



EUROPEAN BLUE FORUM

BRIEFING PAPER

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The establishment of a European Blue Forum

As part of its Communication to the European Parliament on 'a new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU – Transforming the EU's Blue Economy for a Sustainable Future', the European Commission recognised that:

“The shift to creating a sustainable blue economy will rely on even closer engagement with stakeholders, from businesses large and small to local groups, to young people passionate about the health of our ocean and the public. It must unite all groups and sectors around a common vision.”

In an effort to create a mechanism to unite all stakeholders, the Commission announced the 'creation of a Blue Forum for users of the sea to coordinate a dialogue between offshore operators, stakeholders and scientists engaged in fisheries, aquaculture, shipping, tourism, renewable energy and other activities. It will develop synergies between their activities and reconcile competing uses of the sea'.

What is the European Blue Forum ?

The European Blue Forum is intended to be a pan-European Stakeholder group, able to come together to discuss shared challenges and priorities over the medium term with the aim of finding consensus, synergies and solutions towards a common vision. However more than this, it should be a 'safe' moderated space for all users of the sea, to identify innovative solutions to deliver bold and ambitious change, bringing real benefits to people and communities throughout Europe.

As such, the European Blue Forum is structured around the following key principles.



It should be **flexible** and **expandable** to grow and meet the needs of the EUs Sustainable Blue Economy in the future



It must be horizontal, allowing all stakeholders to participate at the same level **with no hierarchy**



It must be fully **inclusive** and **representative** of all sectors, stakeholder group and sea basins



It must be a moderated and "safe" space, encouraging and managing **proactive debate and dialogue** between sectors and stakeholder group

The European Blue Forum is intended to be fully representative of the European Sustainable Blue Economy. It will give opportunities to often underrepresented stakeholder groups, as well as new and emerging sectors, to express the challenges they face and explore possible solutions and synergies alongside more established sectors.

Why to get involved... ?

As a part of the European Blue Forum, we are creating a community of different users of the sea passionate and committed to working together to achieve bold and tangible results in terms of nature protection and the fight against climate change.

As part of the Forum, stakeholders will have the opportunity to influence the structure and direction of the European Blue Forum in a balanced and inclusive way, and through this, the future of Europe's Sustainable Blue Economy. Members of the European Blue Forum will be invited to **participate in dedicated meetings and workshops**, as well as be given the opportunity to **create dedicated Action Groups**. These groups, with the support of the European Blue Forum Secretariat, will collaboratively work towards finding solutions to the biggest challenges facing our Sustainable Blue Economy Community and deliver collective impact.

Be part of the conversation and let's find the solutions together...

What happens next ?



European Blue Forum launch event

EUROPEAN
BLUE FORUM

AGENDA

08:30 - 09:00 Registration

09:00 - 09:15 Opening by the European Commission (DG MARE) – Director General, Charlina VITCHEVA

09:15 - 10:55 Panel Session 1 – What do we need from European Seas by 2030? Are we asking too much?

- Charlina VITCHEVA – Director General, DG MARE
- Sheila HEYMANS – Executive Director, European Marine Board
- Thierry CANN – Director, Pole Metropolitain du Pays de Brest
- Rennie MEYERS – Senior Public Affairs Advisor for Oceans & Biodiversity, Orsted
- Josep LLORET – Director, Oceans & Human Health

Q&A and Forum Discussion

10:55 - 11:40 Coffee Break

11:40 - 13:10 Panel Session 2 – What does a fossil fuel free Sustainable Blue Economy look like ?

How can we as a community support this transition?

Introduction from Member of the European Parliament, President of the Fisheries Committee – Pierre KARLESKIND

- Marta CAVALLÉ – Executive Secretary, LIFE Platform
- Juliana CARVAJAL – Head of EU Affairs, Pole Mer Atlantique
- Tobias TROLL – Marine Policy Director, Seas at Risk
- Guilhem GAILLARDE – Manager Ship Research, Maritime Research Institute Netherlands (MARIN)
- Andrew SMITH – Executive Director, Greenbackers Investment Capital

Q&A and Forum Discussion

13:10 - 13:30 Closing remarks – way forward for the European Blue Forum, European Commission

13:30 - 15:30 Lunch & Networking Session

Moderator : Seamus Kearney



26 May 2023



Océanopolis, Brest, France



Hybrid event



English/ French

For more information visit:



[the European Blue Forum website](#)



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This launch event is being held back to back with European Maritime Days (EMD) – for more information please visit the [EMD web pages](#).

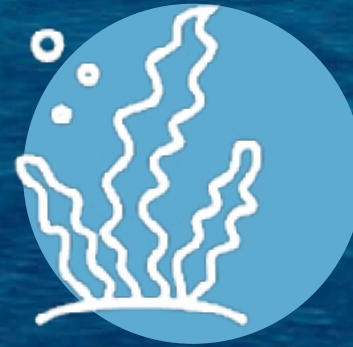
What do we need from European Seas by 2030 ? Are we asking too much?

The ocean is fundamental to all life on earth and plays an essential role in our daily lives. It covers 70% of the planet, produces 50% of the oxygen and is critical to the global climate system, absorbing and redistributing CO2 and heat. It is home to a wide variety of biodiversity and unique ecosystems which support human life and socio-economic activities with food, medicines, renewable energy, transport, tourism, communications.... The ocean is at the heart of human well-being, beliefs, and cultural values, and its beauty has inspired artists for centuries. And we have still to discover all it has to offer.

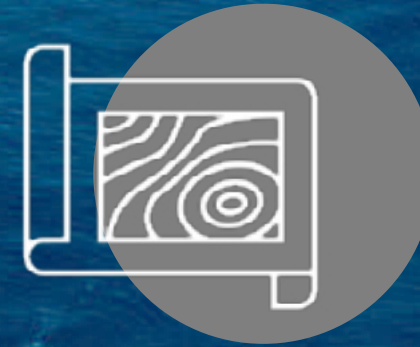
Encompassing all sectors and activities related to oceans, seas, and coasts, the blue economy is becoming a central concept for all coastal states, in the EU and worldwide. However, its continuous development has already led to overexploitation, unsustainable practices, and overcrowded spaces. New conflicts have emerged between users of the sea competing for space. Economic activities have long been concentrated on coastlines, but their increasing development further offshore, could be a significant game changer, opening up new areas of sea space for sectoral development. However, these new areas are already experiencing pressure from competing uses. This multiplication of activities and their cumulative impacts could be highly damaging to the marine environment if not well managed and evaluated. **Yet, the good status of the marine environment is the prerequisite for the support and development of the Sustainable Blue Economy.**



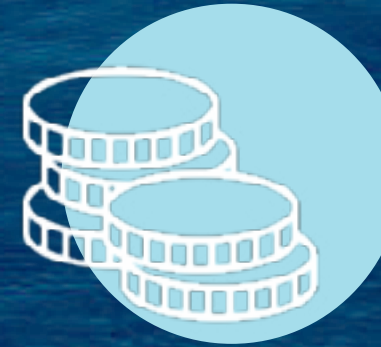
**Provides every second
breath we take**



**Hosts 80% of all
biodiversity**



**Only 20% of the
seabed mapped**



**€670 billion in
turnover in the EU**



**Supports 80% of
goods transport**



**4,5 million people
employed in the EU blue
economy**



**200 million EU citizens live
in coastal regions/islands**



These challenges are accentuated by multiple ongoing crises: the Russian's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, resulting in the current energy crisis, has inevitably impacted the European blue economy sectors, pushing EU Member States to find solutions for their energy needs. The biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse characterized by the decline in wildlife populations is one of this decade's biggest threats, worsened by climate change. **Climate change will be the driving force shaping the way our societies will evolve in the future.**

The rate of the ocean warming has doubled since 1998, associated with increased acidification and a reduction in oxygen, which are major threats for marine biodiversity. The average global sea level is rising, with acceleration in recent decades, exacerbating coastal erosion, and jeopardising socio-economic sectors and increasingly populated coastal communities. These impacts, predicted for decades by scientists, are now observed with new annual records for temperature frequently exceeded. **Climate change is inevitably accelerating, and so must our actions.**

2030 has been set as a milestone by the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the European Green Deal, to address these multiple challenges, by strengthening the commitments for biodiversity protection, low-impact food systems and planning for energy transition. **A set of ambitious goals that require radical change and the uptake of strong measures, to tackle the crises we are all facing.** To meet these objectives, EU seas need to accommodate five times more renewable energy by 2030 and 25 times more by 2050. The European demand for seaweed, for food and feed products, pharmaceuticals, bio-based packaging, and cosmetics, is estimated to increase by 30 times, reaching eight million tons by 2030. Protection of marine space needs to increase from 12,1% in 2021 to 30% by 2030. All these sectoral commitments can only be fulfilled by using more space, not only at sea but also on the coast. On top of this, we as humans still expect to enjoy beautiful seascapes, with nothing but a blue horizon.

Are we asking too much of our seas ?

The maritime community is already mobilized in designing social and technical solutions from alternative propulsion towards zero emission vessels, the recycling of fishing nets to create life to new fashion items; the production of innovative biodegradable materials derived from algae to replace plastic; to climate adaptation and mitigation initiatives taking root in nature-based solutions. Innovative approaches are being developed such as the multi-use of sea space, combining offshore wind with nature protection or mussel/seaweed farming, to create synergies between uses. New sectors and initiatives are emerging, designing pathways towards a more sustainable future, requiring new skills and knowledge. At the same time, existing sectors need to further adapt to the environmental, social, and economic changes ahead, by updating their equipment, competences and practices.

Are we doing enough ?

We, as stakeholders, need to work together across all scales and sectors as one maritime community, to shape the seas we want for tomorrow and to build the legacy we will leave to future generations. Achieving cooperative and effective collaboration would require all parties to reach a shared vision, guiding principles at the outset, and to be genuinely invested in mutual success. In this context, the sharing of knowledge and the use of science as a basis for consensus, are of vital importance and a fundamental objective of the European Blue Forum.

Is this possible ?



Restore at least 20% of EU land and seas



30% marine protected areas and 10% strictly protected



60GW of offshore wind and 1GW of ocean energy

REFERENCES

European Commission, [A new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU](#)
European Environmental Agency, [Marine Protected Areas in Europe's seas](#)
European Commission, [EU Blue Economy report 2022](#)
European Commission, [Offshore renewable energy](#)
European Commission, [Towards a Strong and Sustainable EU Algae Sector](#)
UNESCO, [One Ocean Summit](#)
United Nations, [World ocean day](#)

What does a fossil fuel free sustainable blue economy look like? How can we as a community support this transition?

Among all the challenges that the EU maritime community must meet, one of the most ambitious is the reduction of fossil fuels. Indeed, fossil fuels emissions (from burning coal, oil and gas) represent 75% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and are thus largely responsible for climate change. Following 2015 Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal, the EU has committed to reduce its GHG emissions by 55% by 2030 – compared to 1990 emissions – and to become climate-neutral (i.e., to produce zero net GHG emissions) by 2050. The GHG emissions are mainly due to energy generation from the combustion of fossil fuels (e.g., as a means of propulsion or energy), but also in the fabrication of materials (e.g., plastic).

Therefore, the progressive reduction in the use of fossil fuels coupled with the energy transition, as well as the associated decarbonisation of the blue economy sectors is imperative, and a priority to meet the objectives set at European and international level.

Where do we stand now ?



98,8% of world shipping fleet in operation, uses conventional fossil fuel

In 2019, the EU accounted for 18 000 ships navigating under EU Member States' flags, corresponding to 266 million gross tonnage (GT). Maritime transport is expected to grow due to transport demand from world trade, which is projected to increase GHG emissions from shipping from 90 % to 250 % by 2050 - based on a "business as usual" scenario. Between 6 and 7 % of GHG emissions are generated at berth in ports in the European Economic Area, not to mention those linked to ports operations.



77 % of the goods traded to and from the EU by sea



Oil tankers are the second largest fleet under EU flag in terms of tonnage

Cruise ships, which are steadily increasing in size, are one of the three most polluting categories of vessels. Regarding EU fisheries, in 2020, the fleet totalled 74 000 vessels and used around 2 billion litres of marine diesel.

For some sectors, energy is one of the major costs and can have significant consequences on their profitability, resulting in a high dependency on public subsidies. As illustrated by fisheries, under the 2022 energy price level, 40% of the small-scale fleet, 66% of the large-scale fleet and 87% of the distant-water fleet was not profitable. Overall, the reduction of carbon footprint concerns the whole blue economy as all sectors make use of products and materials made of fossil fuel derivatives, or by using energy derived from fossil fuels.



In 2022 marine-diesel prices have more than doubled compared to the average prices in 2021

The dependency of maritime sectors on fossil fuels increases their economic vulnerability due to the high cost and price volatility of fuels, as recently experienced due to the war in Ukraine.

What are the existing solutions?

Huge challenges stand ahead of us in moving towards a fossil fuel free blue economy. All the key sectors have either started, or are starting to explore pathways for this transition, but solutions are long and expensive to develop (lack of existing markets, life cycles of vessels, etc.).

Nevertheless, from technical to social innovations, progress being made focuses on three main aspects: **energy efficiency** (e.g., eco-designs for leisure boating), the use of **alternative energies** (e.g., wind assisted propulsion for shipping) and **energy savings** (e.g., hull design for shipping, route optimisation, speed reduction, new net and gear designs for fisheries to reduce fuel consumption).

The role and development of renewable energy will be key to supporting the transition of blue economy sectors. In the future ports could play a key role in providing multi-fuel and electrification facilities, bunkering infrastructure for new fuels, and port-to-port green corridors.

At global, national and local scales, policies are progressively being established to address these challenges. In 2018, objectives were set by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to reduce international shipping GHG emissions. In the EU, the 'Fit for 55' package, and FuelEU Maritime sets a number of proposals, including measures for maritime transport and ports. Also, very recently, the European Commission published a communication on the Energy Transition of the EU Fisheries and Aquaculture sector.

REFERENCES

European Commission, [On the Energy Transition of the EU Fisheries and Aquaculture sector](#)

European Commission, [A new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU](#)

European Commission, [2022 Annual Economic report on the EU Fishing fleet](#)

International Maritime Organization (IMO). [Fourth IMO greenhouse gas study \(2020\)](#).

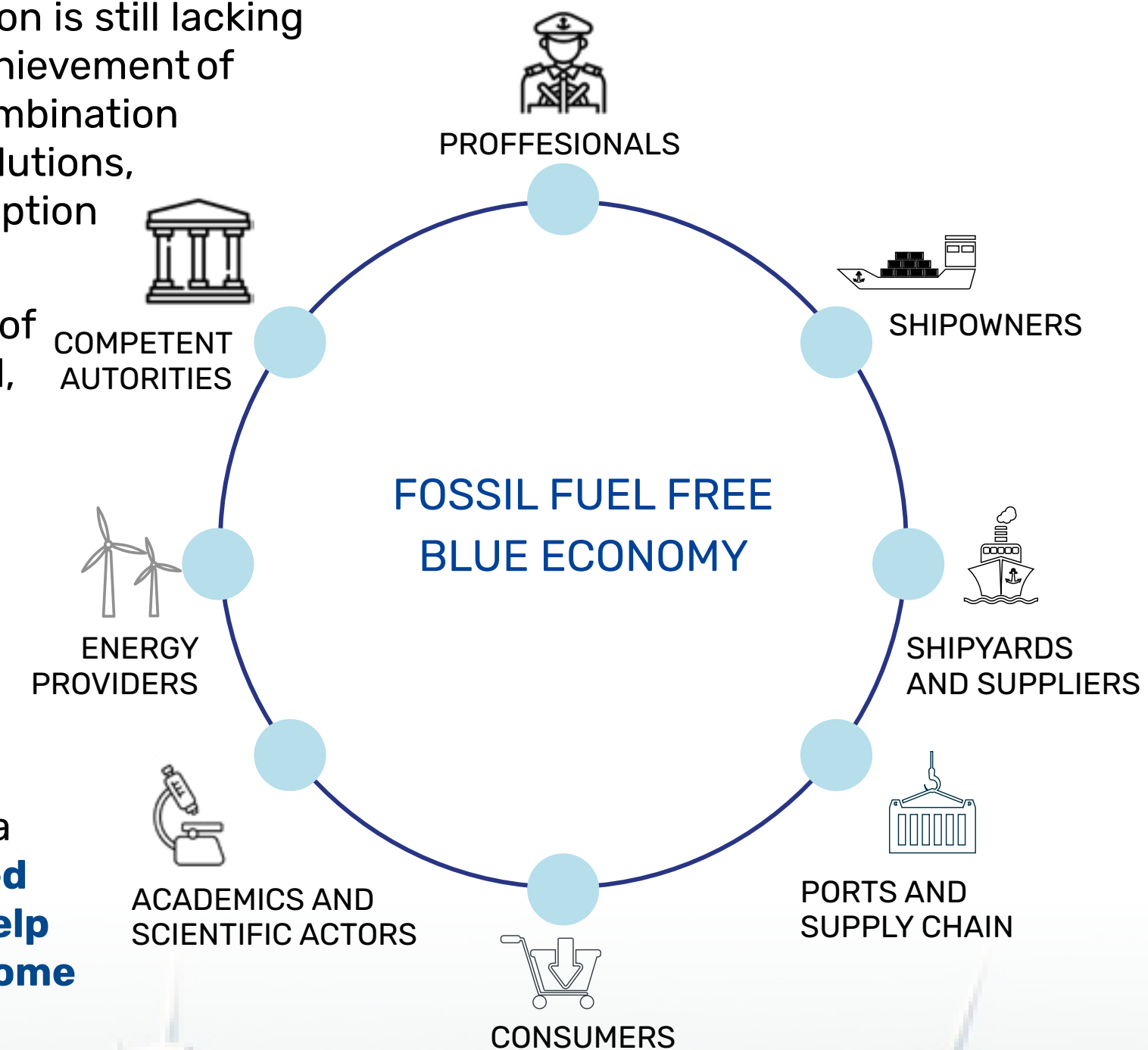
Alma-Marís (2023) [A pathway to decarbonise the EU fisheries sector by 2050](#).

Is it enough?

Given these observations we can say that **we are still far from a fossil fuel free blue economy**. Even though alternative energy sources (e.g., hydrogen) are being increasingly discussed and used by maritime industries, are these really fossil fuel free? Will maritime industries be able to afford the transition? For now, one large scale solution is still lacking and will most likely never exist. On the contrary, the achievement of a fossil free sustainable blue economy will rely on a combination of solutions, both from innovation and technical solutions, but also societal changes (e.g., increase local consumption of goods and seafood).

To implement these changes, all stakeholders of different maritime industries will need to be mobilized, all along the value chain of each sector to make the blue economy greener; upstream (e.g., designers) and downstream (e.g., consumers); at sea (e.g., vessels) but also on the coast (e.g., ports) and on land (e.g., transport of maritime products).

Current activities and technologies will need to adapt to move towards fossil fuel free and reduce their carbon emissions while new carbon neutral activities need to be supported and deployed at a larger scale. **The European Blue Forum is intended to contribute to these global reflections and to help stakeholders identify solutions together to overcome these challenges.**



European Environment Agency, European Maritime Safety Agency, [European Maritime Transport Environmental Report 2021](#)

European Parliament, [European ports becoming 'fit for 55'](#)
FAO, [State of the world fisheries and aquaculture 2022](#)