

A person in a light-colored jacket and hat walks away from the viewer on a wide, sandy beach. The ocean is in the distance with small waves. The sky is filled with large, white, fluffy clouds and several birds are flying. The overall mood is serene and expansive.

EUROPEAN
BLUE FORUM

FROM STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT TO POLICY DESIGN

Paving the way towards the Ocean Pact

NOVEMBER 2024

HOW IT STARTED?

In May 2023, the European Commission officially launched the **European Blue Forum**, addressing the objective set in its 2021 Communication "*On a new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU – Transforming the EU's Blue Economy for a Sustainable Future*". Intended to be a pan-European Stakeholder group aimed at gathering the wide diversity of maritime stakeholders, this forum was built on four core principles ensuring it is representative, horizontal with no hierarchy, inclusive and flexible. **Four key ingredients that have made it a safe space for proactive dialogue and debate among its members.**

This initiative, led by the European Blue Forum Secretariat, was designed from the outset to be a stakeholder forum, enabling bottom-up participation. Since its launch, it has represented the space and opportunity for stakeholders to meet, discuss and share their ideas and challenges about the key issues that will shape the future of our seas and oceans. It has allowed often under-represented stakeholder groups, as well as new and emerging sectors, to be represented alongside more established sectors.

After a successful inaugural event back-to-back with European Maritime Day 2023, the European Blue Forum engaged in a year of thematic activities. Two guiding topics formed the backbone of our members' work, encapsulated in **two Stakeholder Position Papers**, gathering both their main messages but also transparently reflecting their diverging views.

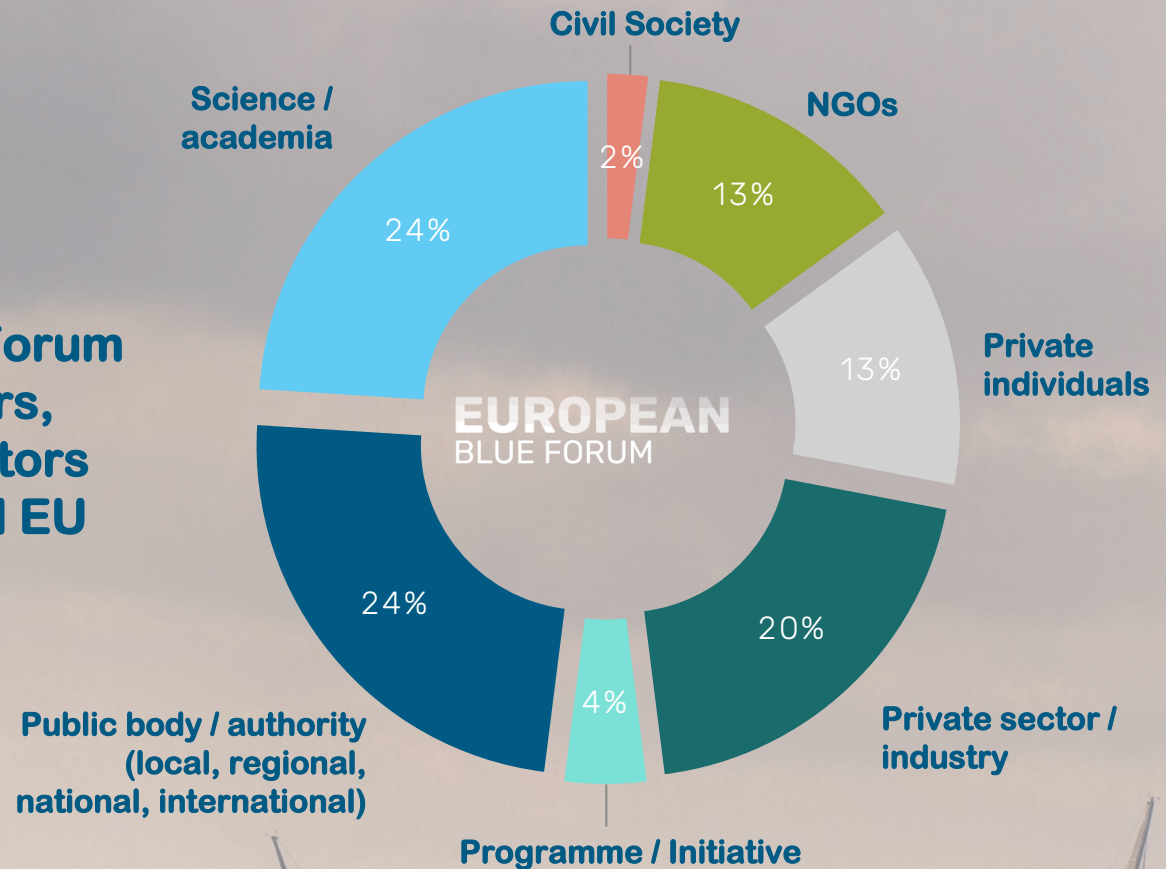


[What do we need from European Seas by 2030? Are we asking too much?](#)



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

**In November 2024,
the European Blue Forum
gathers 643 members,
representing 17 sectors
and activities and all EU
sea basins**



FROM POSITION TO PRACTICE

Celebrating the one-year anniversary of the European Blue Forum

One year later, the European Blue Forum gathered again its members in Svendborg (Denmark) for its Annual Meeting, titled 'From Position to Practice', held back-to-back with the European Maritime Day 2024.

Built for and by our members this annual edition aimed to continue the work of the community, trying to turn ideas into impactful actions, to identify innovative solutions to deliver ambitious changes for a more sustainable future.

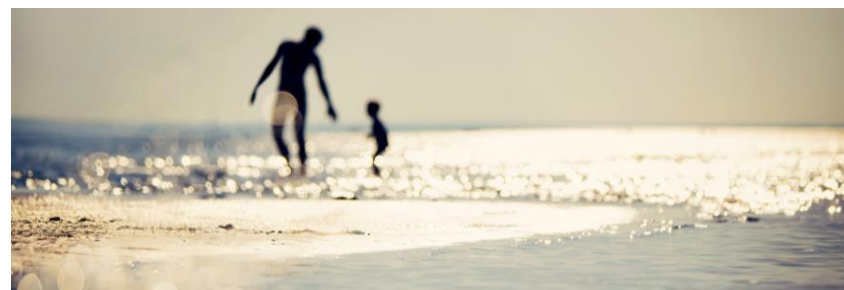
Committed to representing the voice of our community, a wide consultation was held among our members who were given the opportunity to choose the four topics that would be at the heart of the participatory workshops.





How can we accelerate technology transfer from research to innovation to boost European competitiveness and make the Blue Economy more sustainable?

To drive innovation across Europe, it is essential to empower cities and foster social innovation. The establishment of **city-specific Innovation Hubs** can act as central points for local startups and social enterprises. By supporting **city-led pilot projects** and **community-driven initiatives**, cities can play a pivotal role in addressing local issues. Collaboration should be at the heart of technology transfer: organizing cross sectoral workshops and training sessions, to help build a **collaborative mindset**. Success stories can inspire stakeholders to jointly develop innovative solutions that bridge sectoral gaps and address complex challenges. In this context, improving **data facilitation** and **knowledge sharing** is critical. Strengthening digital platforms for data exchange, standardizing data protocols, and creating repositories of best practices can support empowering stakeholders. Technology transfer will also rely on **local value chains** and **in-house R&D**, to enhance resilience and innovation capacity. Simplifying administrative and funding processes through **risk-tolerant funding models** could enable public-private collaborations, reducing costs and risks for stakeholders. Finally, **Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP)** and **multi-use areas** are key for innovation, by developing pilot areas to test new technologies.



How can we use knowledge of the ocean to instill a desire to protect it?

To effectively promote ocean conservation a comprehensive approach including **knowledge-sharing**, **community involvement**, and **emotional storytelling** is essential. **Research** plays a pivotal role and should be engaging coastal communities in scientific activities through **citizen science**, where individuals can participate in data collection on marine life, pollution levels, and other environmental indicators. In this context, leisure activities and marinas could play a key role. The **integration of AI and augmented/virtual reality tools** in educational settings can provide immersive experiences that simulate the impact of human activities on the ocean, making abstract scientific concepts more relatable. Public service advertisements through **media campaigns on television, radio, and social media**, as well as public events such as **open days, guided tours, and art exhibitions** can help raise awareness of ocean conservation, offering tailored messages for diverse audiences. Partnerships with **local organizations**, schools, and businesses can enhance **community engagement** through events like **beach clean-ups** and workshops, fostering a culture of sustainability. **Engaging youth and vulnerable groups** through targeted educational programs can also ensure that the next generation is informed and motivated to participate in marine conservation.



How can we better understand and assess cumulative impacts of maritime and coastal activities?

Undertaking a **comprehensive and collaborative approach** is essential, involving a diverse range of stakeholders such as policymakers, environmental agencies, researchers, local communities, and the **private sector**. Establishing a **unified terminology** across these groups helps create a shared understanding of what constitutes cumulative impacts. The scope of these impacts should include not only the environmental effects of activities but **also socio-economic consequences**. A **harmonized approach**, aligning these efforts with regulatory instruments (MSFD/MSPD), is critical to assess cumulative impacts consistently across the EU. This involves **standardizing EIA**, including common methodologies, criteria, and reporting formats. By establishing a **clear baseline and setting up framework indicators**, it is possible to track changes and the effectiveness of mitigation measures over time. Incorporating **traditional knowledge** and local insights can further enrich the assessment process. Applying a **Plan-Do-Check-Act** framework for continuous improvement allows stakeholders to adapt actions over time, ensuring long-term success. **Financial incentives** can encourage businesses to adopt sustainable practices. Finally, it is crucial to act now based on the existing knowledge, implementing measures that can make **an immediate positive impact** while continuing research and data collection to refine future actions.



How can we effectively address the issue of Land-Sea Interaction (LSI)? How will this be beneficial for the development of the Sustainable Blue economy?

Several barriers hinder effective LSI management: a **fragmented policy landscape** applying to land, sea, and coastal areas, significant **impacts from land-based activities** (including agriculture and urban development, pollution from inland waters) and finally the uncertainty induced by **climate change**, complicate efforts to manage LSI. To overcome these barriers, a **symbiotic understanding** of LSI is essential, recognizing the interconnectedness of land and sea. Drawing on **existing frameworks** such as the Water Framework Directive, MSPD, and MSFD, which already provide a basis for integrated environmental management, can help build more cohesive strategies. Additionally, **Integrated Coastal Zone Management**, which has proven successful in the Mediterranean, offers lessons on how to effectively address LSI. Raising ocean awareness through **ocean literacy** among both coastal and inland communities is also crucial, as informed citizens are more likely to support sustainable practices and policies. Key levers to effectively address LSI include **multi-disciplinary and multi-scalar approaches**, the **involvement of ports** as hubs linking land and sea activities, **increased surveillance** through advanced technologies, and **cross-border cooperation**. The implementation of the Polluter Pays Principle can incentivize industries to reduce their land-based pollution and contribute to remediation efforts.



TOWARDS THE OCEAN PACT

The strength of the Blue Forum lies in its **ability to gather an active community and integrate divergent visions, encourage the exchange of ideas and foster the co-construction of collective solutions. Equally important is the inclusion of local coastal communities, whose knowledge and expertise are vital to understanding the intricacies of marine ecosystems and their sustainable management.** In a context where environmental, social and economic challenges are intertwined, this forum creates a space where the synergy between these various stakeholders becomes a powerful lever for supporting the elaboration of harmonised, effective and sustainable maritime policies.

Its role is all the more crucial **given the historic turning point that we have reached, where decisions taken in the coming years will shape the health of our seas and determine the future of marine ecosystems.**

How can the growing competition for maritime space and the development of maritime activities can co-exist with environmental protection efforts be balanced, particularly in light of the EU's goal to protect 30% of marine areas, including 10% under strict conservation measures?

How can we reconcile the growing global demand for development and resources with the need for a fundamental shift in production and consumption practices, moving away from growth-centric models toward sustainable and equitable alternatives?

In the context of a growing global population and increasing demand for resources, how can we balance the need for technological innovation with the imperative to reduce consumption and prioritize local, sustainable practices?

The European Blue Forum has now been invited to host the European Commission's first Fisheries and Ocean Dialogue and in so doing support the development of the upcoming Ocean Pact.

This represents an unprecedented opportunity for our community to make its voice and proposals heard in order to influence the policies and actions that will shape the future of our oceans.

Come join us on 5th of March 2025 during the European Ocean Days at the European Commission (Charlemagne building) and make your voice heard during the Fisheries and Ocean Dialogue.



For more information about the European Blue Forum, including how to join, events, recordings and publications please [visit the website here](#).

Publication Editors

Emilie Riclet and Chris McDougall,
European Blue Forum Secretariat, a component of the Support and Expert Services on Maritime Spatial Planning and for the Establishment of a European Blue Forum Contract.
CINEA/EMFAF/2022-3.5.1/SI2.885676

EUROPEAN
BLUE FORUM



This publication was funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the European Blue Forum and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.