

RAVENNA

la capitale
del mare
2026

Advancing the Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean: Forging a Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean through Transformative Innovation

17-18 June 2026
Palazzo Rasponi dalle Teste
Ravenna, Italy

Organisers



BLUE ECOSYSTEM



In collaboration with



Introduction and Rationale

Sustainable Blue Economy

The Sustainable Blue Economy is a **priority shared by multiple policies and organizations** across the Mediterranean (MED) area, involving diverse funds, programs, and initiatives. A **coordinated approach** that integrates these efforts is essential to effectively address the challenges and opportunities in fostering this economy, enhancing the impact of individual projects and strengthening regional and cross-regional collaboration.

The concept of the “blue economy” has evolved significantly in Europe over recent years, driven by a growing awareness of the economic relevance of marine activities and their potential for growth, coupled with an increasing recognition of the need for environmental sustainability. Marine ecosystems are under heightened human pressure, and coastal areas and infrastructure are increasingly vulnerable to climate change impacts.

Initially, the European Commission, starting in 2012, focused on the “Blue Growth” concept, aiming to unlock the untapped potential of oceans, seas, and coasts for growth and employment. This marked a turning point, integrating the economy of the sea into the work programs of Member States, regions, businesses, and civil society.

However, by 2021, nearly a decade after the initial communication, the Commission shifted its approach with a new communication titled “A new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU. Transforming the EU’s blue economy for a sustainable future¹”. This shift was largely influenced by the European Green Deal, which seeks to transform the European economy into a modern, resource-efficient, and competitive one that eliminates net greenhouse gas emissions and protects the EU’s natural capital. The new terminology, “sustainable blue economy”, emphasizes the fundamental role of environmental sustainability as a prerequisite for development. This approach highlights the intrinsic correlation between environmental and economic interests in the maritime sector, addressing global competition, decent work, and territorial disparities. It treats the ocean and waters as a single entity, crucial for achieving climate neutrality and nature restoration, placing significant attention on research and innovation (R&I), new governance models, and civil society involvement.

The Mediterranean Sea Basin

The Mediterranean Sea, a global biodiversity hotspot and a key trade route, faces increasing environmental pressures and socioeconomic disparities.

The Mediterranean Sea, despite covering only 1% of the total ocean surface, is economically vital, accounting for approximately 20% of the global Gross Marine Product. It hosts 30% of global sea-borne trade, 450 ports and terminals, the world’s second-largest market for cruise ships, half of the EU’s fishing fleet, and over 150 million tourists annually also attracted by its 400 UNESCO sites and 265 protected areas.

However, this intensive economic activity has led to significant environmental challenges, including pollution (e.g., microplastics, pesticides) and climate change impacts. Addressing these issues requires joint actions among bordering countries and basins, focusing on preventing and eliminating pollution, restoring marine and freshwater ecosystems and biodiversity, and making the blue economy more carbon-neutral and circular. Building resilience to extreme climate-ocean events and sea-level rise is an urgent priority.

¹ COM (2021) 240 final

Conference Abstract

The international conference “**Advancing the Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean: Forging a Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean through Transformative Innovation**”, scheduled for **17th – 18th June 2026 in Ravenna**, represents a strategic opportunity for dialogue and exchange on the future and challenges of the sustainable blue economy in the Mediterranean.

The international conference within the framework of “**RAVENNA SEA CAPITAL 2026**” is jointly organized by the **Emilia-Romagna Region / ART-ER** (within the framework of the **Blue Ecosystem project, ADMA Pilot and BLU-ER Forum**), the **BIG Cluster, OMC Med Energy, the Municipality of Ravenna**. Addressed to institutional actors, governance bodies, research organizations, and industry stakeholders, the conference focuses on **innovation policies, the integration of financial instruments, and off-shore low-carbon technological innovation**, with the aim of fostering synergies and promoting strategic alliances in a highly fragmented and rapidly evolving sector such as the blue economy.

The conference marks a transition from the concept of “**Blue Growth**” to that of a “**Sustainable Blue Economy**”, in line with the **European Commission’s Mission Ocean and Waters**. Within this renewed perspective, environmental sustainability becomes the fundamental prerequisite for the development of all sectors of the maritime economy, which must address emerging challenges such as climate change, biodiversity protection, marine pollution, and the increasing geopolitical instability of the Mediterranean basin.

The conference will focus on three main thematic strands:

- **High-level political dialogue with institutions**, with particular attention to the Southern Mediterranean shore, considered crucial for overcoming governance fragmentation and strengthening strategic alliances.
- **Synergies and coordination among funding instruments**: given the growing number of programmes and financial tools promoting the sustainable blue economy, there is an increasing need to strengthen coordination and alignment among these initiatives in order to ensure greater impact.
- **Thematic focus on key offshore technologies**: technical sessions dedicated to research and innovation on key low-carbon technologies capable of accelerating the ecological transition of the maritime economy (including areas such as offshore renewable energy, decommissioning, innovative materials).
- **Site visit** (on request)



DAY 1 Wednesday 17th June 2026

Palazzo Rasponi dalle Teste, Ravenna

14.30 - 15.45 Plenary Session 1

“The Future of our Sea: towards a Mediterranean Sustainable Blue Economy”

Institutional welcome

- Mayor of Ravenna - **Alessandro Barattoni**
- Chairman and President of the Port System Authority of the Central-Northern Adriatic Sea - **Francesco Benevolo**
- Emilia-Romagna Region President - **Michele de Pascale**

Mediterranean Blue Economy Strategy and Overview. High-level dialogue with:

- European Commission (DG Research, DG MARE, DG REGIO):
 - Deputy Head of Unit, DG MARE, European Commission - **Iglika Yakova**
 - Mission Ocean, Active Senior - **Elisabetta Balzi**
- Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, Coordinator for Development Cooperation in the Mediterranean - **Grammenos Mastrojeni**
- OMEC - Organization Méditerranéenne de l’Energie et du Climat - **Houda Ben Jannet Allal**
- Director of Research, Istituto per le Risorse Biologiche e le Biotecnologie Marine del CNR (IRBIM-CNR) - **Ernesto Azzurro**
- Head of Laboratory for Sustainability and Circularity Tools at ENEA, WestMed Hub for Italy Representative - **Cristian Chiavetta**

Moderator

Cluster BIG President - **Giorgio Ricci Maccarini**

15.45 - 16.00 Coffee Break

16.00 - 18.30 Plenary Session 2

“Innovative solutions, challenges for a Sustainable Blue Economy in Mediterranean”

Setting the scene

- Italian Ministry of University and Research - Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership **Margherita Cappelletto**: R&I in Mediterranean Blue Economy
- Institute of Oceanography Hellenic Centre For Marine Research (HCMR) **George Petihakis**: Challenges and Opportunities - “TASC RESTORE MED”

Challenges and Solutions from:

- Emilia-Romagna Region (Italy) - **A. Tiziana De Nittis**: *Green Ports & Offshore Innovation*
- PMM (France) - **Corentin Sanguinetti**: *Smart Infrastructure for Sustainable Ports*
- ADRAL (Portugal) - **Anabela Caeiro**: *Coastal Bioeconomy and Sustainable Tourism*
- HCMR (Greece) - **Chrysa Efstratiou**: *Nature-Based Solutions and Smart Port Technologies*
- UAMD (Albania) - **Ariola Harizi**: *Sustainable Fisheries & Blue Skills*
- HGK - CCE (Croatia) - **Maša Jurin**: *Circular Solutions for Sustainable Fisheries*
- CLEAP (Cyprus) - **Stelios Procopiou**: *Digital Innovation for Water Awareness*

18.30 - 19.00

Towards the future in Mediterranean SEA: the new lighthouse

Cyprus Maritime and Maritime Institute CMMI - **Gotellenne Piaton**

Moderator

Emilia-Romagna Region - **Elisabetta Maini**

20.30 **Networking Dinner - Ravenna** LIMITED PLACES

DAY 2 Thursday 18th June 2026

Palazzo Rasponi dalle Teste, Ravenna

09.00 - 09.15 **Registration**

Welcome and introduction

Emilia-Romagna Region Vice President - **Vincenzo Colla**

09.30 - 11.15 **Technical Sessions on Innovation for Blue Economy Industry**

Floating Offshore technologies: innovation projects and financial opportunities

A session connecting cutting-edge floating offshore developments in collaboration with Vanguard Pilot ADMA

- Floating Offshore:
 - Cluster BIG, **Sara Tedesco**: *Presentation of the I3Float Project and the Floating Offshore Wind Strategic Agenda*
 - Pôle Mer Méditerranée, **Anouchka Le Roux**: *Presentation of the I3Float Open Call for SMEs*
- Instituto de Hidráulica Ambiental de la Universidad de Cantabria - "IH Cantabria", **Francisco Royano Gutiérrez**
- Sea of Innovation Cantabria Cluster SICC - **Luis San Segundo**
- AGNES - **Alberto Bernabini**
- ADRIOWIND ARTI Puglia - **Valeria Patruno**
- MARE Technology Cluster FVG - **Carlo Kraskovic**

Moderator

ART-ER - **Stefano Valentini**

11.15 - 11.30 **Coffee Break**

11.30 - 13.15

Transforming Offshore Decommissioning: Innovation and Circular Value Pathways

Emerging circular approaches to decommissioning, highlighting innovation pathways and investment opportunities.

- Eni Spa, Circular Decommissioning Subject Matter Expert - **Carlos Henrique Friederichs**
- Eni Spa, Mature Asset Circular Economy | PMP® Certified - **Stefano Salustro**
- WSP Senior Marine Biologist, Head of Marine Services - **Giovanni Torchia**
- Eni US, Facilities Engineering Manager - **Francesco Tafuni**
- Subsea Cloud Founder and CEO - **Maxie Reynolds**
- Head of Modelling, Observations, and Scenarios for Climate Change and Air Quality Division at ENEA - **Gianmaria Sannino**
- Marine Biologist and Communication Lead Fondazione CESTHA - **Linda Albonetti**

Final Remarks

Moderator

Emilia-Romagna Region - **A. Tiziana De Nittis**

13.15 - 14.15 **Lunch Break**

14.30 **Site visit - Rosetti Marino Yard** UPON INVITATION

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Interreg
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