

Meeting Mission Oceans: Restore oceans and waters by 2030

The Baltic and North Sea lighthouse in action

25th – 26th April 2023, Hamburg, hybrid

Report

Organised by Mission Oceans¹ – European Commission

Background:

With a 2030 target, the EU Mission "Restore our Ocean and Waters" ²aims to protect and restore the health of our ocean and waters through research and innovation, citizen engagement and blue investments. The Mission's new approach will address the ocean and waters as one and play a key role in achieving climate neutrality and restoring nature. The Mission supports regional engagement and cooperation through area-based "lighthouses" in major sea/river basins: Atlantic-Arctic, Mediterranean Sea, Baltic-North Sea, and Danube-Black Sea. Mission lighthouses are sites to pilot, demonstrate, develop and deploy the Mission activities across EU seas and river basins. Mission '**lighthouse**' will be launched in the first phase, as sites to pilot, demonstrate and deploy the Mission solutions across EU sea and river basins as well as mobilise Member States, regions and other relevant actors to address common challenges collectively. Building on existing 21 initiatives, and different sources of funding, starting with Horizon Europe, but not limited to this, these lighthouses will cover all seas bordering the EU as well as major river basins, i.e. the Atlantic and Arctic coast, Baltic and North Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Danube River basin. Due to the transboundary nature of waters, basin-scale coordination of implementation and regional cooperation is required for solutions to be effective for resolving shared problems³.

¹ [Restore our Ocean and Waters \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu)

² [Final outline implementation plans \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu)

³ The Mission will provide a systemic approach for the restoration of our ocean and waters:

1. **Set-up of 'lighthouses'** for the major European sea and river basins, based on existing structures, as the Mission sites to promote basin-wide cooperation, commitment and deployment of solutions addressing the three Mission's objectives.
2. A core of scalable and replicable, excellent and impact-driven **research and innovation solutions (technological, business, social and governance) and demonstration** activities tailored specifically for each of the three specific Mission objectives.
3. **Scale up projects** throughout European sea and river basins to achieve the Mission objectives and targets;
4. A digital ocean and water knowledge system including an environmental and biodiversity monitoring system to better understand, monitor and forecast the health of the water system as a whole and measure progress towards the targets of this Mission.
5. **Public mobilisation and engagement.**

Statements by

•Baltic & North Sea Countries

Kristina Sigurdsdottir Hansen, State secretary, Norway is a substantial part of the North Sea, and its goals are based on sustainability and support of the EU Green Deal. We depend on productive and healthy oceans. The Baltic and NS countries should cooperate closely.

Representatives of Denmark, France, Poland, Finland, Belgium, Lithuania

Representative of Danish administration stated that Denmark is trying to establish a Danish Mission hub. He underlined that we have to work together and use the existing initiatives. Mission strategy has been established in Denmark, it includes windmills.

Representative of Polish administration stated that Poland is very much into the Mission and international cooperation. The goal is to mobilise all Polish stakeholders to join the Mission. Poland is already active in some actions related to the Mission (i.e. on underwater noise). The Blue economy Baltic Forum will be held 1st June in Gdańsk, a new initiative aimed at mobilising stakeholders around the Baltic and showcase most successful initiatives and funding opportunities (LIFE, Interreg etc.) for innovative projects. Representative of Finnish administration mentioned the Finnish actions to achieve the Mission's objectives.

Leading actions for making the blue economy carbon-neutral and circular

This session showcased main actions to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions from maritime economic activities in Europe, develop zero-carbon and low-impact aquaculture, and promote circular, low-carbon multi-purpose use of marine and water space.

Introduction by Kestutis Sadauskas, Mission Manager, European Commission

There is a need for a holistic approach towards the restoration of the oceans. We need to restore degraded ecosystem on land and look at pollution (plastics). The solutions are there, in the Mission Charter. The Mission is an accelerator, adapted to different sea basins. Some measures are universal and can be replicated. The EU is deploying substantial funds from HORIZON, but other funding sources are also welcome.

Pitches from EU funded and national projects/initiatives

This session presented examples of EU funded projects and national projects/initiatives relevant for the Mission Restore our Ocean & Water as well as national initiatives with specific topics linked to the Baltic and North Sea lighthouse.

Representative of European Climate, Infrastructure and environment Executive Agency CINEA⁵ stated that CINEA is dealing with several projects under Missions Oceans. CINEA's mission is to support stakeholders in delivering the European Green Deal through high-quality programme management.

⁵ [European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-operations/infographic-117336.pdf)

Some examples of the EU funded projects:

• **OLAMUR project**

The main objective of OLAMUR (Offshore Low-trophic Aquaculture in Multi-Use scenario Realisation) is to bring together multi-use low-trophic aquaculture (MU-LTA) related key sectors, to demonstrate sustainable commercial solutions for both the North and the Baltic Sea. OLAMUR will establish three pilot demonstration sites where seaweed and blue mussels will be grown within windfarms or in the vicinity of a trout farm. The wind farm pilot sites are located in the German exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the North Sea north of Helgoland, in the Danish EEZ of the Baltic Sea at Kriegers Flak and the third pilot demonstration site will be next to a trout farm in the Estonian Sea near the Port of Veere.

ULTFARMS project: ULTFARMS is a pioneering project that aims to enhance Europe's capacity for low-trophic aquaculture by promoting the sharing of marine space in multi-use settings. The farms are located near offshore wind farms. The project seeks to establish commercially viable low-trophic aquaculture production in more challenging environments while prioritising environmental and biodiversity protection, carbon footprint reduction, and commercial viability. Germany, Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands are involved.

• **BlueMissionBANOS⁶ coordination and support action**

BlueMissionBANOS inspires, engages and supports stakeholders across the Baltic and North Sea to reach a carbon-neutral & circular blue economy. The project facilitates the development of a sustainable, carbon-neutral, and circular blue economy in the Baltic and North Sea by connecting national, regional, and transnational actors from policy, industry, science and the public, creating a conducive governance model to innovation. While fostering the transition towards the blue economy, BlueMissionBANOS will also support preventing and eliminating water pollution and protecting and restoring marine and freshwater ecosystems and biodiversity.

Some examples of national projects/initiatives

• **Poland: Agnieszka Jędruch**, Institute of Oceanology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Interreg Baltic Sea Region referred to some initiatives in which the institution is engaged. CHEMSEA project addressed underwater munition. It aimed at measuring the scale of pollution from dumped munition. The results shocked the public. The impact of dumped munition is substantial. DIAMON 1 and 2 projects examined whether the munition should be removed and provided decision-making tools for Member States if they decide to take the munition out. The awareness and understanding of the potential harm of dumped munition has raised.

• **Germany: Corinna Schrum**, Director of the Hereon Institute of Coastal Systems – Analysis and Modelling presented the projects ongoing in Germany, on decarbonisation and SustainMARE⁷.

⁶ [BlueMissionBANOS Lighthouse](#)

⁷ [Homepage sustainMare](#)

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Keynote speakers:

- Gesine Meißner, Member of Mission Board “Restore our Ocean and Waters” spoke on the Mission’s objective to bring science closer to people. Cooperation is the key element of the Mission.
- Henrik Lesaar, Director International Relations and EFRE, Ministry of Economy and Innovation, Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, underlined that the protection of oceans is a topic of high concern. He spoke about the importance of Hamburg port. To be successful the Mission must include businesses. There is a need for the shift towards green energy, also in the ports. The level playing field is a must.

COMMUNITIES OF ACTORS FOR THE BALTIC - NORTH SEA LIGHTHOUSE

This session illustrated examples of good practices from communities of actors for the Baltic & North Sea lighthouse. It provided opportunities for networking and identify needs, bottlenecks and key activities to meet the Mission objectives, particularly towards the elimination of greenhouse gas emissions from maritime economic activities in the EU; the development of zero-carbon and low-impact aquaculture, and promotion of the circular, low-carbon multi-purpose use of marine and water space. There was a panel (short presentations) with representatives of:

- Cities: Björn Grönholm, Director of Strategic Projects, city of Turku (Finland), Nuno Jardim Nunes, Bauhaus of the sea project in Hamburg and Malmö cities, Siri Granum Carson, city of Gjøvik (Norway).
- Regions: Markku Viitasalo, Finnish Environment Institute (Finland), Astrid Burhöi, Västragötaland region (Sweden), Chantal Martens, Blue Innovation Officer, VLIZ (Belgium).
- Islands: Morten Ledertoug, Blue Bornholm NGO, Bornholm (Denmark), Jaanika Tiitson, Saaremaa Municipality (Estonia), Mattias Holmquist, coordinator Blekinge Arkipelag (Sweden).

They presented lighthouse initiatives/projects in the Baltic, among others development of wind power. Again, cross-border cooperation was underlined. Small communities can be used as lighthouses (like Bornholm). Members of small communities know how to work together. So there should be opportunities for such small actors to get together and work together.

- Industries/SME: Prof. Pawel Licznar, The Polish stormwater system (Poland), Austeja Platykyte, founder of SEA FOAM start up (Lithuania).

•Fisheries & aquaculture: Jörn Schmidt, Chair of the Science Committee of ICES

He spoke on ICES structure and tasks. ICES is working mainly on fisheries but going far beyond (offshore energy development, ecosystem assessment, increasing number of social scientists). He underlined that seafood contributes to the Blue Economy objectives.

KEY MESSAGES AND CLOSING REMARKS

• **Peter Grönwoldt, Division Marine, Coastal and Polar Research, Federal Ministry of Education and Research** thanked the Commission for holding the meeting in Hamburg. He underlined that resources are needed to make ideas a reality. The Mission objectives are reflected in the lighthouse projects.

• **John Bell, Director, Healthy Planet, European Commission and Deputy Mission Manager, Mission "Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030"**

The biodiversity is collapsing. Everything will depend on how people are engaged in working towards a transition and generating changes. A lighthouse is a mobilisation of people in the sea basins. The array of what is taking place is extraordinary. **"Make peace with nature"** that is what the Mission is about. We have to think what the Mission can do for specific topics like eutrophication or dumped munition in the Baltic. There is an archipelago of different communities in the Baltic, but these communities can do a lot together. He thanked all participants for their commitment and closed the meeting.