

TAPPING THE POTENTIAL OF THE SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN:

Policies and Practices to Accelerate the Sustainable Transformation

Sala do Senado da Reitoria, Universidade Nova de Lisboa (Portugal)

7-8 November 2022

PRESENTATION

In the context of the 2022 Spanish co-presidency of the 5+5 Dialogue, the **European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)** and the **Portuguese Institute of International Relations (IPRI)** organise a thematic seminar in the framework of the **MedThink 5+5 network** entitled "*Tapping the potential of Sustainable Blue Economy in the Western Mediterranean: Policies and Practices to Accelerate the Sustainable Transformation*". With the collaboration of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, this event provides a space to discuss the prospects and challenges of accelerating the transition of the blue economy towards more sustainability while enabling Western Mediterranean countries to fully tap its potential as a driver of economic development and prosperity.

The **MedThink 5+5** network of think tanks of the Western Mediterranean provides a multidisciplinary platform of debate linked to the 5+5 Dialogue, which contributes both to strengthening the network and to the regional integration based on a bottom-up approach. Since its inception in May 2016, the MedThink 5+5 network has organised several annual fora and thematic seminars back-to-back with Ministerial Conferences of the 5+5 Dialogue, during which experts from the whole of the region analysed the factors underpinning economic, human, and sustainable development, as well as security and stability in the Western Mediterranean.

The concept of a sustainable blue economy has gained considerable traction over the last decade in the Euro-Mediterranean region. While being a dynamic segment of the region's economies, the blue economy has still an enormous **untapped potential for growth, innovation, jobs, and investments** that can contribute to reducing poverty and boosting inclusive development. At the same time, enhancing its sustainability responds to the imperative to consider and **address the serious environmental impacts** of existing unsustainable production and consumption patterns in the maritime and marine sectors, while mitigating and adapting to the existential threat of **climate change**. In order to achieve a blue growth that is sustainable, actors of the Western Mediterranean Basin have launched successful cooperation initiatives in line with the SDG 14 of the UN 2030 Agenda and the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Blue Economy (2015) and Sustainable Blue Economy (2021). In 2017, The Ministers of Western Mediterranean countries gathered in Naples (Italy) to endorse and launch the **Initiative**

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for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the Western Mediterranean (WestMED). Other cooperation platforms and projects such as the BLUEMED Initiative and the Mediterranean Blue Stakeholder Platform have contributed to further exchanging knowledge and best practices to build the sustainable blue economy cooperation agenda in the region.

Building upon the lessons learned from these initiatives and other regional projects, this thematic seminar aims to initiate an in-depth discussion to **identify and debate policies and practices** that can contribute to tap the potential of the sustainable blue economy as a leading economic segment that preserves and enhance the natural capital of the Mediterranean Sea.

Participants from different backgrounds, including decision-makers, scientific experts, representatives of international organisations and civil society from both shores of the Western Mediterranean, will highlight **economic models and policies** (circular economy, social economy) that accelerate the transformation and development of the blue economy in a sustainable way. **Enablers of this transition towards a sustainable blue economy** will also be discussed by the participants. On one hand, experiences and best practices regarding policies and practical initiatives (digital transformation, technology transfer, R&I) that foster innovation for new and sustainable business opportunities in the blue economy will be shared and discussed. On the other hand, the needs in terms of **capacity building and skills development** to harness the full potential of the sustainable blue economy for job creation and inclusive growth will be debated with the aim to generate policy recommendations stemming from best practices.

Throughout the session of the seminar, crucial transversal issues will be addressed, such as investments opportunities and **blue finance**, ways to increase the **participation of women** in the different sectors of the blue economy, as well as the role of cooperation in the framework of the **5+5 Dialogue**.

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PROGRAMME

Day 1 – 7 November 2022

14.30	Registration and accreditations
15.00	<p>Welcome Remarks</p> <p>Nuno Severiano Teixeira, President, Instituto Português de Relações Internacionais (IPRI), Universidade Nova de Lisboa</p> <p>Senén Florensa, Executive President, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)</p> <p>Almotaz Abadi, Deputy Secretary General, Water and Environment Division, Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat (UfMS)</p>
15.10	<p>Inaugural Addresses</p> <p>Pedro Soares Oliveira, Director of Middle East and Maghreb Services, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Portugal</p> <p>Alberto Ucelay, Director General for the Maghreb, the Mediterranean and the Middle East, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, Government of Spain</p>
15.35	<p>Keynote Speech - Setting the Scene: Challenges and Opportunities Towards a Sustainable Blue Economy</p> <p>José Maria Costa*, Secretary of State for Maritime Affairs, Ministry of Economy and Maritime Affairs, Government of Portugal</p>
15.50	Family photo
16.00	<p>Introductory Session – Blue Economy Cooperation Frameworks in the Western Mediterranean: Achievements, Synergies and Future Prospects</p> <p>The concept of sustainable blue economy has received considerable attention from policymakers in recent years, especially in the Mediterranean Basin where the sustainable use of the marine resources offers the potential to be an important driver for sustainable development. In order to address joint challenges in key blue economy sectors, a number of cooperation frameworks between both shores of the Mediterranean Sea have been created. This is particularly the case in the Western Mediterranean Basin where blue economy is considered as a successful cooperation field, notably through the WestMED Initiative.</p>

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As an introduction to the seminar, this session will take stock of the achievements of these initiatives and will discuss the next steps to strengthen the cooperation between the countries of the region to promote a sustainable blue economy.

Moderator

Ana Santos Pinto, Executive Director, Instituto Português de Relações Internacionais (IPRI), Universidade Nova de Lisboa

Interventions

Union for the Mediterranean

Alessandra Sensi, Head of Sector of Environment and Blue Economy, Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat (UfMS) – *via videoconference*

WestMED Initiative

Ali Shagrune, Representative and Libyan National Hub, General Authority for Marine Wealth of Libya. WestMED Initiative Co-Presidency
Javier Fernández, Project Manager, Central Team, WestMed Assistance Mechanism

17.00

Coffee Break

17.30

Session 1 – Sustainable Blue Economy Models for a Prosperous Western Mediterranean Region

Reconciling the development of the marine, maritime and coastal economic sectors with the protection of marine and coastal ecosystems, biodiversity, the sustainable use of natural resources and climate change mitigation and adaptation, lies at the basis of the Sustainable Blue Economy approach. Transitioning to a sustainable blue economy is also synonymous with greater economic and social inclusiveness, equity, and well-being. To achieve these goals, a shift from existing unsustainable production and consumption patterns is required, as well as economic models and policies that promote the creation of decent jobs, women’s economic participation, as well as just and fair transitions. This session will look at successful examples of implementation of sustainable production and consumption models within the different sectors of the blue economy, especially those related to the circular economy and the social economy. It will also debate the policy challenges that accompany these shifts and the best practices that contribute to accelerating their replication and mainstreaming in the blue economy in the Western Mediterranean.

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Moderator

Paqui Santonja, Executive Advisor, Casa Mediterráneo

Speakers

Jérémie Fosse, Co-founder and President, Eco-Union

Stéphanie Vella, National Hub Malta for the Western Mediterranean Initiative (WestMed) – *via videoconference*

Emmanuel Maniscalco, Senior EU Programme Officer, The Intermediterranean Commission, Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) – *via videoconference*

Aomar Bourhim, Blue Economy and Maritime Spatial Planning Expert

Comments by

Marta Pascual*, National Hub Spain for the Western Mediterranean Initiative (WestMED)

20.00

Dinner

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Day 2 – 8 November 2022

09.30

Session 2 – Blue Innovation as a Driver of a Sustainable Blue Economy in the Western Mediterranean

Transitioning to a sustainable blue economy requires investing in innovative technologies that are a *sine qua non* for the future development, sustainability, and modernisation of the sector's activities. Mainstreaming the digital transformation into the sectors of the blue economy will contribute to achieving zero-waste, low-carbon, resource-efficient, and socially inclusive solutions while creating new green jobs and businesses. However, spurring innovation in the blue economy relies on investing in research and development capacities, accessing finance, allowing technology transfers, and upscaling the workforce's skills.

This session will discuss the main challenges and opportunities as regards the promotion of blue innovation in the Western Mediterranean. It will also map the sectors of the blue economy with the highest potential for innovation. Current initiatives in this regard, especially the role of clusters, and their achievements will be highlighted with the aim to set best practices and policy recommendations.

Moderator

Ruben Eiras, Secretary General, Fórum Oceano – Associação do Economia do Mar

Speakers

Emna Sohlobji, Secretary General, Cluster Maritime Tunisien

Samir Grimes, National Hub for Algeria of the Western Mediterranean Initiative (WestMed)

Giovanni Caprino, President of the National Technology Cluster "Blue Italian Growth" (BIG TC) – Italy

Ana Brazão, Project Manager for the Blue Bioeconomy, Oceano Azul Foundation

Comments by

Inès Boujmil, BlueMed Young Communication Ambassador in Tunisia –
via videoconference

11.00

Coffee Break

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11.30

Session 3 – Harnessing the Full Potential of the Sustainable Blue Economy: The Cooperation to Enhance Maritime Skills and Careers

Capacity building to support specific sectors transitioning to a sustainable blue economy model and the strengthening of blue skills are essential to fight unemployment, provide attractive jobs and finally spur economic growth in the countries of the region. It is all the more important because of the mismatch between the skills of the labour force in Western Mediterranean societies and the evolving needs of the blue economy industry. Cooperation in the field of education and employment policies is at the centre of a successful transition to a sustainable blue economy.

Against that background, the session will take stock of the current situation in the blue job market and the potential to lead to job creation, especially in emerging sectors such as blue-biotech and renewable marine energy. Particular attention will be devoted to the policies contributing to strengthening women's participation in blue economy activities with the aim to close the gender gap in the maritime sectors. Finally, participants will reflect on the role of regional cooperation in the Western Mediterranean to foster competencies and skill development in the sustainable blue economy.

Moderator

Victoria Tur, Head of the Department of Cooperation with the Arab World and Asia, Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID)

Speakers

Mounir Ghribi, Director of International Cooperation and Research Promotion (ICAP), National Institute of Oceanography and Applied Geophysics

Leila Ben Hassen, Founder of Africa Blue Economy Forum (ABEF) and Women in Maritime Association in Tunisia (WIMA Tunisia)

Élodie Nunes, Executive Secretary of the Intermediterranean Commission, Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) – *via videoconference*

Xavier Matheu de Cortada, Director ad interim, European Training Foundation – *via videoconference*

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Comments by

Alessandro Pernice, Head of Unit European Programmes, ARCES Association. Project Manager of the ENI CBC MED HELIOS – *via videoconference*

13.00

Closing remarks

Roger Albinyana, Managing Director, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)

Nuno Severiano Teixeira, President, Instituto Português de Relações Internacionais (IPRI), Universidade Nova de Lisboa

13.30

Lunch

*To be confirmed

- with English-French simultaneous translation -