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Mistral Project's News

A project co-financed by the European Development Fund

MISTRAL News and Highlights

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A Short Introduction

MISTRAL is now ready to approach Policies!

After many constraints, due to Covid, the events that have been arranged in ordinary way, as far as presence is concerned, are limited and the recent years have teached to all of us an important lesson: when commitment and willingness to achieve a common goal are shared, there is no restriction that can stop successful actions for happening. This has been exactly the case of MISTRAL: 8 National Learning lab/camps arranged, 3 transnational events to transfer the knowledge acquired through the implementation of the Business Plan competitions and the matchmaking events. Networking has favored collaborations among Clusters: Spain, Italy, France and Portugal... ready to join forces to unlock innovation and sustainable blue initiatives in different sectors. Partners are now engaged to elaborate Regional Action Plans that will summing up goals and priorities to be more competitive, innovative and impact the MED area by improving a sustainable competitiveness of their territories while contributing significantly to the development of Mediterranean area. MISTRAL has been nominated for being part of the upcoming European Maritime Days that in 2022 will be hosted in Ravenna- Italy. Some ideas are in action to arrange the final event of the Project for March!

Stay tuned and follow us !!!

Interreg Mediterranean EUROPEAN UNION MISTRAL

Introduction to Regional Action Plans

MISTRAL has the ambition to develop a wider governance vision towards 2028 in the BG sector as well as assuring the effective policy mainstreaming. During 2021 MISTRAL partners organised several events: “BG MED Forum – capitalization labs” in order to exchange knowledge and experiences acquired during project implementation and discuss together on the future of the innovation on Blue economy (Regional innovation action plan for Blue Growth). The aim of these webinars were to concretely capitalise experiences on regional innovation policies on Blue Growth, discuss the impacts of MISTRAL project and engage Regions and other relevant stakeholders.

The results of the “capitalisation labs” are these regional action plans on Blue Growth that are shortly presented here.

Terminology

The term **"Blue Growth"** is used to refer to Innovation in the Blue Economy domain. This aligns both with the Interreg Med approach that identifies as constituting pillars of the Blue Growth high innovation potential areas - namely: 1) Maritime and Coastal Tourism; 2) Fisheries and Aquaculture; 3) Blue biotechnology; 4) Marine Renewable Energy; 5) Maritime Surveillance - and with the innovation domains of the Blue Italian Growth Cluster (BIG).

Blue Economy, on the other hand, refers to all economic activities related to or occurring in the sea and the coastal areas.

The Action Plan of Italy

by ASTER S.Cons.p.A (PP1)

The regional strategy for innovation is shaped by the Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) which has been drawn by crossing the grand socio-technical challenges with the most relevant value chains, resulting in 15 cross-cutting thematic areas

Within this context, three main Blue Growth areas with high innovation potential for the regional productive specialisations have been identified as well as some possible innovation topics for each of them:

Blue bio-economy

- Marine biotic resources: sustainable and circular fisheries and aquaculture, ecosystem services, biodiversity and fighting the spread of alien species.

Within this strand, aquaculture is particularly important and a growing economic sector that calls for technological and organisational innovation, towards more sustainable practices.

- Blue biotechnologies: bio-remediation, biopharmaceuticals, biomolecules, biomaterials.

Within this strand, the areas of activity of greatest interest are those related to the valorisation of waste from the fishing and sea farming industry according to circular economy principles, to recover proteins, peptides and short-chain amino acids from molluscs and fish waste by means of enzymatic hydrolysis, or gelifying agents for proteins, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. A second area of particular interest is the cultivation of microalgae, which can be a source of compounds with a high nutritional and functional value (nutraceutical). The cultivation of microalgae, however, calls for the development of an appropriate supply chain to process and market them.

- Protection against anthropogenic pollution: "save the Sea" decree, marine litter, environmental intervention services, emerging pollutants.

Maritime manufacturing

This area is characterised by the overarching aim to develop new or regenerate existing-but-no-longer used inland and offshore infrastructures towards new and more sustainable uses. Such as:

- Renewable energy from the sea (offshore wind, wave and tidal energy).

Within this strand, offshore wind energy has the highest relevance, especially in terms of ensuring that investments trigger the development of a local supply chain.

- Sustainable shipbuilding and marine robotics (means, systems and infrastructures in ports and offshore - mining, energy, civil, fishing -, marine robotics for monitoring and safety, surface and submarine vessels, dual safety systems), electric navigation systems, including for cabotage;
- Marine abiotic resources (technology for oil & gas conversion, mining, technologies and energy options for limiting GHG emissions) and conversion/different and multiple use of off-shore platforms that are no longer operational.

Coastal zone and Tourism 2.0

A sustainable management of the coastal zone capable of providing ecosystem services and well-being to coastal communities, starts from the protection of the marine ecosystem (habitats and biodiversity of the marine environment) and of the coast to the tourist enhancement of the marine and coastal environment. The issue of security is of increasing importance in the technological scenario both for the intensity of anthropogenic use of resources and for decreasing climate and hydrogeological risks. All these factors impose new paradigms for coastal infrastructure resilience and require new interoperable decision support tools for monitoring, transmission and alerting. This calls for the important role of digitalisation and Big Data Analysis. A role that can also be played in support of sustainable management and sustainable economic use of the sea and coastline.

- Marine environment and coastal strip: environmental monitoring and safety, safety at sea and in ports, protection and defence of the coast, marine habitats, anthropised and non-anthropised areas, and ports;
- Maritime and coastal tourism 2.0: technologies for the regeneration and development of tourist systems, development of new participatory models for the quality of supply;
- Sustainability and economic uses of the sea: Big Data analysis, development of models of impact on the economy and environment, decision support tool, scenario building, new governance and business models.

These innovation activities are underpinned by a rich **innovation ecosystem** as all the regional universities and research centers, as well as the regional innovation Clust-ERs, have research units and groups working on one or more of the Blue Growth themes listed above.
The Region Emilia-Romagna is also pretty active in national and international initiatives, either by direct participation or via some regional organisations, namely: RITMARE; the National Technology clusters (with over 20 regional organisations participating among public agencies, academias and RTOs, companies); more than 100 funded projects; the European initiatives BlueMed, Vanguard and EUSAIR.

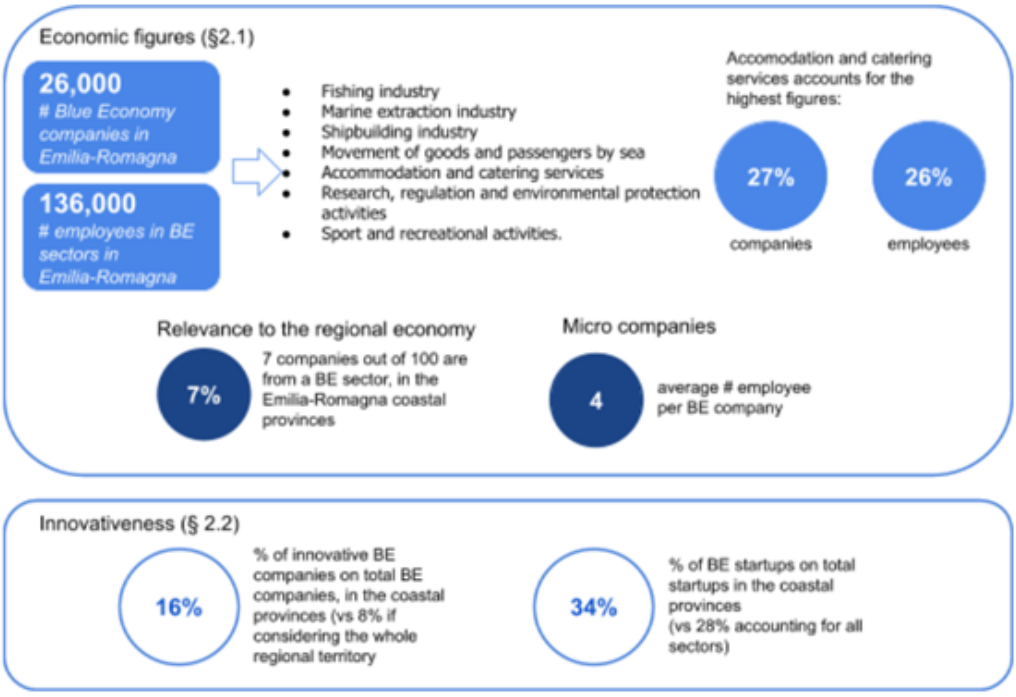
The regional territory is also home to a handful of annual specialist events dedicated to the Blue Economy: Sealogy; European Maritime Day Ravenna 2022; Aquaculture Rimini 2022; OMC Med Energy Conference and Exhibition; Bologna International Boat Show. Plus some generalistic ones with a dedicated session to Blue Economy, like Research to Business, Ecomondo and RemTech Expo.

The maritime and coastal activities identified as high innovation potential must find a virtuous balance that can guarantee employment and growth without depleting or damaging marine biological resources and increase the resilience of marine and coastal environments.To conclude, environmental sustainability is the key to the expected paradigm shift in production specializations:

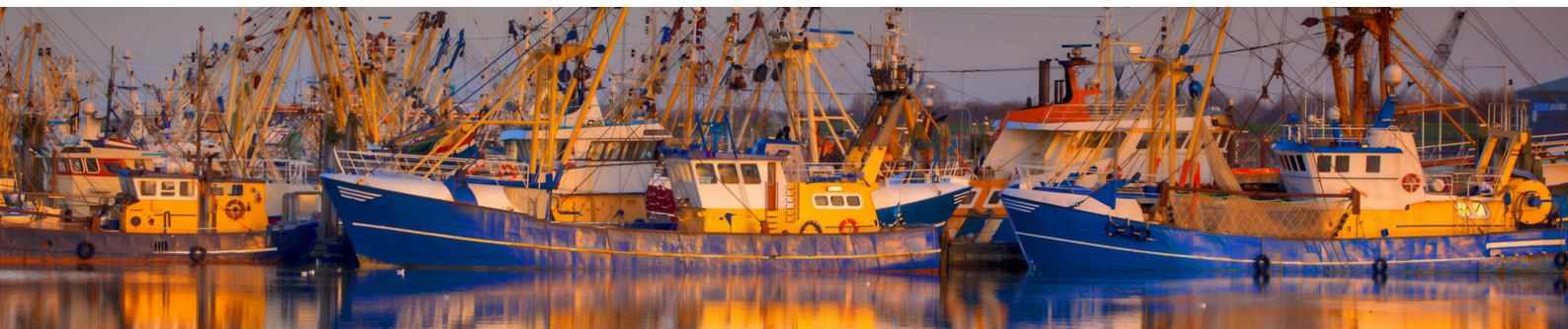
- Sustainable tourism: towards new solutions that can integrate coastal regeneration and rehabilitation processes, digitalisation, sustainable mobility, zero-km products, energy infrastructures, etc;

- The internationally operating oil & gas sector must drive the transition to offshore renewable energy by capitalizing on existing know-how and energy infrastructure. In this line of action, it is necessary to involve major national players who can lead the regional production sector;

- Blue bioeconomy. The value of blue biotechnology is now small, but it is characterized by a strong potential for innovation and interest in regional volumes of marine biotic resources (for the pharmaceutical, food, cosmetics, chemical, textile, environmental and energy industries). This offers extraordinary economic growth potential that is also strategic for environmental protection, provided that: i) the community of economic operators is encouraged to resolve any conflicts of interest; and ii) the principles of the circular economy are adopted more extensively, so that the development of blue biotechnologies can virtuously close the production cycle.



Key economic figures of the Regional Blue Economy are reported in the figure below. All the figures were elaborated by ART-ER based on national and regional available statistics.



The Action Plan of Region of Attica (Greece)

by Hellenic Center for Marine Research - Institute of Oceanography (PP3)

In the framework of MISTRAL, the Hellenic Center for Marine Research (HCMR) has undertaken a comparative study on the potential of research and innovation, in six core sectors of the blue economy in Greece (Marine and Maritime Surveillance, Blue biotechnology, Marine renewable energy, Fisheries, Aquaculture, Coastal and maritime tourism). The main objective of this study is to **identify and prioritize realistic actions for the national blue economy that would be useful to adopt in the national and regional research and innovation strategies for smart specialization (RIS3) and propose targeted action plans, depending on the readiness of each region (technology or policy).**

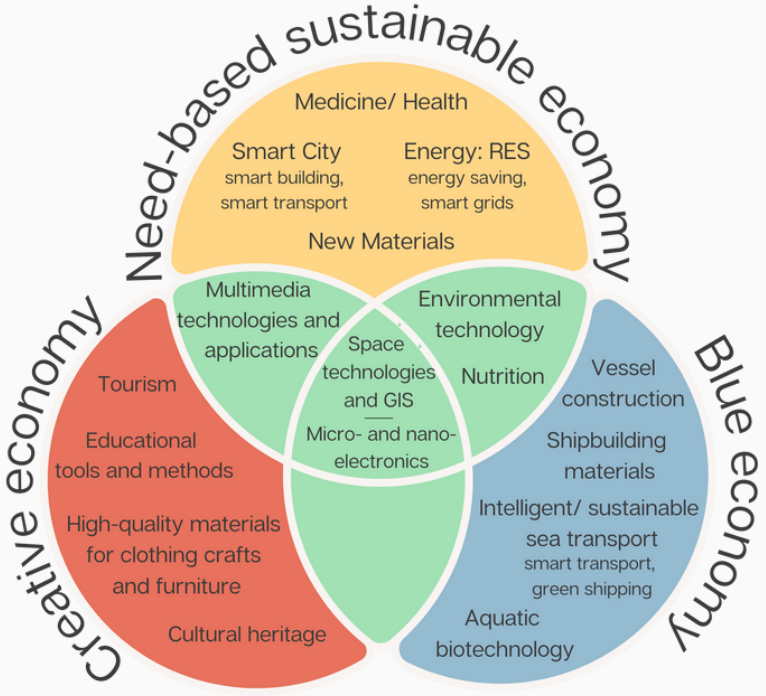
Taking into account the high innovation potential of the Attica Region in all sectors and within the framework of MISTRAL, HCMR initiated a close collaboration with executives of the Region and the Regional Governor for the implementation of a business plan competition (MISTRAL entrepreneurial discovery process) in the field of Blue Economy (BLUE PROTOTYPE), which is a key process for the identification of priorities in RIS3, and for the **national forum on priorities and challenges for the development of the national blue economy**, aiming to address thematics and structuring activities to be developed and to identify innovative practices and synergies in different sectors in order to ignite a transformative process at regional and national level.

HCMR collaborated with the national partners of the BLUE GROWTH COMMUNITY and BLUE MED projects, preparing a set of policy recommendations, which were submitted to the Region of Attica, in the framework of the public consultation for the regional operational programme 2021-2027. Horizontal synergies with the fisheries, aquaculture, energy and natural resources departments deemed necessary for promoting new collaborations and/ or transferring of know-how, sketching economy-driven trajectories in order to design a realistic regional action plan that boosts the development of innovative products/services related to the blue economy.

The Region of Attica is one of the 12 coastal regions of Greece (13 in total), which concentrates more than a third of the national population and more than 45% of the national GDP. It consists of the Prefecture of Attica, based in Athens and it is divided into eight regional units, four of which form the capital (Central, North, West and South Athens) and the other four (Piraeus, Islands, East Attica and West Attica) the suburban area. The regional units of South Athens, Piraeus, Islands, East Attica and West Attica include coastal communities directly linked to the blue economy.

The Region of Attica has been identified as an area with robust research and an experienced workforce in the traditional and emerging sectors of the blue economy. It is already a "frontier" in the field of shipping and nautical tourism, while it concentrates a critical mass of infrastructure and experienced workforce in shipbuilding, fisheries, aquaculture, blue biotechnology, environmental protection and marine renewable energies. The Region faces significant challenges concerning the protection of the aquatic environment and the sustainable management of intensive activities, such as maritime transport and tourism.

Blue economy is a priority domain of the RIS3 of Attica, focusing on the protection of the aquatic environment, shipping-shipbuilding, fisheries, coastal tourism management in terms of environmental protection and sustainability, exploitation of marine renewable energy sources (e.g. wave energy and energy-saving systems), alternative tourism (e.g. underwater archeology and culture diving tourism, fisheries-related tourism), nautical museums, protection, monitoring and exploration of the marine environment, emerging technologies in marine biology, biochemistry, biotechnology, new materials, ICT and space technology.



BUDGET

The long-term EU budget, together with NextGenerationEU, a temporary instrument designed to boost recovery, will be the largest stimulus package ever financed in Europe.

The new long-term budget will increase flexibility mechanisms to ensure its ability to cope with unforeseen needs. It is a budget prepared not only for today's realities, but also for the uncertainties of the future. It is time to work to create a greener, more digital and more resilient Europe.

The Action Plan of Balearic Islands

by Maritime Cluster of Balearic Islands (PP4)

All sectors of the blue economy, such as fisheries, aquaculture, coastal tourism, maritime transport, port activities and shipbuilding, will have to reduce their environmental and climate impact. To face the climate and biodiversity crisis, healthy seas and sustainable use of their resources are required to create alternatives to fossil fuels and traditional food production.

The transition to a sustainable blue economy requires investment in innovative technologies. Wave and tidal energy, the production of algae, the development of innovative fishing gear or the restoration of marine ecosystems will create new jobs and 'green' businesses within the blue economy.

Balearic companies linked to the blue economy generate a value of more than € 5,100 million annually.

The development of the blue economy in the Balearic Islands is focused on the tourist specialization of the archipelago and on the transport needs of an island territory.

Considering this situation, **the greatest contribution to the blue added value** is **coastal tourism - accommodation** (66.5%) or **restaurants**, **transport and commerce** (24.6%) , **the construction and repair of boats** (3.3%), **maritime transport** (2.8%) and the exploitation of living marine resources, related to fishing, aquaculture and the food industry based on **seafood** (1.7%).

The blue economy is a great opportunity to reformulate some of the most important value chains in the Balearic Islands.

MISTRAL has had a positive impact through sensitizing key stakeholders in creating innovative policies.

The main stakeholders within technology and innovation are companies, who demand knowledge and then offer it through projects and solutions that they manage to develop, for their own benefit and that of other business actors.

We must not forget about the public bodies of the Balearic Islands since through them resources are provided to different actors who request it to carry out their innovative projects and initiatives.

Although the RIS3 is still in the process of updating for the period 2021-2027, the Government of the Balearic Islands provides economic resources, designs strategies and establishes legal or regulatory mechanisms within the scope of its competences for the development of technology and innovation in the islands.

The Action Plan of France

by Toulon Var Technologies (PP5)

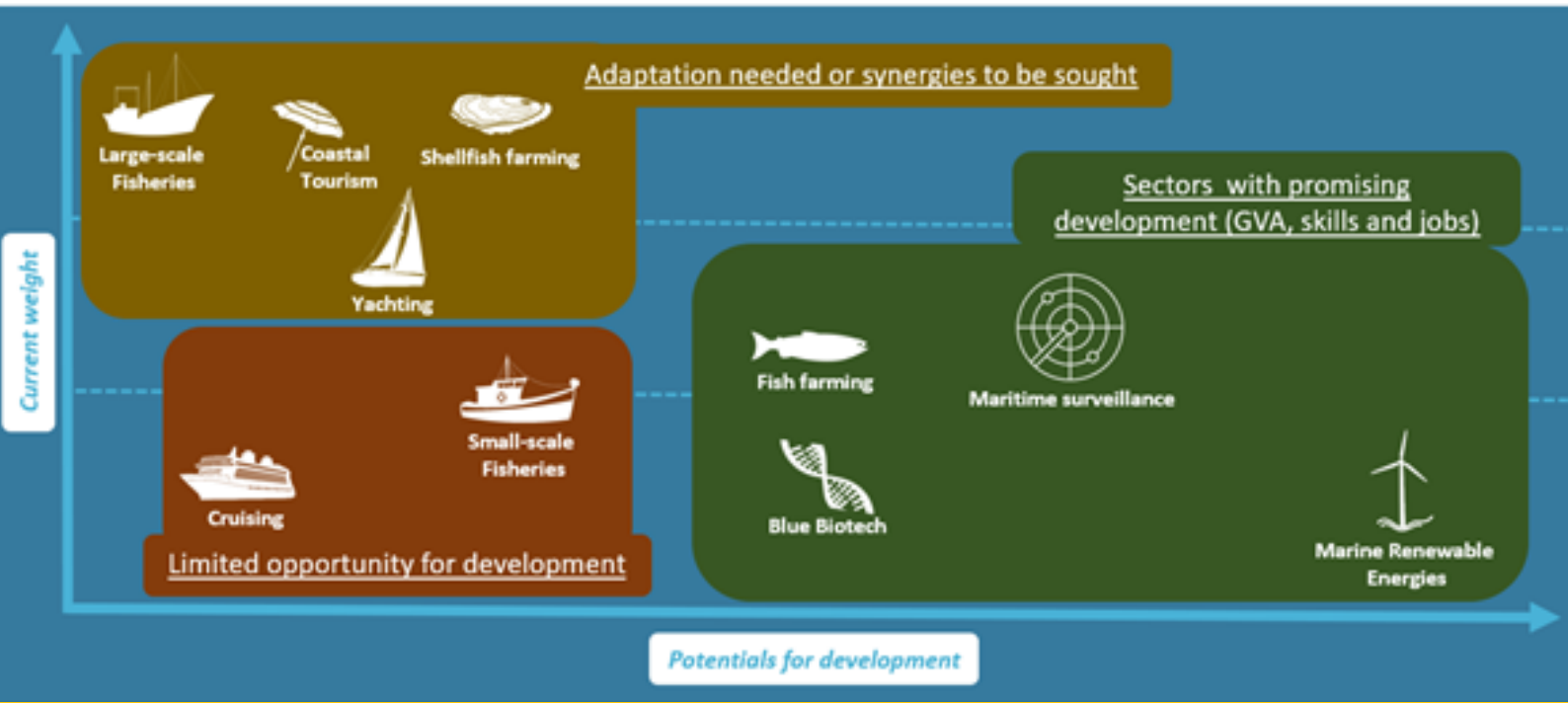
Considering the current state of each sector and their respective SWOT analysis, the following figures aim to illustrate the current weight of each sector (vertical axis) and their development opportunities (horizontal axis). It is available at the level of the façade as well as for each of the two regions.

Occitanie

In Occitanie, the sectors currently with the **highest economic 'weight' and lowest potential for development** are: **fisheries** (especially large-scale), **tourism** (especially beach tourism and yachting) and **shellfish farming** (aquaculture). For these sectors to grow, they must either adapt to the new market requirements or identify synergies with other sectors in order to create added value and new jobs.

The sectors which are **emerging or still have not been extensively developed** across the region are: **marine renewable energies**, **fish farming** (aquaculture), **cruise tourism** and **blue biotechnologies**. These sectors currently have a low 'weight' but some present promising opportunities for development individually or through the creation of synergies with other sectors, and by doing so, create value, skills and jobs. This is especially the case for MREs (and more so OWE), blue biotechnologies and to a lesser extent fish farming (with a specialization in fry production). Cruise tourism development, although promoted at regional scale, does not appear as a realistic opportunity for the territory. **Maritime surveillance** is already **well implanted** in the region, but still presents a **strong development potential** with regards to the constantly increasing and diversifying needs, from law enforcement to spatial planning.

Figure: Occitanie sectors overview: current weight and development potential (SML)

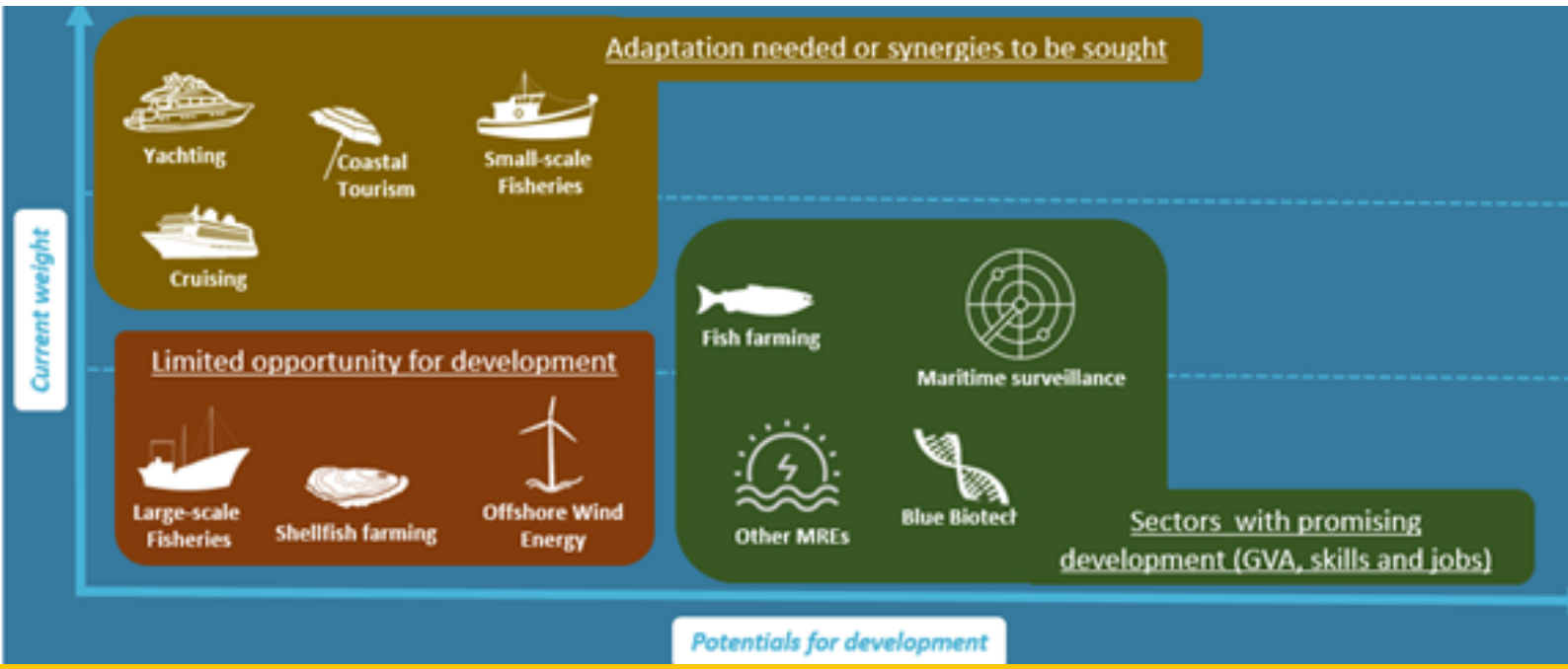


SUD PACA

In SUD-PACA, the sectors currently with the **highest economic 'weight' and lowest potential for development are small-scale fisheries** and **tourism** (beach, cruise and yachting). For these sectors to grow, they must either adapt to the new market requirements or identify synergies with other sectors in order to create added value and new jobs. This is specifically important to coastal tourism and cruise tourism, which are highly dependent upon international visitor arrivals, and which have been significantly affected by the impacts of COVID-19 within the region.

The sectors which are **emerging or still have not been extensively developed** across the region are: **marine renewable energies**, **fish farming** (aquaculture) and **blue biotechnologies**. These sectors currently have a low 'weight' but some present promising opportunities for development individually or through the creation of synergies with other sectors, and by doing so, create value, skills and jobs. This is especially the case for blue biotechnologies and to a lesser extent fish farming. Although OWE potential is smaller than in Occitanie, MREs also present a promising potential for SUD-PACA, especially with regards to SWAC technologies. Shellfish farming (aquaculture) is not implanted in the region and does not present potential because of unsuitable coastal physical characteristics. Equally, **large-scale fisheries** are **not developed in the region, and do not present potential for development**, especially considering the pressure under which fish resources are already evolving. **Maritime surveillance** is already **well implanted** in the region, but still presents a **strong development potential** with regards to the constantly increasing and diversifying needs, from law enforcement to spatial planning.

Figure: SUD-PACA sectors overview: current weight and development potential (SML)



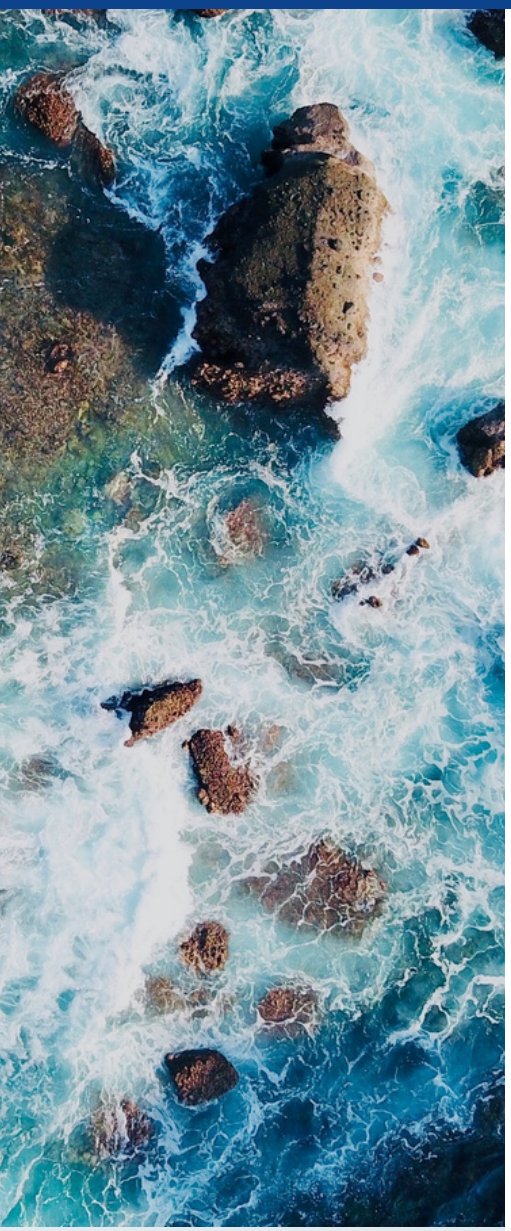
The Action Plan of Andalusia

by Maritime Cluster of Andalusia (PP6)

By implementing the tools of the European Mistral project, the Andalusian Maritime-Marine Cluster has managed to ensure that Blue Economy is conceived as one of the fundamental growth strategies within the Andalusian economic agenda, helping companies, blue sector entities and governments to converge in a great alliance. This increased cooperation, with the Cluster as a cornerstone, has led to the development of a greater awareness of the importance of Blue Economy and the proliferation, within it, of projects driven by sustainability and innovation, mainly in marine renewable energy, fisheries and aquaculture. **Maritime surveillance, coastal and maritime tourism and blue biotechnology are basic pillars of Mistral.**

The Cluster, within Mistral, participated in the Big Med Forum, in Ravenna (Italy-July 2018). This is a forum designed to learn about regional strategies and opportunities for innovation in 'Blue Growth' in the countries of the Mediterranean arc, and then communicate them in different regions, including Andalusia, gateway to the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. On the other hand, in the international meeting InnovAzul, which brought together companies, research groups and the most relevant institutions, and took place in Cadiz with thousands of participants, in November 2018, the Cluster intervened with the presentation “The Mediterranean Blue Book; an example of the impact of the maritime sector in the blue economy. Project Mistral; Innovation, business fabric and tourism".

We note that all public and private agents in the sector are very aware of the weight of Blue Economy in Andalusia thanks to the development of territorial plans, and especially in terms of sustainable tourism, nautical infrastructures, the modernization of tourist services and in line with the implementation of energy efficiency systems and their digitalization to access the Smart Ports model easier and more accurate. There has also been an increase in blue entrepreneurship thanks to the cluster.

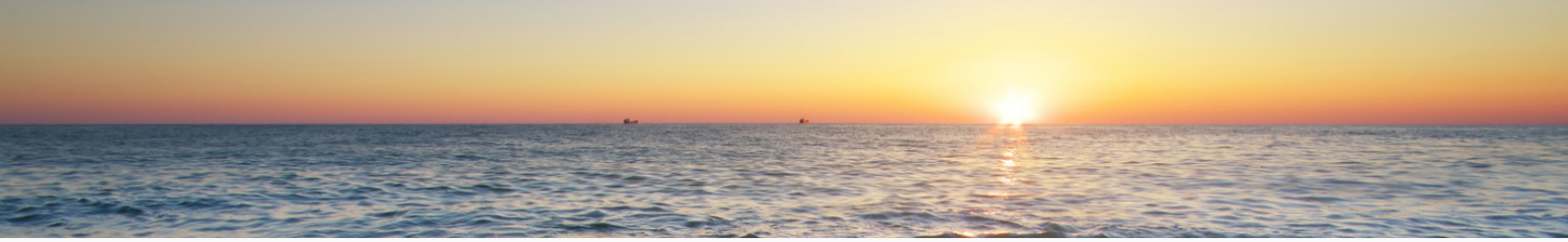


The Blue Growth Business Plan Competition (June-October 2020) was organized to promote projects or business ideas in the maritime sector with high sustainability and innovation components. ECOncrete and Algaqua were the winners.

At the European Innovation Meeting, Transfiere 2020, the Cluster had an exhibitor, along with the most important institutions of the Spanish Blue Economy, where information about the organization and the Mistral project was presented. On the other hand, numerous meetings were held between companies, sector associations, the Spanish Institute of Oceanography, Ceimar and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

In 2021, a series of events took place for the European Maritime Day on 27 May. For example, a digital seminar entitled: “Blue growth: a sustainable future for our seas and oceans”, in which public, private, educational and business institutions were present. A manifesto for the protection of the seas was also read in the Port of Malaga, an event attended by representatives of associations, political parties with municipal representation and other members of Malaga's civil society, thus extending the philosophy of the European Mistral project to reach society as a whole and turn that necessary and important gaze to the sea.

The Cluster also contributed to the content and design of the Blue Book, which identifies trends and best practices in sustainability in tourism and in the development of nautical port infrastructures. It was presented in Malaga at the 2019 edition of S-Moving, an international forum where B2B meetings were also held.



The Action Plan of Region of Crete (Greece)

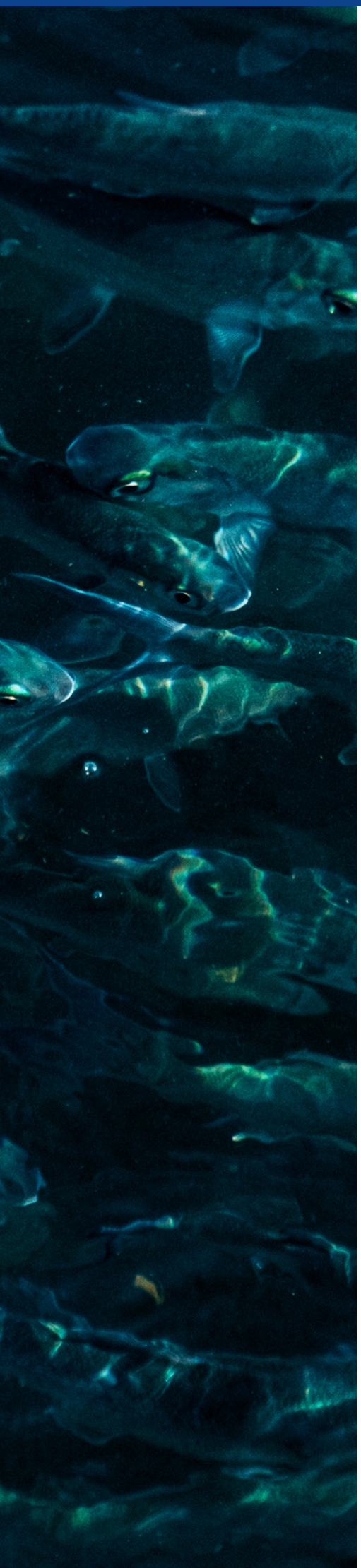
by Region of Crete - Directorate of Environment and Spatial Planning (PP8)

The region of Crete is a classic, international, and very popular tourist destination among the tourist markets. There are six ports and other kinds of infrastructure which serve coastal shipping, cruise tourism and cargo shipping. In the region of Crete, emphasis is given to date on coastal and maritime tourism, while on some occasions activities related to maritime tourism are provided by luxurious hotels located in popular coastal destinations of the island. However, more actions in the coastal and maritime sector could be implemented to enhance the sector and to strengthen and enrich the tourism product of the region.

When it comes to entrepreneurship in the context of Blue Growth most of the enterprises of the BG sector are small or very small – scale and are located throughout the region of Crete.

In this vast maritime territory, and in conjunction with the existence of academic and research centers and universities in the region, there is plenty of room for the organized development of blue biotechnology research and development activities. Moreover, for Blue Growth and consequently Blue Economy to become more competitive and innovative from region to region it is considered appropriate to transfer and implement the relevant research results at business level (commercial and/or industrial).

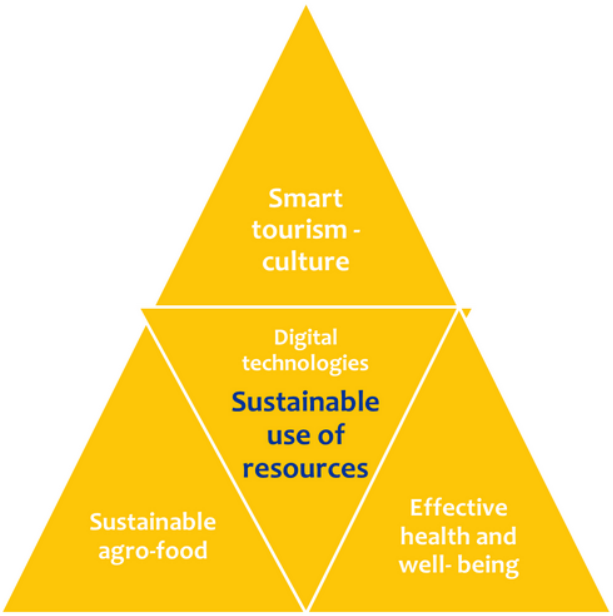
Crete, as an island has strong potential for the development of Blue Growth and consequently Blue Economy. There is an unprecedented opportunity for the integrated development of Blue Growth in the region, which could be enhanced and supported in the context of the new programming period with funding opportunities, tools and mechanisms and cooperation between stakeholders in a wide range.



An important sector that, despite being mature, can be innovative at the same time, is the sector of coastal and maritime tourism with significant potential for further development in the region, in the context of sustainability.

In conclusion, the sector of Blue Growth is slightly developed, in relation to all the other sectors of the region. However, it has significant dynamics and prospects to emerge as a key development sector in the future if it will be included as a key priority at national level as well.

In the context of the new programming period 2021- 2027 and the new Smart Specialization Strategy of the Crete Region, Blue Growth is integrated in the "Sustainable use of resources" field of specialization. More specifically, the fields of specialization regarding Blue Growth in Crete that are highlighted are: fish farming, biomass utilization, seabed resources utilization, coastal protection, and water quality control.



Smart Specialization Priority Sectors, Region of Crete
Source: Smart Specialization Strategy of Crete Region for the new programming period 2021-2022

The Action Plan of Portugal

by Alentejo Regional Development Agency - Economic Department (PP9)

Blue economy represents a niche of innovation possibilities for many regions across the EU. One out of five EU regions are specializing in at least one domain related to the blue economy.

In addition, Smart specialization strategies (S3) are useful tools to support transition towards a sustainable blue economy by creating the necessary blue economy-oriented innovation ecosystems in EU regions.

Being aware of this importance, Alentejo region in Portugal, has been following this S3 approach to spot blue-growth niches of innovation, including its economic activity.

The Blue Economy is very important and relevant for the Alentejo region. However, although the ocean and marine resources are considered a strategic asset, and one of its most important natural assets due to the potential economic activities it supports, the Blue Economy is still far from its enormous potential in the Alentejo Region.

Therefore, by promoting the exchange of know-how/lesson learned, facilitating the creation of a blue economy community of S3 quadruple helix stakeholders and supporting the development of future blue economy based interregional innovation partnerships, Alentejo region is now looking to harness its unexploited potential of its extensive coastline as driver for its Blue Economy with a great potential for innovation, improved competitiveness and quality jobs.

In this framework, within the scope of the Mistral project, ADRAL develop a Regional Action Plan for Blue Growth in Alentejo Region, to assess the status of Blue Growth policy implementation and support policy-makers, regional and national authorities and other stakeholders involved in research and innovation to bridge blue growth investment platforms and regional innovation initiatives.

According to this Action Plan, the extensive Atlantic coastline of Alentejo has a high potential for economic use, due to its natural characteristics and its diversified marine resources. Alongside with traditional activities (fishing, maritime-tourism activities, barnacle harvesting, etc), new emerging activities are evolving and growing in energy production, biotechnology and chemistry, particularly the research and exploration of new alternatives in the fields of food, medicine, transport and health, thus providing new prospects and creating jobs.

Based on these resources and considering their strengths and comparative advantages, the quadruple helix stakeholders took an entrepreneurial discovery process that revealed what the Alentejo region does best in terms of R&D and innovation. Regional stakeholders reached a consensus on development trajectories, and common policy recommendations, and identified and selected a limited number of priority areas, sectors or technologies to explore the enormous potential of Blue Economy in Alentejo, where the regional policies should focus to promote innovation, namely:

Fisheries and Aquaculture: consolidation of the fishing chain and aquaculture production and adapting the fish processing capacity to the potential productive growth associated with aquaculture; encouraging the concentration of supply and greater organization of fish producers; support for the use of ICTs to reduce costs context in maritime activities; promotion of mobility between activities such as fishing and maritime tourism and aquaculture;

Emerging activities and sustainability: support to SMEs in the area of ICT products and services associated with maritime activities; support to companies that facilitate innovative businesses and start-ups in maritime activities; improvement of technological accessibility, with the promotion of the use of innovative solutions in the form of shared services);

Maritime and Coastal tourism: incorporation of research and knowledge, at the service of transforming resources into assets, structuring a more solid value chain, integrating the framework of the renewed Smart Specialization Strategy of the Alentejo; identification of new products/services and strategic destinations necessary to reinforce the Alentejo's leading role in the development of national tourism; the enrichment of products and experiences; the “matching” between the development of tourism in the Region and urban and social development, enhancing the sustainability of the destination; and the fight against double seasonality (during the year and during the week), with an impact on the job offer in the territory.

These policy recommendations and actions will be largely provided for infrastructure programs from EU ESIF funds.

Today, Blue Growth is recognised by regional stakeholders to be an economic opportunity, source of jobs and driver to sustainable development of Alentejo until 2030.

MISTRAL and similar projects related to Blue Growth and the Blue Economy have had a positive impact through awareness raising of key stakeholders in the creation of innovative policies through the main planning document of Alentejo Region.

The Action Plan of Croatia

by Croatian Chamber of Economy – Zadar County Chamber (PP12)

Today, Blue Growth is recognised to be an economic opportunity, source of jobs and driver to sustainable development for Europe.
Zadar County is traditionally tied to the sea and its benefits. Today, Zadar County's economy rests on three pillars of the Blue Economy: fisheries and mariculture, maritime transport and tourism. Zadar County is a leader in the Croatian fisheries and especially mariculture, farming of white fish and Bluefin tuna. Tourism is an important driver of economic life and the most promising development branch of the County. Zadar County relies on tourism due to the growth of investments and the rapid activation of economic growth and employment, which tourism strongly multiplies with its functions. Also, in Zadar County the largest Croatian shipping company, specialized in the transport of oil and petroleum products and dry cargo, has its headquarters.

Innovation regional Policy is contained in the Regional Operational Development Plan of Zadar County (ROP 2021-2027) which is in line with the National Development Strategy until 2030 and with RIS3. ROP is in its final stage of development in which various stakeholders were involved in planning and creating directions of development through the work of several thematic working groups.

A key factor in the economic growth of Zadar County is the development of entrepreneurship. In this context, it is important to create an entrepreneurial ecosystem at the center of which are entrepreneurs.

Through a period of more than 1 year stakeholders achieved the consensus, they came to trajectories and common policy recommendations and after that a plan of activities that will lead to the set goals in the next planning period. The planned activities will be largely provided for infrastructure programs from EU ESIF funds.
The ROP describes large infrastructure projects related to the overall development of ZC and projects that are of lower rank and within some of the most important sectors of the Blue Economy.

MISTRAL and similar projects related to Blue Growth and the Blue Economy have had a positive impact through awareness raising of key stakeholders in the creation of innovative policies through the main planning document of Zadar County.

Policy Recommendation

As far as fishery and aquaculture are concerned the policies that have been recommended are the implementing ecosystem-based approaches to responsible fisheries and aquaculture management to enhance sustainability and productivity. Strengthening the role of small-scale coastal fishing by encouraging innovation. And the constant scientific and professionally discussion for finding suitable breeding sites.

As for coastal and maritime tourism the recommendations are to extend the tourism season seasonality, to develop norms and infrastructure for the sustainable cruising or planning systems for sustainable development of a land and sea continuum. The development and further improvement of the destination management system and the development and improvement of tourist infrastructure - one of the key segments of building a smart destination will be the use of ICT and innovative software solutions, the application of large databases, as well as VR, AR, MR and XR technologies. And last but not least it is recommended to invest in youth education programs in the tourism sector, as well as adult education to improve the knowledge and competencies in tourism to be able to keep pace with innovation in the sector.

And the only recommendation for maritime surveillance is the efficient data exchange among other sectors and countries.

Actions

Specifically the actions that are recommended for fisheries and aquaculture are The implementation of the Gaženica Fishery Port project and the construction of The Blue Center with the Fishing HUB.

For coastal and maritime tourism some suggestions are to establish a sustainable and efficient system for managing tourism resources and potentials, to reduce seasonality through the development of a competitive tourism sector and to improve tourist infrastructure and services, and environmental protection

The Action Plan of Spain

by Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (PP14)

Event-Blue Mediterranean: Innovation for people

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on behalf of the Mistral project organized the hybrid event “Blue Mediterranean: Innovation for people”'. With the collaboration of other partners of the Mistral project and experts from the European Commission, FAO, Joint Secretariat, BlueMed, University of Cádiz, WestMed Initiative, University of Cartagena, Bluenetcat, Navantia, and several Spanish local, regional and National Government representatives. The purpose of this event was to share the importance of the Blue Innovation Growth with the experience of successful projects, financing opportunities and initiatives.