

WESTMED
blue economy initiative



WESTMED 
In my country

Hackathon '22
Malta, 30 June, 2022

SUMMARY NOTE (with video-links)

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CONCEPT AND OBJECTIVES

The WestMED Hackathon event took place in a hybrid format on 30 June 2022 at the Salini Resort Hotel in Malta. The plenary sessions of the event were live streamed via a dedicated platform.

The event was organised by the WestMED Assistance Mechanism team in cooperation with the Maltese Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure and Capital Projects, CINEA and DG MARE.

Building on the previous experiences of Algiers (2018) and Palermo (2019), the third edition of the WestMED Hackathons aimed at facilitating the **exchange of project ideas** and promote **concrete project development** among stakeholders operating in the Blue Economy in the western Mediterranean.

The event also presented an opportunity to showcase and discuss the results of the “WestMED In my country” national events organised during May and June in the participating countries.

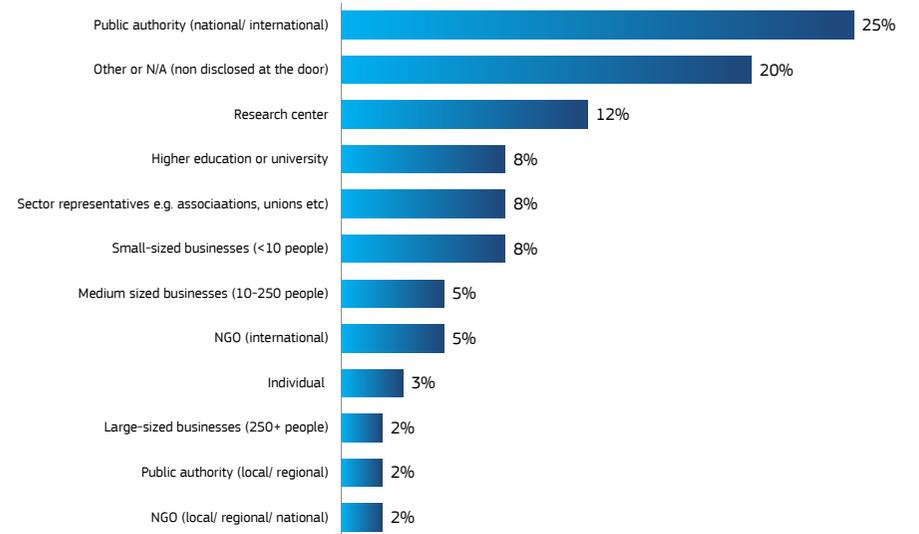
In-person participants

60

Generated project ideas

18

Typology of participants



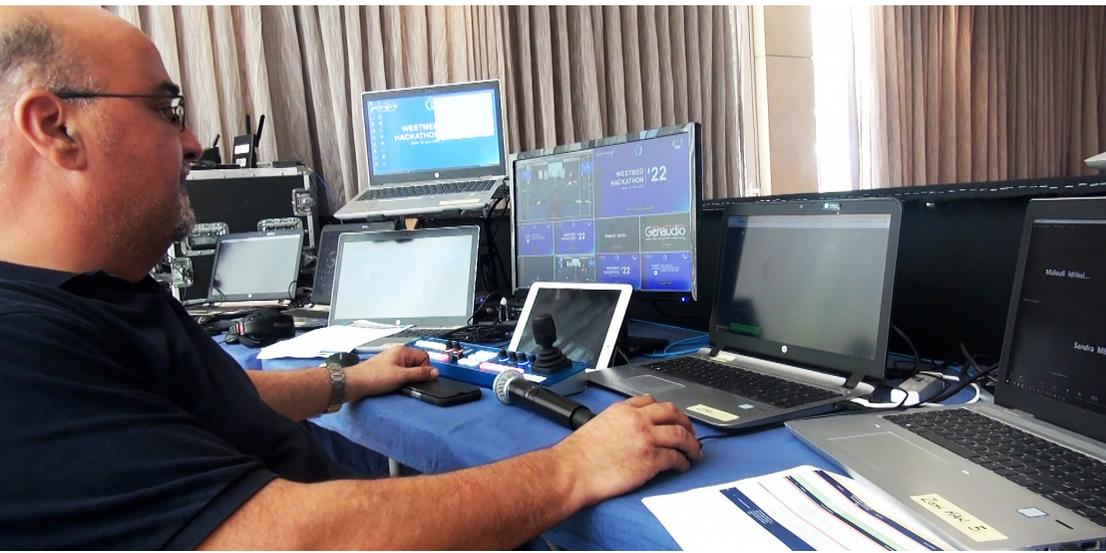
Sectors tackled

6

- Aquaculture
- Maritime clusters
- Sustainable tourism
- Small ports and marinas
- Ocean literacy and blue skills
- Maritime Spatial Planning

Countries

10





The availability of adequate skills is a pre-requisite for a competitive and resilient Blue Economy. The gap cannot be addressed by ocean literacy alone – creating awareness and attracting students to blue careers is also key



Lucienne Meilak | Director Policy Development Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, Malta / WestMED National Coordinator Malta (WestMED co-presidency)



The European Commission has recently published a wide array of strategic documents (the Joint Communication on the Southern Partnership, the Communication on Sustainable Blue Economy, and the Communication on International Ocean Governance). This policy framework needs projects; tangible achievements and results. That is the best way to build Europe, precisely through these projects



Manuel Pleguezuelo Alonso | Policy officer, Sea-basin Strategies and Maritime Regional Cooperation Unit, DG MARE



The UfM is currently developing a Roadmap for the operational implementation of the 2021 Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy. Short term concrete actions have been identified, and the focus will be on small ports and diversification of marinas, innovation ecosystems, MSP as enabler, and training workshops on project development



Alessandra Sensi | Head of Environment and Blue Economy, Union for the Mediterranean



Private investors and individual venture capitalists are growing more and more keen on investing in the Blue Economy. The challenge now is how to scale-up the existing opportunities, so that the companies operating in it are really able to access the available funding



Matteo Bocci | Deputy project manager WestMED Assistance Mechanism

TAKEAWAYS WESTMED IN MY COUNTRY CAMPAIGN

The main outcomes and summary conclusions of the “WestMED In my country” events were presented by the respective WestMED National Hubs, allowing to get a full picture of what stakeholders really consider important and critical for the development of the sustainable blue economy in their countries and in the region as a whole.

Javier Fernández (Project leader of the WestMED Assistance Mechanism) introduced the campaign, with a two-fold objective: to look back on what has been achieved and, most importantly, to conduct a forward-looking exercise.

“

Despite the individual priorities of the WestMED countries, there is clearly a common ground for regional cooperation, a minimum common denominator proved by the participation of over 300 stakeholders in WestMED events around the region

Javier Fernández | Project leader WestMED Assistance Mechanism



CAMPAIGN SET-UP

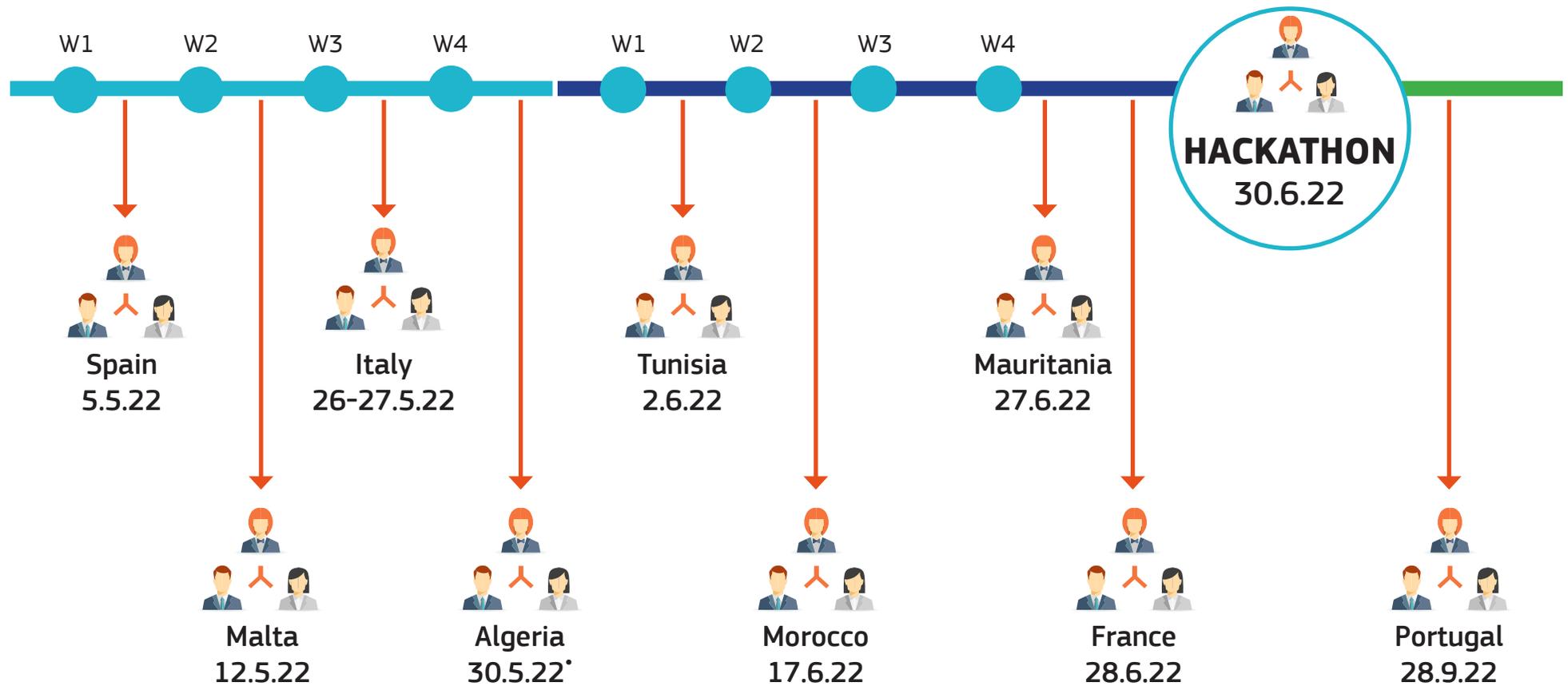
- 9 national events covering the WestMED region
- Each with a specific maritime topic of high interest and relevance to that country; ranging from maritime skills and financing to diversification for fishers, strategy and cluster formation
- Aimed at local (national) stakeholders but with a regional (sea basin) scope
- In local language for high practical participation and accessibility
- With joint promotional support (3 'EMD in my country' labelled events)
- One event focused on Libyan stakeholders during Seafuture 2021 in La Spezia, Italy

CAMPAIGN TIMELINE

**May
2022**

**June
2022**

**SEPTEMBER
2022**



* Co-organised with ENSSMAL

 **Diversification in the fisheries and aquaculture sector: opportunities of the blue economy in the western Mediterranean**

Objectives

- To address the important issue of diversification in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors
- To explore the various challenges that exist in order to achieve diversification
- To present examples of initiatives and companies working on diversification from the Mediterranean basin

Main conclusions

- Fisheries and aquaculture diversification does not take place spontaneously - it needs to be supported with targeted measures
- Diversification is considered as a way to generate additional sources of income in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, as well as a tool for economic and social development
- Still, there are challenges such as:
 - consolidating the competitiveness of the fishing activities
 - reorienting the economic activities of these areas
 - the promotion of the pluriactivity of the fishermen
 - the creation of additional jobs
 - offering additional value-added (fishing) products
 - the need to support small municipalities
 - the need to invest in additional infrastructure and services

Intended follow-up

- Project development support for funding opportunities



 **Blue Skills in Malta: Bridging the Skills Gap through Education and Ocean Literacy**

Objectives

- To create an opportunity for key stakeholders in the Maltese blue economy to come together and identify the skills gap between the education offer and labour market needs
- To identify most pressing needs in the country from a holistic perspective, with a special focus put on a number of key priority sectors
- To explore the importance of increasing citizen engagement and addressing the existing gap in ocean knowledge to increase the attractiveness of blue careers

Main conclusions

- Skills shortages and the associated challenges are echoed by stakeholders from across various blue economy industries
- The evolving nature of the sectors, portrayed by new developments in automation of operations and the shift towards greener sources of energy, calls for a new skills-set which needs to be met in the near future
- Robust career guidance structures are needed to appropriately raise awareness amongst students on the employment opportunities available in the blue economy, especially for the benefit of small municipalities

Intended follow-up

- Facilitate collaborations and cooperation between the industry and education providers, to develop effective syllabi and courses which are aimed at providing the necessary skills for the development of the blue economy industries
- Emphasise the importance of ocean literacy given the links between blue careers and ocean literacy. Supporting action and investment to be directed towards raising awareness and educating the general public about the importance of preserving the functions of the oceans



Accelerators & Incubators: the main challenge for the Blue Growth in Italy

Objectives

- To increase interest of accelerators and incubators in the Blue Economy, through synergies with Maritime Clusters (national & regional) and identify the main Italian players
- To foster an Italian supply chain to support innovative initiatives, through an alliance Maritime Clusters-Accelerators/Incubators-Fund managers (public, private)
- To engage Blue Finance hubs of prominent Italian coastal cities (Naples, Genoa, Trieste), as a way to scale-up interest and financial opportunities for the Italian Blue Growth ecosystem

Main conclusions

- The WestMED national event timely tackled the momentum to promote the creation of a path for channelling innovative initiatives, speeding-up partner identification, scaling-up finance opportunities and reducing the risk for those investing in human and financial resources
- Light investors and/or VC companies actively joined the event
- Research Institutes have often already started developing internally their own incubators, even if not properly business-oriented, thus needing specialized assistance
- The embedding process of WestMED priorities in the Interreg and mainstream cohesion programmes and beyond, successfully pursued by the Italian National Coordinator - Presidency of Council of Ministers – Dept of Cohesion policies, may help the strategy implementation and the above mentioned dynamics, by providing financial resources

Intended follow-up

- Promote the Italian supply chain to support innovative initiatives, through a MoU among Maritime Clusters-Accelerators/Incubators-Fund managers (public, private), drafting the desired path
- Assist interested organizations in dedicated matchmaking actions, as a first step toward the concrete implementation of this path
- Continue the embedding process, by facilitating the exchange and the research of opportunities between the institutional, industrial and scientific dimensions of the blue economy



 **International Conference on the Blue Economy, “Blue Solutions”, Marine Sciences as a lever for the development of the Blue Economy (co-organised by ENSSMAL)**

Objectives

- To highlight the contribution of marine sciences to the development of the blue economy in Algeria
- To provide a space for exchange and discussion between data requesters (socio-economic sector) and data producers (universities and specialised schools) for good marine and coastal governance
- To understand the constraints and requirements for data and scientific knowledge related to the blue economy
- To explore the best ways for universities and specialised schools to support decision making on the blue economy through adapted scientific expertise

Main conclusions

- Increasing the role of science in the development of the blue economy in Algeria
- Setting up a national platform on the blue economy (bringing together scientific and institutional players)
- Creation of scientific thematic networks on marine sciences and development of higher education specialising in marine sciences
- Encourage the formation of international and Mediterranean scientific consortia on the blue economy

Intended follow-up

- Support the National Strategy for the Blue Economy to 2030
- Explore the opportunities and priorities for the development of the blue economy in Algeria



 **Launch of the Blue Economy in Tunisia: Promoting Promising Sectors**

Objectives

- To have a political declaration on the promotion of the Blue Economy in Tunisia
- To create a dynamic reflection and participation of Westmed Technical Groups
- To foster synergies between Research in Biotechnology and Industry

Main conclusions

- Commitment: creation of a Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2025
- Adherence of Tunisian partners to the Technical Group Dynamics
- Need for additional synergies between research in the field of Marine Biotechnology and Industry..

Intended follow-up

- Continue the cooperation with the Ministry for the Sea for the development of the Strategy and Action Plan
- Follow up the Actions to be undertaken in the Framework of the Technical Groups



The sustainable blue economy in the context of maritime spatial planning in Morocco

Objectives

To investigate...

- Blue Economy and Maritime Spatial Planning in Morocco: what is the future in the framework of the new national strategy for the development of the blue economy (in collaboration with the World Bank)
- The perspectives for the creation of maritime clusters
- Fishing and aquaculture for the development of the blue economy
- Blue Ports, what is the future for Morocco

Main conclusions

- The involvement of the authorities and territorial entities is essential to ensure the viability of the actions and projects designed and to create synergy in terms of decision-making
- The form of the maritime cluster to be established can be shaped by capitalising on already existing groupings which have shown their effectiveness in the field. In this respect, it is wise to opt for a structure likely to stimulate interest among the entities in question
- Innovation is essential to successfully complete the national project for the development of the blue economy
- The technical and financial support granted by the World Bank to Morocco to support the launch of the national strategy for the blue economy economy, will contribute to the implementation of good management practices used at the international level

Intended follow-up

- Create a monitoring committee for the creation of maritime clusters
- Follow-up the national blue economy strategy



Towards a Maritime Cluster for Mauritania (MMC)

Objectives

- To adhere to the idea of creating a Mauritanian Maritime Cluster (MMC)
- To develop a roadmap for the creation of the MMC

Main conclusions

- Stakeholder buy-in to the idea of creating the MMC
- Development of a roadmap with a timeline
- Creation of a technical committee to propose the practical modalities for the creation of the cluster
- Establishment of a WhatsApp group dedicated to the creation of the MMC

Intended follow-up

- Concrete proposals expected by end of October 2022
- Creation of the cluster by the end of 2022



 **Towards a sustainable and resilient blue economy in the Western Mediterranean**

Objectives

- To take stock of actions and share experiences contributing to the WestMED initiative
- To exchange ideas on future actions

Main conclusions

- Very good examples of the commitment of French public and private actors to support the objectives and the WestMED roadmap through ongoing projects
- Avenues to be developed and shared, notably “FrenchSmartPorts” for WestMED
- Opportunities to be seized with Europe Mission Ocean 2030 Lighthouse

Intended follow-up

- Strengthen the existing cooperation between the two French clusters namely “Pôle de compétitivité Mer Méditerranée” and “Pôle de compétitivité Mer Atlantique.” This within the framework of the new Assistance Mechanism and building on their respective ongoing engagements with the French National Hubs that support the implementation of the WestMED Initiative and the Atlantic Action Plan
- Develop/support synergies between the different actions in the different projects - share national experiences in the framework of WestMED
- Engage national actors in the new opportunities to come
- Follow up the projects presented in a “success stories” perspective





LIBYA

The Sustainable Development of the Blue Economy in Libya

Context

In the framework of the Technical Assistance provided by the WestMED Initiative Assistance Mechanism, and on the occasion of the joint Italian-Libyan co-Presidency, the Italian National Hub with the National Coordinator organised a workshop on the perspectives of the Sustainable Blue Economy in Libya. This was part of the Seafuture Convention 2021 held in La Spezia on 1 October 2021 and formed a key factor for the scale-up of Libyan development during and after the delicate post-conflict transition period.

Objectives

- To involve Libyan counterparts, as the WestMED co-president and sectoral actors
- To assess successful cooperation models of recent or ongoing projects. Particular attention was raised by the ongoing RE-BUILD Project, from the EuropeAID – Nicosia Initiative, led by Italian Autonomous Province of Trento, where a pilot action on fishery will be soon conducted by OGS Trieste, on behalf of FVG Regional Government
- To involve enterprises engaged and/or interested in Libyan ventures

Main needs

- Inclusion and capacity building actions at Mediterranean level, involving local institutions and public organizations;
- Preparation of the re-start of most impacting sectors, as soon as a minimum stability is achieved;
- Organization of the Blue Economy stakeholders' community, even a first form of cluster.

Intended follow-up

Considering the complex political situation, which is preventing from undertaking specific on site initiatives, and the difficulties to establish a stable dialogue with national institutions, the Libyan ecosystem shows the following needs:

- Inclusion and capacity building actions at Mediterranean level, involving local institutions and public organizations
- Preparation of the re-start of most impacting sectors, as soon as a minimum stability is achieved
- Organization of the Blue Economy stakeholders' community, even a first form of cluster



LIBYA

The Sustainable Development of the Blue Economy in Libya

Ongoing actions as a follow-up of the seafuture event

- Active participation of Libyan NC in WMAM Technical Groups (TGs) and Working Groups (WGs)
- Involvement of Libyan stakeholders in Blue Sea Land 2021, Mazara del Vallo (Sicilian Cluster Fishery and Blue Growth)
- Fisheries & Aquaculture: AICS project – CIHEAM Bari
- Sustainable tourism and cultural heritage event, as soon as minimum stability is achieved
- Blue Skills (UNIMED already associates 18 Libyan universities)
- Engagement of main coastal Municipalities & Universities (Nicosia Initiative –EuropeAid REBUILD Project – Pilot Action Fishery - OGS Trieste)
- Approach the re-organization of the Fishery & Aquaculture stakeholders' community, also in terms of storage & refrigeration facilities in local ports (Nicosia Initiative –EuropeAid REBUILD Project – Pilot Action Fishery - OGS Trieste)

What the westMED Assistance Mechanism may do for Libyan Blue Growth at this stage

- Activate a Libyan National Hub
- Include Libyan stakeholders in all possible project partnerships (as beneficiaries, associated partners, etc.)
- Target funding programmes where non-EU countries may be beneficiaries
- Identify the organization or the aggregation suitable to undertake the establishment of a Libyan stakeholders' community (cluster?)
- Promote a dedicated event for the Libyan Blue Economy

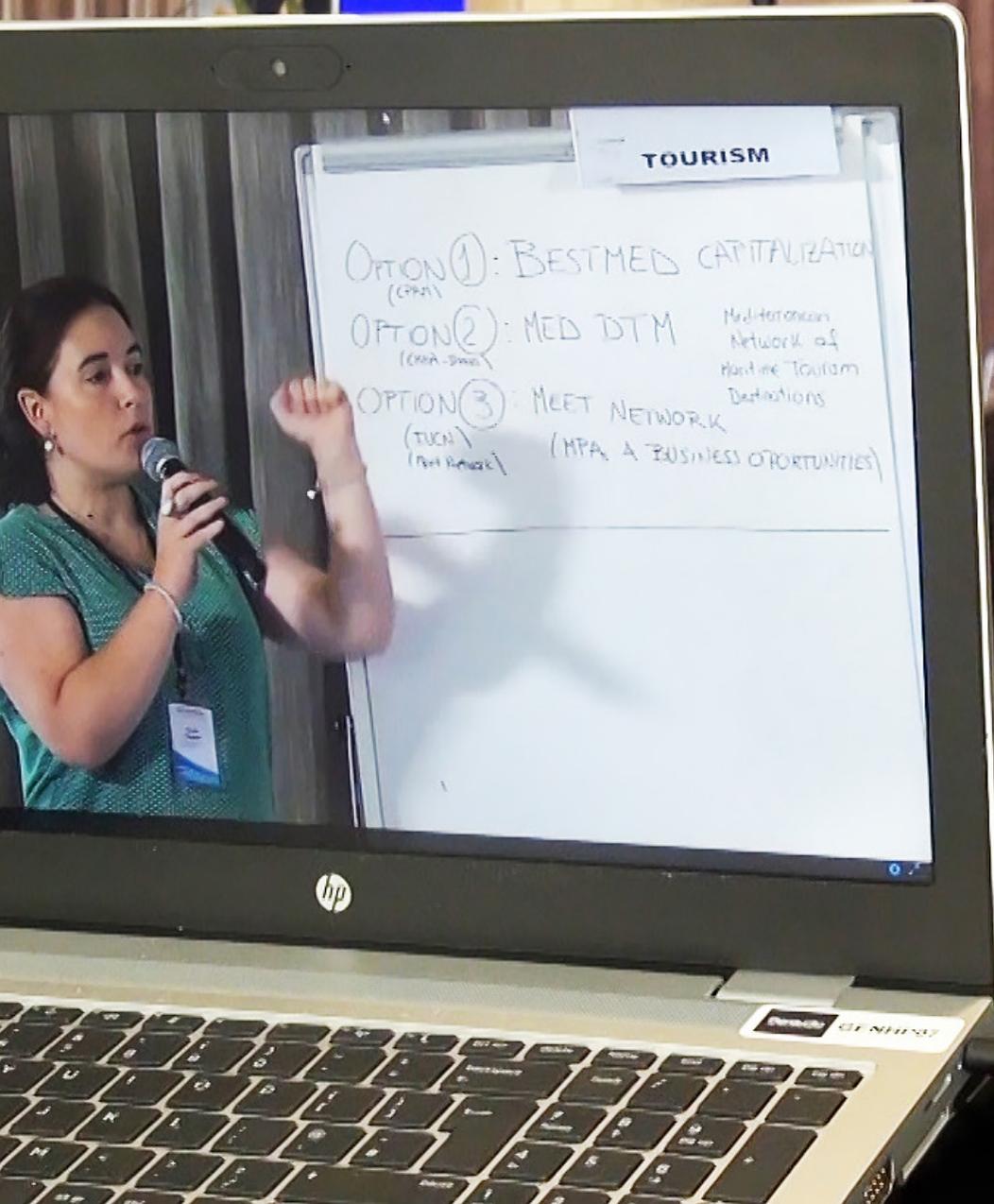


OUTCOMES HACKATHON SESSIONS

Themes for the Hackathons on project development included the five main topics as currently discussed within the WestMED Initiative: Green Shipping and Ports, Aquaculture, Maritime clusters, Tourism and Blue skills.

In this way, structured sessions aimed at generating concrete project ideas and topics took place - including the identification of possible funding opportunities and open/future calls for proposals.

Maritime Spatial Planning was also discussed in a dedicated session to outline concrete ways forward in the region at a technical level, involving relevant organisations and projects.





Context

The Aquaculture project development lab focused on further defining the proposal emerging from the WestMED Technical Group for a COST Action (deadline October 2022) to accelerate the uptake of innovative and circular models in sustainable aquaculture across the Mediterranean (both north and south shores).

This is to be achieved through the (i) sharing of good practices, (ii) support to SMEs for uptake of such practices and (iii) identification of innovation opportunities across the aquaculture value-chains (feeding, harvesting, processing, monitoring, diversification, commercialisation, support services, etc.).

Outcomes and emerged ideas

- Diversification of aquaculture (species, practices, activities...)
- Promoting circular approaches in aquaculture value-chains
- Establishing a permanent dialogue mechanism

Potential funding opportunities/ programmes targeted

- COST Actions
- EMFAF





Context

Building on the work promoted through the WestMED Technical Group, this hackathon focused on the smaller-scale ports and their need to receive support towards greater sustainability and identification of innovative business models for greater local added-value (quality jobs, sustainable growth and environmental sustainability).

The approach revolved around the potential for greater diversification of local services and strategies towards emerging niches (tourism, green marinas, small-scale charters, etc).

Outcomes and emerged ideas

- Network of specialised crafting / artisanal manufacturers
- Label of marinas regarding the sustainable services that marinas are offering at Mediterranean level
- Waste reception facilities – establishment a consortium of cruise ports who are offering complimentary waste management facilities
- Dedicating some ports to fishery activities in terms of infrastructure implying refrigeration, storage, ice-making, desalination which could become a hub for aquaculture
- Digitisation of smaller ports for shipping, especially tailored for some niche sectors

Potential funding opportunities/ programmes targeted

- INTERREG NEXT MED
- INTERREG EURO MED
- EMFAF





Context

Building on the several streams of work promoted under the WestMED Cluster Alliance, including the recently awarded [MedBAN project](#), the discussion aimed at identifying areas for greater support towards southern countries, including the acceleration of cluster development in Algeria and Morocco – also building on the outcome of the dedicated event on cluster support promoted by the WestMED in Mauritania, with the participation of international clusters and supported by the Tunisian Cluster.

Outcomes and emerged ideas

- Develop national clusters (support cluster development in southern-west shore)
- Extend Med Alliance (promote a platform for cluster cooperation in the south also supported by north)
- Create a Maghreb Cluster (“light” platform to federate and support capacity development between southern clusters)

Potential funding opportunities targeted

- To be defined





Context

This hackathon session was aimed at allowing practitioners to reflect on the main needs and future directions for supporting blue skills, to identify areas for cross-fertilisation and capitalisation of regional projects in this area, including the Blue Skills project which has been awarded as “Best WestMED Project” in 2021.

Outcomes and emerged ideas

- Develop a platform to address the identification of gaps in blue skills. The platform would bring together government authorities, private sector and educational providers which have offered or are offering solutions to address gaps
- Address skills for traditional and artisanal sectors such as fishing: The project would focus on: recognition of skills, upskilling, development of skills which support diversification, supporting greening and digital skills
- Focus Ocean Literacy on marine litter. The discussion centered around a two-pronged approach to ocean literacy: youth and private sector, with a focus on corporate social responsibility

Potential funding opportunities/ programmes targeted

- Horizon Europe
- Erasmus+





Context

A focus on sharing the potential for capitalisation and synergies amongst regional projects, towards a “leveraging-up” of current practices in sustainable tourism (operators and policymakers) across the Mediterranean.

Amongst the project invited to discuss this topic were Interreg MED projects and some of those supported by the WestMED through time for their further capitalisation.

Outcomes and emerged ideas

- MED NSTO (Med Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatory), an idea capitalising on the Interreg MED “BESTMED” project
- MED DTM – Mediterranean Network of Maritime Tourism Destinations
- MEET Network – MPAs & Business Opportunities

Potential funding opportunities/ programmes targeted

- INTERREG EURO MED
- INTERREG NEXT MED
- National funds





Context

This hackathon session aimed to bring together major actors/ initiatives from across the Mediterranean, to allow knowledge sharing and discuss the state of the art of Maritime Spatial Planning practices on both shores of the sea basin.

Outcomes and emerged ideas

- Confirmation of interest to set a group of MSP experts to share experience and practices on MSP in the WestMED as several actions/ projects and commitments for Countries to give a WestMed overview of MSP implementation
- The main goals of this group would be to ensure transfer of techniques and research for decision makers; link with national and local actions (MSP/ICZM/MAP) and contribute to the development of a “community of practice” on MSP for a sustainable Blue Economy

Potential funding opportunities targeted

- To be defined





This is the start of a journey. All these ideas will be formally presented tomorrow to the main governance institution of the WestMED: the Steering Committee. All member states and partner countries are going to learn about your project ideas and most likely are going to give us a mandate to support you in taking this to the next level.



Javier Fernández | Project leader WestMED Assistance Mechanism



To develop and sustain a blue economy we need to place the people at the center of our response. A bottom-up approach is key to defining the future of the WestMED Initiative. We look forward to continue building on the excellent work so far through the development of concrete measures and mechanisms to champion the Blue Economy vision in the Mediterranean



Shaun Patrick Ebejer | Lead coordinator maritime policies Malta, Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure and Capital Projects



The term that has been common to all the parallel project development labs has been “diversification”. The current geopolitical context forces us to reinvent the way that we face challenges: we need not only to be more sustainable, but also more creative and innovative. Through the projects we achieve the policy objectives and the priorities of the sea basin strategies; this is the real way of cooperation, of soft diplomacy. The main goal is to promote the sustainable development of coastal communities, businesses, SMEs, academia; mainly for our people to thrive.



Manuel Pleguezuelo Alonso | Policy officer, Sea-basin Strategies and Maritime Regional Cooperation Unit, DG MARE

WESTMED
blue economy initiative



WESTMED 
In my country

Hackathon '22
Malta, 30 June, 2022



westmed-initiative.eu



[@westmedstrat](https://twitter.com/westmedstrat)

The WestMED hackathon '22 was organised by the WestMED Assistance Mechanism (Ecorys led consortium), together with the Maltese Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure and Capital Projects, CINEA and DG MARE.
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