

Western Mediterranean: Actions for the sustainable development of the blue economy

The region covers economic hubs like Barcelona, Marseille, Naples and Tunis. It also includes tourist destinations like the Balearic Islands, Sicily and Corsica.

The sea's biodiversity is under severe pressure with a recent [report](#) by scientists from the Joint Research Centre indicating that 50% has been lost in the last 50 years. In addition to this are recent security and safety concerns from the increase in migration from the South to the North.

This initiative will allow EU and neighbouring countries to work together to increase maritime safety and security, promote sustainable blue growth and jobs, and preserve ecosystems and biodiversity.

Karmenu **Vella**, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries said: *"Millions of holiday makers have a happy association with the Western Mediterranean. Like the millions more who live across the region, they understand the fragile link between conserving national habitats and traditions and ensuring economic viability. Blue economy is important for each of the countries involved and they have recognised the strength of working together."*

Johannes **Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, said: *"This new regional initiative recognises and taps into the economic potential of the Mediterranean Sea and its coast lines to further enhance economic growth, contribute to job creation and eventually the stabilisation of the region. It is an important step towards closer coordination and cooperation among participating countries."*

The initiative is the fruit of years' of dialogue between ten countries of the Western Mediterranean region who are ready and willing to work together on these shared interests for the region: five EU Member States (France, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Malta), and five Southern partner countries (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia). It follows up on the Ministerial Declaration on Blue Economy endorsed by the Union for Mediterranean (UfM) on 17 November 2015.

The goals of the initiative

By fostering cooperation between the ten countries concerned, this initiative has three main goals:

1. A safer and more secure maritime space
2. A smart and resilient blue economy
3. Better governance of the sea.

Gaps and challenges have been identified and a number of priorities and targeted actions have been set for each goal.

For **Goal 1** priorities include cooperation between national coast guards and the response to accidents and oil spills. Specific actions will focus on the upgrade of traffic monitoring infrastructure, data sharing and capacity building. For **Goal 2** priorities include new data sourcing, biotechnology and coastal tourism. For **Goal 3**, priority is given to spatial planning, marine knowledge, habitat conservation and sustainable fisheries.

The initiative will be funded by existing international, EU, national and regional funds and financial instruments, which will be coordinated and complementary. This should create leverage and attract funding from other public and private investors

This “Initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy of the Western Mediterranean” is another example of the EU’s successful neighbourhood policy. Barely three weeks ago, the EU secured a 10-year pledge to save Mediterranean fish stocks. The MedFish4Ever Declaration, signed by Mediterranean ministerial representatives from both Northern and Southern coastlines on 30 March, involves 8 Member States (Spain, France, Italy, Malta, Slovenia, Croatia, Greece, and Cyprus) and 7 third countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Turkey, Albania, Montenegro). The two projects will enhance each other in protecting the region’s ecological and economic wealth.

Background

The initiative is based on the Commission’s long-standing experience with sea basin and macro-regional strategies (such as the Atlantic Strategy, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region). It is also based on over two decades of work within the 5+5 Dialogue, which has created strong ties between the participating countries. Furthermore, the initiative builds on other EU policies linked to the region, such as the European Neighbourhood Policy Review priorities and the recent Communication on International Ocean Governance.

The initiative is presented in two documents. A Communication outlines the main challenges, shortcomings and the possible solutions. A Framework for Action presents the identified priorities, actions and projects in detail, with quantitative targets and deadlines to monitor progress over time. Some of the actions could extend well beyond the countries in question and even beyond the sub-basin.

For More Information

[Communication](#)

[Framework for Action](#)

[MEMO/17/1001](#)

[MEDFISH4ever Declaration](#)

[Ocean governance](#)

[Blue Growth](#)