue between programmes and national authorities to integrate results into national and local policies. Two project examples were also presented: PHARO4MPAs and Care Peat.

## Part 2: Knowledge sharing and networking

Below is a list of Prompt Questions posed to participants during this session. Participants were asked to share their experiences and advice on the specific topics. Responses to these questions have been collated in [Section 7](#) on workshop outputs.

- 1. AMs will be merged in the future. In view of fostering synergies between projects within and between sea basins, please tell us about:**
  - a. What worked well with the current assistance mechanisms
  - b. What can be improved
  - c. Recommendations for the future
- 2. Can you provide examples of synergies between different projects? By “synergies” we mean different projects that collaborate together to produce a new output or a new project**
- 3. Do you think there are skill gaps/challenges that are hampering growth and synergies in the maritime domain? If so, should these be addressed at sea basin or at EU level? What possibilities do you envisage for addressing skill gaps/challenges?**
- 4. Where do you see the future of your sector going in your sea basin? How and to what extent do you think that your sector might benefit from cooperation with other sea basins?**
- 5. Innovation and technology are a major driver for competitiveness and for economic growth. How and to what extent a quadruple helix (university-industry-government-public) framework can benefit from cross-sea-basin cooperation? Or can it be more effectively pursued at sea basin level?**



## 7. Workshop Outputs

This section summarises the key points captured during plenary and breakout sessions during the event.

### Room A: Cooperation

**Question 1: AMs will be merged in the future. In view of fostering synergies between projects within and between sea basins, please tell us about:**

- a. What worked well with the current assistance mechanisms**
  - Strategic view at sea basin dimension
  - Matchmaking and partnership building
- b. What can be improved**
  - Interaction between projects
- c. Recommendations for the future**
  - Interact more with the Black Sea Commission (Permanent Secretariat) – they have good connection with the Black Sea scientific community

**Question 2: Synergies with other projects**

- a. Can you provide examples of synergies between different projects? By “synergies” we mean different projects that collaborate together to produce a new output or a new project**
  - CleanAtlantic project and OceanWise project worked out together a common mechanism to contact their stakeholders (which were similar for both projects) and gather information.
- b. What kind of support can the EC provide to foster synergies between projects? What you find useful?**
  - Organise working groups on specific topics
  - Create tools such as platforms that could help in communication between projects (it was pointed out that for the Black Sea such a tool already exists (Virtual Knowledge Centre of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation – [BSEC](#)). The sea basin strategies websites should also serve as platforms to support contacts and exchanges between projects.
  - Integrated support from different funders

**Question 3: Do you think there are skill gaps/challenges that are hampering growth and synergies in the maritime domain? If so, should these be addressed at sea basin or at EU level? What possibilities do you envisage for addressing skill gaps/challenges?**

- Skill gaps and challenges should be addressed at EU level as all sea basins face similar challenges.
- Together with communication activities more actions to reinforce capability to transfer knowledge should be undertaken.
- Another challenge is the availability of maritime professionals who are already part of the blue economy transition but are extremely busy (e.g. fishers) and it may be difficult to have them participate in workshops and sector events. A mechanism to approach maritime professionals should be found and the agenda of such workshops and events should be adjusted to their agenda.



- There should be a mechanism to facilitate knowledge exchange between those who are already working (e.g. fishers) and those who are studying.

**Question 4: Where do you see the future of your sector going in your sea basin? How and to what extent do you think that your sector might benefit from cooperation with other sea basins?**

- Two examples were discussed: the marine litter sector and the fisheries sector. In the case of marine litter, there is still considerable room for research. It is very important to interact and cooperate with other sea basins as they are facing common challenges and there is a need to exchange good practices and lessons learned. Also, the fisheries sector is facing several challenges (e.g. not enough manpower) that should be faced at EU level.

**Question 5: Innovation and technology are a major driver for competitiveness and for economic growth. How and to what extent a quadruple helix (university-industry-government-public) framework can benefit from cross-sea-basin cooperation? Or can it be more effectively pursued at sea basin level?**

- It is extremely difficult to get four pillars (university-industry-government-public) work together, so the effort should be directed towards making them collaborate. To be efficient one needs to have a quadruple helix work together. In doing so, it is important to involve policy makers and industry.
- DG MARE has recently launched the smart specialisation thematic platform for a sustainable blue economy, whose aim is also to support quadruple helix stakeholders of blue economy sectors in working together at sea basin level and profiting from the opportunities offered by DG REGIO's specifically dedicated tool, [I3](#), whose calls should be opened, starting from the next call, also to non-EU countries associated to HORIZON EUROPE. One of the challenges for cross-sea-basin cooperation is to overcome language barriers.

**Room B: Research and innovation**

**Question 1: AMs will be merged in the future. In view of fostering synergies between projects within and between sea basins, please tell us about:**

**a. What worked well with the current assistance mechanisms**

- Integration between different sectors pertaining to the marine economy has been particularly efficient.
- Involvement of various stakeholders, which fostered integration between the public and private sectors.
- Creation of national hubs, which promoted cooperation within and among individual countries, including through bilateral cooperation.

**b. What can be improved**

- Cooperation and integration with non-EU countries, which share basin strategies with member countries.

**c. Recommendations for the future**

In the future, more attention could be paid to the integration of assistance mechanisms, sea basin strategies and funding programmes.

#### **Question 2: Synergies with other projects**

**c. Can you provide examples of synergies between different projects? By “synergies” we mean different projects that collaborate together to produce a new output or a new project**

- Examples of virtuous collaboration have sprung up spontaneously between different projects, even with seemingly uncommon interests.
- Cooperation through networking activities and existing platforms has been an opportunity that beneficiaries have profited from.

**d. What kind of support can the EC provide to foster synergies between projects? What you find useful?**

- The EC may in the future propose new networking initiatives either in the form of events for beneficiaries or in the form of collaborative platforms.
- Please see Room A - Question 5 on DG MARE smart specialisation thematic platform for sustainable blue economy

#### **Question 3: Do you think there are skill gaps/challenges that are hampering growth and synergies in the maritime domain? If so, should these be addressed at sea basin or at EU level? What possibilities do you envisage for addressing skill gaps/challenges?**

- A more systematic approach, based on a better understanding of nationally defined priorities, social context and resource base can guide sustainable and inclusive blue growth.
- Integrated coastal zone management, addressed at a sea basin level can enhance the protection of coastal and near shore resources while increasing the efficiency of their uses.
- New data can also sway decision-makers for addressing challenges at EU level.

#### **Question 4: Where do you see the future of your sector going in your sea basin? How and to what extent do you think that your sector might benefit from cooperation with other sea basins?**

- Long-term climate change impact on ocean systems is fraught with uncertainty, but it is clear that changes in sea temperature, acidity, and major oceanic currents, among others, threaten marine life and habitats. Climate change phenomena could be addressed from a basin perspective.
- The issue of maritime transport is linked to national and EU Level logics. The trend is green shipping, which should be promoted at all levels.

## 8. Conclusions

The workshop brought together a mix of stakeholders including project beneficiaries, Assistance Mechanism team, and European Commission staffs. Over 3 hours the two sessions helped to:

- ✓ **Contextualise** the overarching framework for sea-basin and regional cooperation in the EU.
- ✓ **Explore** current policies and set the scene on the direction of future policies.
- ✓ **Identify** key characteristics of some best practice case studies.
- ✓ **Generate** ideas on actions that can support implementation and help current and future projects align to the European agenda.

Main takeaways:

- **Some project beneficiaries were not aware of the existence of sea-basin Assistance Mechanisms**, which reinforced the idea of having **more networking events**. To be noted that over the coming months, the current Assistance Mechanisms, managed through different contracts, will be merged into a single Assistance Mechanism, which will however continue providing assistance at national and sea-basin level.
- Those who were aware of the Assistance Mechanisms judged their work quite positively. In particular, it was reported that they contributed to **implementing the vision of the sea basin strategies**, as well as to **facilitating matchmaking and partnership building**. National hubs were also reported to be quite useful.
- It was reported that interaction between projects has room for improvement. According to participants, synergies have sprung up mostly spontaneously, whereas **in the future more attention could be paid to facilitating networking**, for instance through dedicated events and platforms such as the Virtual Knowledge Centre.
- **Cooperation with non-EU countries** is another area where the work of Assistance Mechanisms can be improved.
- **Skill gaps and challenges should be addressed at EU level** – to be noted that they are indeed addressed at EU level – as all sea basins face similar challenges. Together with communication activities more actions to **reinforce capability to transfer knowledge** should be undertaken.
- It was noted that it might be difficult to involve maritime professionals in sector events and workshops. They tend to be quite busy and winning their buy-in might not be easy. Therefore, a mechanism should be found to **make networking activities more palatable to maritime professionals**, otherwise they risk being cut out from the process.
- Cooperation across sea basins is crucial, as these are **facing common challenges** – and opportunities! – and there is a need to exchange good practices and lessons learned. However, **language barriers might remain an issue** to cross-sea basin cooperation over the coming years.

## 9. Follow Up Actions

A recording of the workshop and PDF copy of all presentations delivered on the day is available on the [Maritime Forum](#).

## Annex 1 – Event Agenda

### Agenda

Chair: Alessandro Pititto, Cogea

#### Part 1: Sea-basin Assistance Mechanisms and funding opportunities

- 10:00-10:05 Welcome and introduction**  
*Alessandro PITITTO, COGEA*
- 10:05-10:15 Policy context and landscape**  
*Patrizia BUSOLINI, DG MARE*
- 10:15-10:25 [Assistance Mechanism for the Atlantic Action Plan](#)**  
*Mariana TAYLOR DE JESUS, PwC*
- 10:25-10:35 [Black Sea Assistance Mechanism](#)**  
*Thanos SMANIS*
- 10:35-10:45 [WestMED Assistance Mechanism](#)**  
*Matteo BOCCI, Ecorys*
- 10:45-10:55 [Interact](#)**  
*Ivano MAGAZZÙ, Interact Programme*

**10:55-11:10 Comfort break**

#### Part 2: Knowledge sharing and networking

- 11:10-11:15 Introduction to Part 2**  
*Alessandro PITITTO, Cogea*
- 11:15-12:30 Parallel breakout rooms\***  
*1. Cooperation*  
*2. Research & Innovation*
- 12:30-12:45 In plenary – Summary of discussions**  
*Reporting back from rapporteurs*
- 12:45-13:00 Formal meeting close**