

# The WestMED Initiative

Boosting the sustainable blue economy in the Western Mediterranean

## Technical Assistance Mechanism

July 2025

CINEA/EMFAF/2022-3.5.1/SI2.881692

**WESTMED**  
blue economy initiative



The Initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the western Mediterranean

# WestMED Initiative

An innovative cooperation instrument between countries, regions and people of the western Mediterranean to facilitate the blue economy

# TIMELINE



# ASSISTANCE MECHANISM

**WESTMED**  
blue economy initiative

**ATLANTIC STRATEGY**  
Supporting the Atlantic Action Plan



**Common Maritime Agenda  
for the Black Sea**



The Assistance Mechanism is led by Ecorys with AETS and PwC as consortium partners



WESTMED

blue economy initiative

# OBJECTIVES



**A safer and more secure  
maritime space**



**A smart and resilient  
blue economy**



**A better governance  
of the sea**

# PRIORITIES



**Maritime safety  
and security**



**Environment, biodiversity  
and climate change**



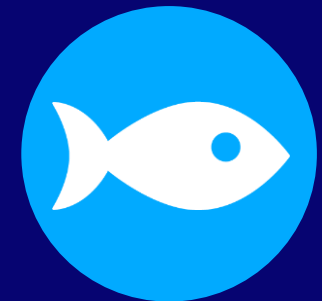
**Maritime clusters  
and networks**



**Skills development  
and circulation**



**Sustainable tourism, transport and  
fight against pollution**



**Fisheries and  
Aquaculture**

# STREAMLINED PRIORITIES Ministerial declaration: Malta 2023

On 23 June 2023, ministers and high-level representatives from the 10 WestMED countries met in Malta with representatives from the European Commission and the Union for the Mediterranean to reassess and update the priorities set out in the WestMED Framework for Action, as supported by the WestMED initiative.

## In particular:

- Supporting the transition of shipping, green shipping and ports to carbon neutrality and zero emissions,
- Turning ports into energy centres
- Innovative and restorative aquaculture and fisheries
- Coastal and maritime eco-tourism.





# SOME RESULTS

115

Projects Supported  
(and supporting)

45

Projects proposals  
awarded for funding

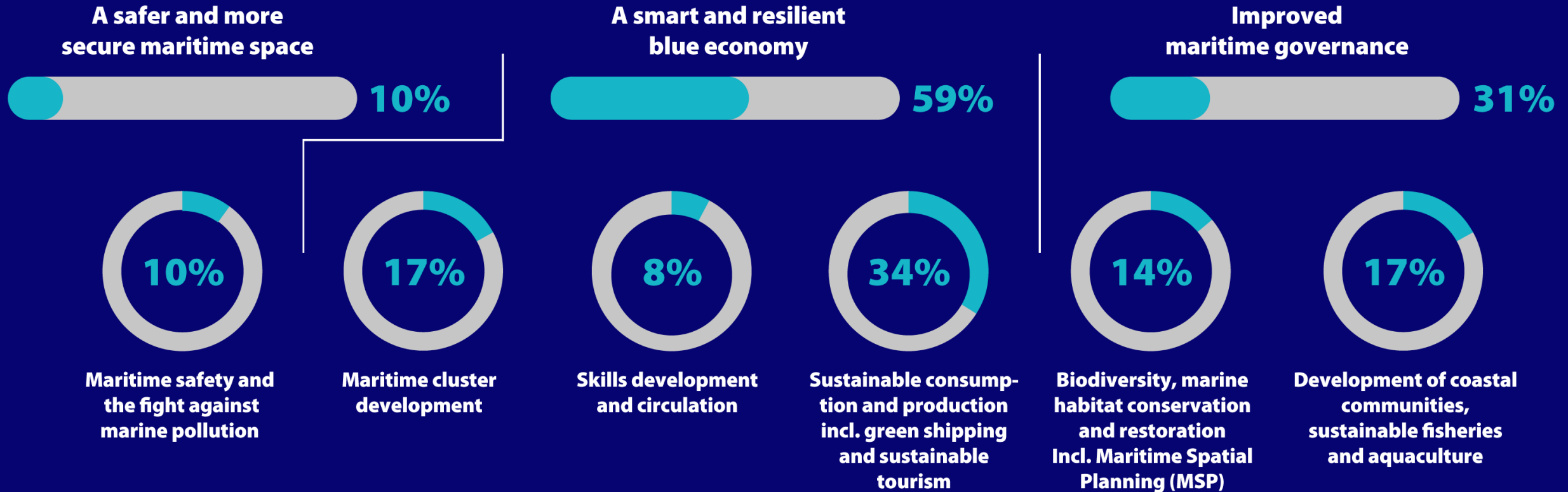
€ 78.1 M

invested in the  
sustainable blue economy



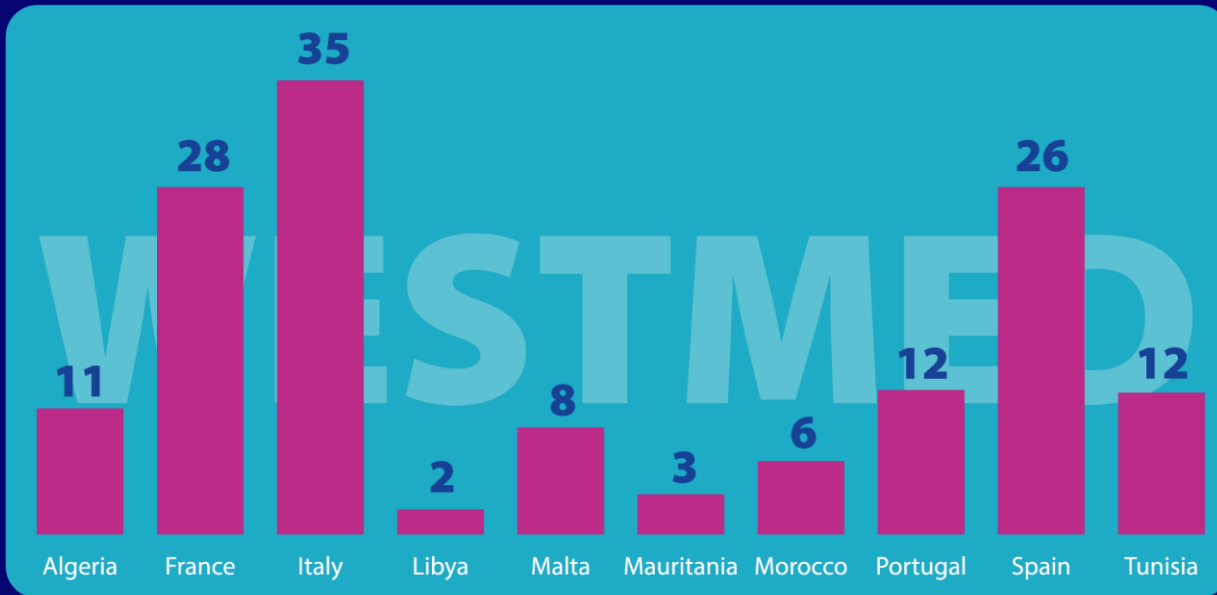
# SOME RESULTS

Approved and funded projects/ breakdown by WestMED Goals & Priorities



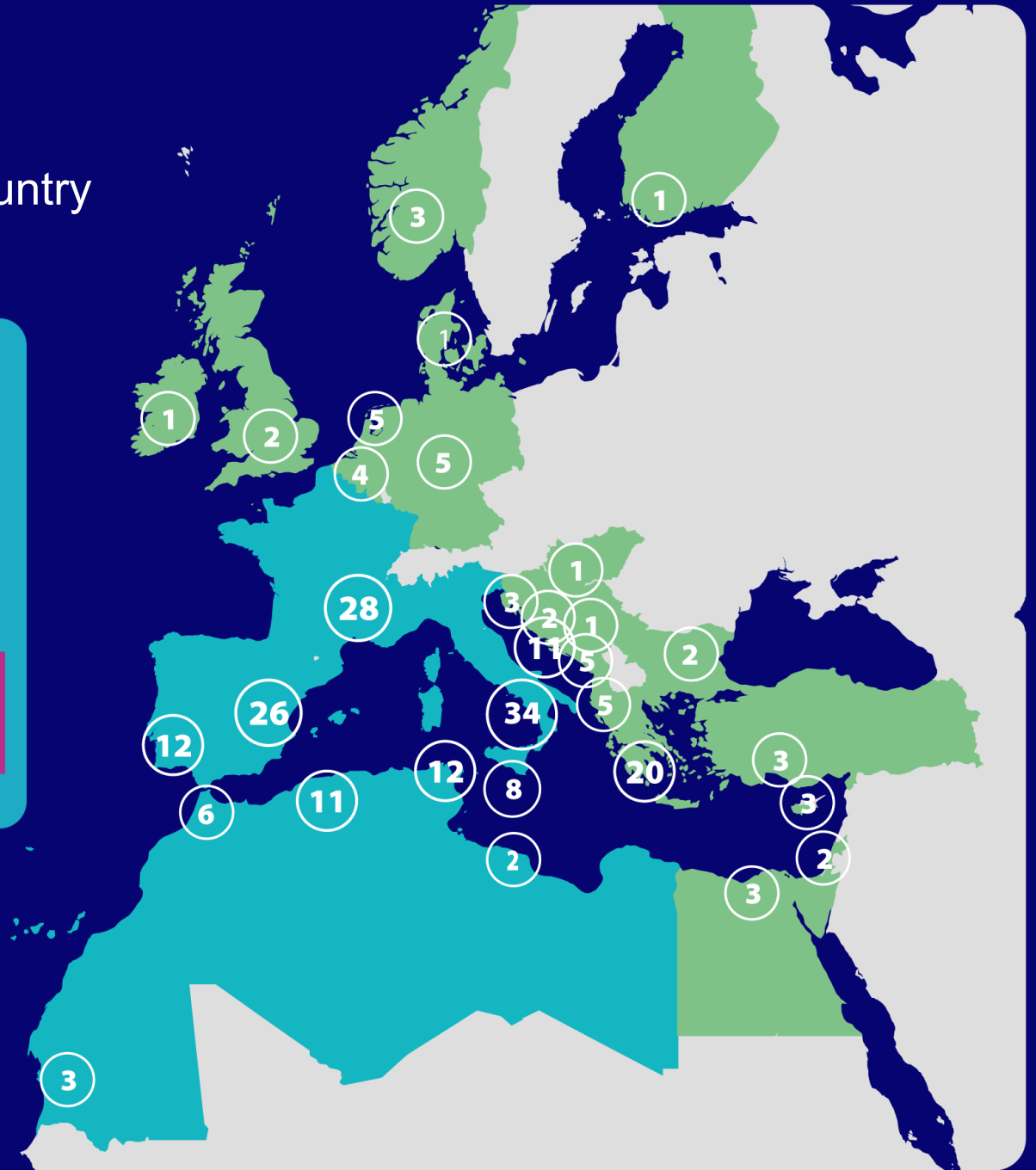
# SOME RESULTS

Approved and funded projects/ breakdown by Country



**21**

Non-WestMED countries also benefitted  
Notably Greece (20) and Croatia (11)



# SOME RESULTS



Approx **50**/ year WestMED branded events – incl. Stakeholder conferences, Hackathons and Ministerials



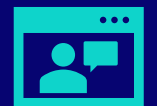
**3** countries that have been directly supported with their national maritime/ blue economy strategy (Algeria, Italy, Tunisia - with Libya ongoing)



**2** National maritime cluster created with the support of WestMED (Maritime Clusters Alliance) in Mauritania and Libya (assisted by the Italian National Hub). Others are being developed in southern partner countries



**2.750** tweets/posts related to news, (funding) calls and events on the website and X (formerly Twitter)



**11.4K** views on YouTube | **1.670** followers on X (Twitter) | **24.300** website visits/ year (2023)

# STRUCTURE

## **Steering Committee**

EC/ UfM/ CINEA/ National Coordinators/ Consortium

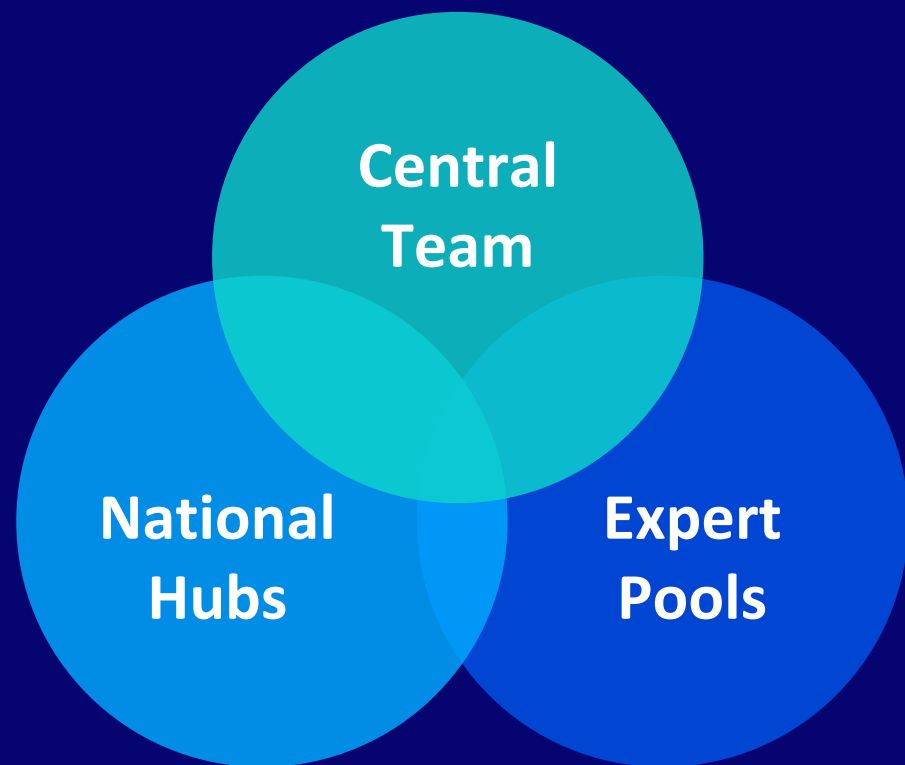
## **Overall management**

CINEA/ EC/ Consortium

## **Operational Management**

Consortium

# TEAM



29+ Experts



# 10 NATIONAL HUBS/ - CENTRES

- Assist blue projects in their search for partners, funding (EU) and capitalization
- Lead discussions on blue themes with stakeholders for sustainable transitions
- Strengthen blue policies at local, national, regional and European levels for greater synergies



# Libyan National Coordinator

Ali Shagruni



# Libyan National Hub

Masauda Abuarosha

[libya@westmed-initiative.ec.europa.eu](mailto:libya@westmed-initiative.ec.europa.eu)





**الكتلة البحرية الليبية**  
LIBYAN MARITIME CLUSTER

# WE CAN HELP...

## ▶ **If you have a concrete project, to...**

- Identify possible funding opportunities
- Connect with possible partners across the National Hub Network
- Structure your project(idea)
- Provide argued proofreading of technical dossiers and budget proposals for official submissions

## ▶ **If you have expertise, to...**

- Connect you with possible projects across the WestMED National Hub Network
- Provide you with a platform to help shape future WestMED developments (stakeholder meetings)

# FOR

- Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)
- Public institutions
- Academia
- Research centres
- Entrepreneurs
- Local communities
- Maritime clusters



IN-PERSON



VIRTUAL

# ASSISTANCE



# Filling gaps of the national/regional ecosystem



# Water resilience strategy

## Background

The Water Framework Directive provides the main foundation for water policy in Europe, setting rules that protect water resources, fresh and saltwater ecosystems, and ensure our drinking and bathing water is clean.

[https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/water/water-framework-directive\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/water/water-framework-directive_en)

The water resilience strategy is firmly rooted in the 2050 vision put forward by the EU at the 2023 UN Water Conference.

Water resilience is a priority of the European Commission as President von der Leyen announced in the 2024-2029 Political Guidelines.

As from December 2025, the Commission will hold, every two years, a water resilience forum.

This will bring together stakeholders and interested parties to take stock of progress made in enhancing water resilience across all levels of government, business and civil society, and monitoring implementation of this strategy.

# European Water resilience strategy

[https://commission.europa.eu/topics/environment/water-resilience-strategy\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/topics/environment/water-resilience-strategy_en)

The 2025 Water Resilience Strategy focuses on three objectives:

**Restore and protect the water cycle as the basis for water supply, from source to sea.**

Effective implementation of the existing EU framework is key, including the Water Framework Directive, the Flood Management Directive, and the Nature Restoration Regulation.

Further efforts are needed to protect resources, boost sustainability, improve water retention on land, and tackle pollutants in drinking water.

**Build a water-smart economy to boost competitiveness, attract investment and promote the EU's water industry:** Improve water efficiency and sustainable water management.

The Recommendation on Water Efficiency First provides guiding principles to reduce water consumption and sets an EU-wide goal to improve water efficiency by 2030.

**Secure clean and affordable water and sanitation for all, and empower consumers for water resilience:**

Access to safe drinking water and sanitation is a human right. Support is needed to bring clean water and sanitation to some regions and vulnerable groups, and improve water treatment to remove dangerous pollution, pathogens and diseases.



SOME

**SUPPORTED  
PROJECTS**



# SUPPORTED PROJECTS

## Maritime safety and the fight against marine pollution



WestMED support | Example funded project

### **TOUMALI**

Prevent Tourism Marine Litter  
in Northern Africa

## Development of coastal communities, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture



WestMED support | Example funded project

### **FIUFRA**

Fight IUU (Illegal, Unreported  
and Unregulated) Fishing  
by creating a regional academy

## Biodiversity, marine habitat conservation and restoration



WestMED support | Example funded project

### **ARIBIOTECH**

Process organic waste found in the  
marine environment to produce new  
products using blue biotechnology

# SUPPORTED PROJECTS

## Sustainable consumption and production



WestMED support | Example Awarded project  
**GALATEA**

Focus on high potential Blue Growth domains: Smart Port, Smart Ship, Smart shipyard and Maritime Surveillance

## Maritime cluster development



WestMED support | Example Awarded project  
**MEDBAN**

Build an innovative acceleration ecosystem Based on Med ports as Environmental, Social, Governmental Blue Economy Hubs

## Skills development and circulation



WestMED support | Example Awarded project  
**MARMED**

Develop and implement Cluster management e Educational programs and training



SOME

FUNDING

PROGRAMS

# CONTINUOUS SCREENING (non exhaustive)

## CALLS/ GRANTS/ TENDERS/ PROPOSALS

<b>CINEA</b>	European Climate Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency
<b>DG MARE</b>	Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
<b>EMFAF</b>	European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund
<b>LIFE</b>	EU Funding programme for the Environment and Climate Action
<b>Horizon Europe</b>	Horizon 2020/ Research and Innovation Programme
<b>Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership</b>	SBEP enables research and innovations that contribute to the transition towards a climate-neutral, sustainable and productive Blue Economy
<b>Cost Action</b>	European Cooperation in Science & Technology
<b>ENI CBC MED</b>	European Neighbourhood Instrument/ Cross Border Cooperation/ Mediterranean
<b>INTERREG</b>	Interreg Next MED, Interreg Euro-MED
<b>ERDF</b>	European Regional Development Fund
<b>COSME</b>	Europe's programme for small and medium-sized enterprises
<b>CEF</b>	Connecting Europe Facility (transport, energy and digital projects)
<b>ERASMUS +</b>	EU programme for education, training, youth and sport
<b>CHAFEA</b>	Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency

An aerial photograph of a vast aquaculture farm, likely for salmon, featuring hundreds of circular pens arranged in a grid across a body of water. The water is a deep blue, and the pens are visible as lighter, circular structures. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**STAKEHOLDER  
THEMATIC GROUPS**

# THEMATIC STAKEHOLDER GROUPS



## SHIPPING



## TOURISM



## AQUACULTURE



## MSP

**Maritime Spatial Planning  
Community of Practice**



## CLUSTERS



## EDUCATION

**Blue Skills & Ocean Literacy  
(in development)**

# GREEN SHIPPING AND PORTS

- **Three EMFAF projects** awarded funding (Green Marine Med, POWER4MED and CALLMEBLUE)
- Follow-up to CETMO reports: The 'Centre d'études des transports pour la Méditerranée occidentale') encouraging cooperation related to transport in the Western Mediterranean
  - **Develop the concept of "connectivity"** (from east to west and towards southern countries)
- **Main priorities:**
  - Technology chain observatory
  - Ports as energy communities
  - Fleet renewal and refitting
- **Other emerging topics: innovation in green public procurement in ports, sustainability in small ports** Synergies permanentes with REMPEC, MEDPORTS, CETMO, technology platform for maritime transport (Waterborne transports)
- **Synergies between WestMED and the Atlantic sea** within the framework of Pillar 1: Atlantic ports as gateways and hubs for the blue economy



# POWER4MED

local emPOWERment of fuel  
transition **FOR** a green  
**MED**iterranean



## WESTMED ASSISTANCE

- Matchmake among stakeholders
- Support partnership building
- Identify funding calls for project proposals

## COUNTRIES

Italy  
Algeria  
Spain  
Egypt

Türkiye  
Libya (associated)

## BUDGET

€ 798.043

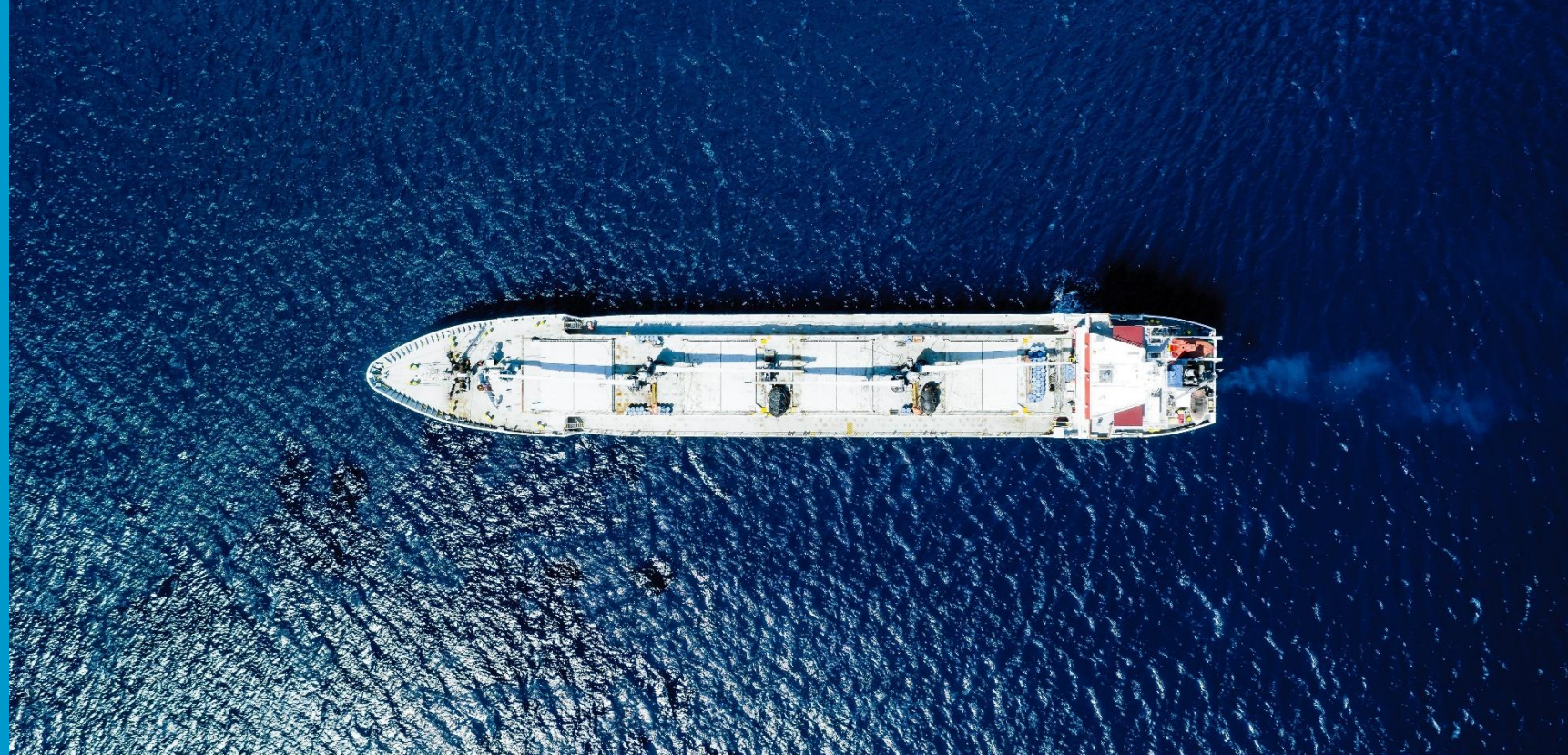
## SOURCE DE FINANCEMENT

EMFAF



# Green Marine Med

Mediterranean Green Shipping Network: Linking Ports, Industries, Investment and Innovation for Monitoring and Technology Foresight on Green Shipping in the Mediterranean



## WESTMED ASSISTANCE

- Identify/ shaping proposal ideas
- Identify funding calls
- Matchmake among stakeholders
  - Support partnership building

## COUNTRIES

Spain	Türkiye
France	Israel
Italy	

## BUDGET

€ 1.179.443

## SOURCE DE FINANCEMENT

EMFAF

# EMFAF Regional Flagship call 2023: Sustainable transport and ports in the Mediterranean

- **GreenMED** - Green Shipping Pathways Towards a Clean Energy Transition in the Mediterranean
- Effectively **support green shipping efforts** in the Mediterranean Sea basin, by **promoting plausible scenario-based decarbonisation pathways**.
- **Comprehension and integration of innovative technologies**, selected on future potentials and various economic, social and environmental criteria. Regional ship energy demands, the fuel supply chains in both shores of the Mediterranean Sea, and the variety of emerging green shipping technologies will be considered.
- **Establishment of a decarbonisation hub: the Mediterranean Sustainable Shipping Observatory (MSSO)**, development stakeholders' network & building knowledge capacity.
- Decarbonisation pathways and options -> **recommendations for policy making and informed investment decisions**.
- **Duration:** 24 months - **EU contribution:** € 740.868

## 2. EMFAF-2023-BlueCareers

### State of Play

- 36 Proposals received – 8 granted
- Project Starting Dates 1 September 2023
- Kick-off meeting in Brussels 22 September 2023
  
- Sea basins/areas covered: North Sea, Baltic Sea, Atlantic, Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, Outermost regions (indirectly) and EU in general.

# BLUE PORTS project

BLUE PORTS	Blue careers in net zero energy ports
Target Sea Basins	Mediterranean and Black Sea
Concept	Aims to develop a new, certified, training program for trainers and final users (professionals and students) to <b>enhance digitalization and greening of port activities.</b>
Activities proposed etc	Set up 'Trainings of the trainers' schemes, ensure dissemination of the most recent available knowledge, technology and practices; design and launch the virtual learning environment; eLearning platform for distance learning and handbook in 5 languages, deliver a mutually acknowledged certification scheme to keep high-quality standards for technologies and policies towards zero emission for ports at EU level and a roadmap for the implementation across the Mediterranean and Black Sea.
Consortium	8 partners (4 EL also coordinator, 1 ES, 1 IT, 1 GE and 1 TN)
EU contribution and duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 937 327 EUR</li><li>• 24 months</li></ul>

# LIFE4MECA: a wake up call for the Mediterranean Supporting Maritime Emission Control Areas

## WP1 – Project management, and coordination

### PHASE 1

#### WP2 – Preparatory actions

- Substandard ships
- ATLECA assessment
- Knowledge gathering
- IMO, EMSA

### PHASE 2

#### WP3 – Capacity building & support

- Expertise to MEDECA
- ATLECA scenarios
- Access to finance
- IMO, EMSA

### PHASE 3

#### WP4 – Sustainability, replication and exploitation of LIFE4MEDECA+ results

## WP5 - Dissemination, communication, stakeholders & networking

**EU MISSIONS**  
RESTORE OUR OCEAN & WATERS  
BY 2030



Join the **ECA4MED** community by filling out the capacity building questionnaire

JOIN NOW

[WWW.ECA4MED.COM](http://WWW.ECA4MED.COM)

# S3 partnership: blue economy



- 7 Regional Bodies
- 12 Businesses & Clusters
- 4 Reseach & Innovation
- 3 Civil Society Organisations

# AQUAWEST

Promote and accelerate cooperation across the Western Mediterranean to generate innovative solutions for the development of economically and socially sustainable aquaculture

- Launched in 2021
- Led by WestMED's Algerian National Hub
- Main objective: to promote knowledge sharing, facilitate policy development, encourage cooperation between stakeholders and identify funding
- Explore further synergies/opportunities (e.g. SwitchMed in Tunisia, AquaBioTech group, NewTechAqua project, etc.)
- Synergy opportunities with the recently launched Technical Group on Aquaculture in the Black Sea basin
- Synergies with the FAO/GFCM and the EU Aquaculture Assistance Mechanism



# MARITIME CLUSTERS ALLIANCE

- Launched in 2021
- Led by Pôle Mer Méditerranée and coordinated by WestMED's National Hubs from Mauritania and Tunisia
- Promotes dialogue between Mediterranean maritime clusters: south south (Tunisian Maritime Cluster) and north-south (Blue Italian Growth), as well as attracting investments (Forum Oceano)
- Focuses on project development, cluster management training, as well as creating project proposals
- 3 projects supported and awarded funding in 2023: MARMED, MEDBAN and CALL ME BLUE





# MEANING OF CLUSTERS

- Clusters have been originally defined as “geographically proximate group of interconnected companies, associated institutions and research bodies, in turns linked by commonalities and complementarities” (Porter, 1998).
- Clusters are strongly related to the social and economic history, and therefore to the productive vocation of the territories (historical role of large « national » companies;
- The form of aggregation that a Cluster may adopt are various (association, consortium, federation, foundation, academic centre, ONG etc).
- Transition from the sectoral to the challenge concept.
- Clusters manager may respond to different profiles, according to the goals and the activities of the aggregation (advocacy capacities, recognized sectoral leadership, R&I stimulation, business developer, project manager). He has to know the territory, the sector(s), the international contest.
- 3 main profiles of Cluster Manager: R&I (academic) leader, experienced manager, “animator” (mostly coming from the professional bodies).



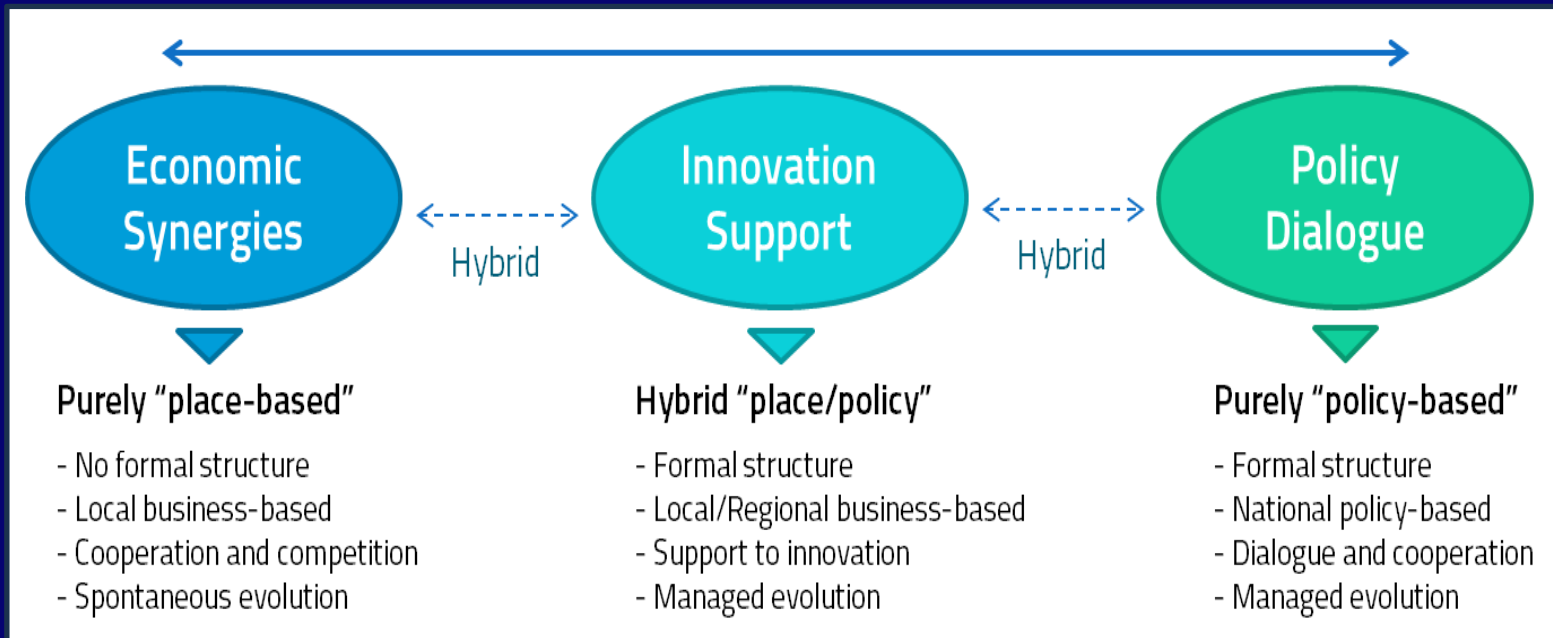
# CLUSTERS: TYPOLOGIES AND OBJECTIVES

- Three ideal types have appeared in literature and practices, with an important role for “hybrid” forms.
- These hybrid forms are structured groupings aimed at meeting local needs in terms of innovation, knowledge, financing, etc.
- The development and analysis mainly focused on these (note: existing practices are less clearly attributable to a model)

## Clusters:

*‘Geographically close groups of interconnected companies, associated institutions and research organisations, linked by commonalities and complementarities’.*

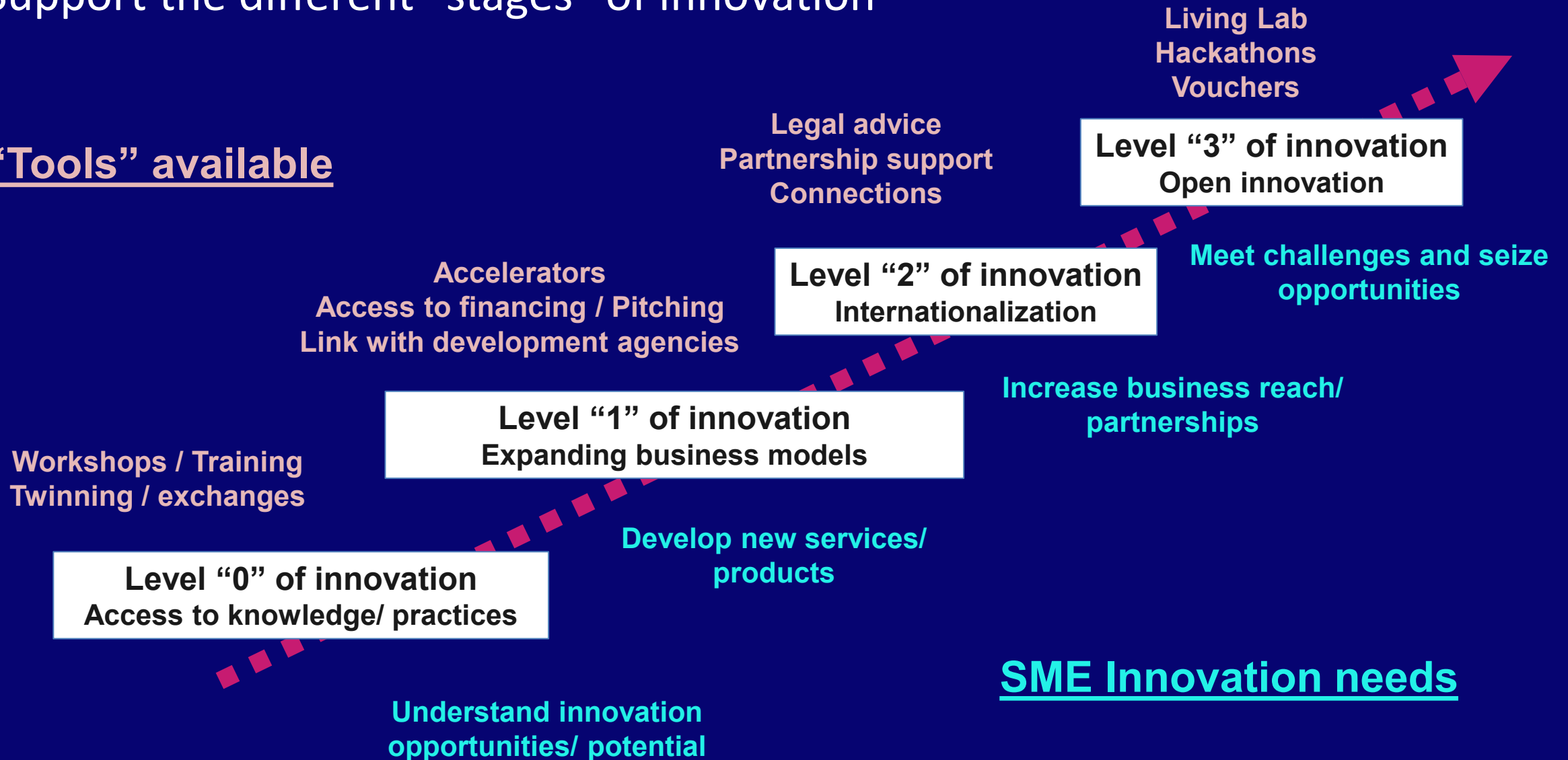
Porter, 1998).



# POTENTIALS

Support the different “stages” of innovation

## “Tools” available



## SME Innovation needs

# MARITIME CLUSTERS

## AN IDEAL “BROKER” FOR LOCAL SMEs

Bring together and have direct access to a range of local stakeholders

Local and regional authorities

Fishery and  
aquaculture

Research Centres

Marine Renewable Energies

Maritime  
Clusters

Port Authorities

Tourism and  
leisure

SMEs/ Large companies

Transport and logistics

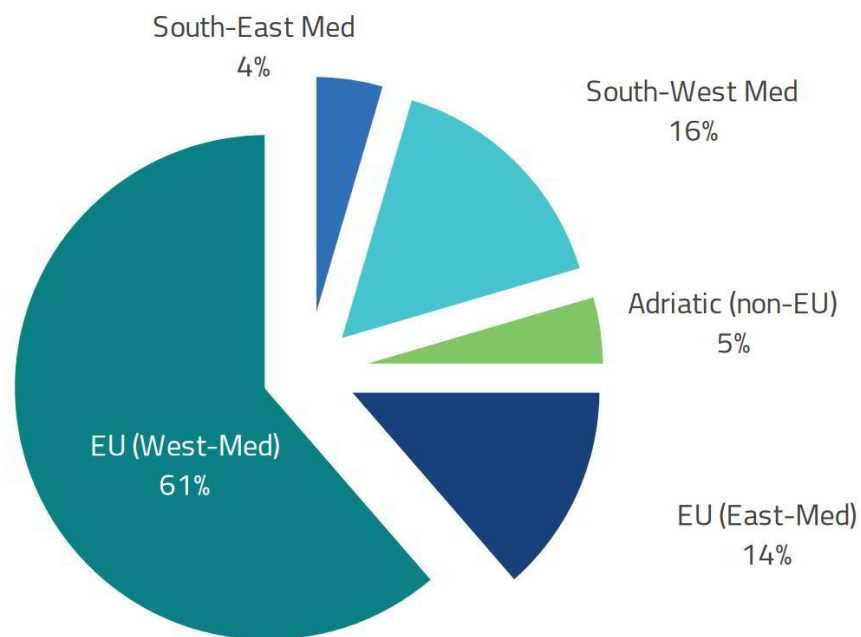
Understanding local value chains and business ecosystems in the SME sector

# WestMED

Developed but still needing support

Potential to be further exploited

An effective “platform” for stakeholders is already available



Source: UfM (2019) – Maritime Clusters in the Mediterranean Region

## Main characteristics

- June 2021: official launch
- Maritime clusters - strategic actions
- Geographic scope: priority to the north and west of the Mediterranean (but open to clusters of the Eastern part of the Mediterranean)

## Main activities

- Dialogue between clusters: Pôle Mer Méditerranée (FR)
- South-South Cooperation: Tunisian Maritime Cluster
- North-South Capacity Building: Italian Blue Growth
- Investment attraction: Forum Oceano (PT)



### Expanding membership

- Mauritania
- Libya
- Morocco?

# MARITIME SPATIAL PLANNING

- The Community of Practice (CoP) on Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) for the Mediterranean was launched on January 26, 2023 by CINEA and DG MARE
- The main objective: establish permanent cross-border dialogue between MSP practitioners (i.e. planners, researchers), to strengthen cooperation between the north and south of the Mediterranean
- Ongoing series of thematic webinars (check European MSP Platform - website)

[maritime-spatial-planning.ec.europa.eu/msp-resources/med-msp-cop](https://maritime-spatial-planning.ec.europa.eu/msp-resources/med-msp-cop)



# NEW STAKEHOLDER GROUP

## Sustainable Coastal Tourism

- The TG serves as an **informal FORUM** where participants can discuss **their needs to advance towards a sustainable tourism within the Western Mediterranean** around the topics already set at EU level with regards to **green transition, digitalization, governance and skills**.
- This TG also focuses on addressing other **policy and regulation topics** that can **help non-EU countries adapt and develop these sustainable tourism practices**.
- **Led by the Spanish National hub and supported by the Maltese National Hub.**

Launched  
**Sun&Blue Congress, 21 November 2024**





# STAKEHOLDER EVENTS

(National and international)

Conferences, Hackathons, webinars, back to back events



Knowledge exchange | Project idea development | Networking

# WESTMED BEST PROJECT AWARDS

- 4 categories
- A trophy and certificate
- Extra support and promotion
- Next edition 2025 | Watch the website and X (Twitter)



**WESTMED 2023**  
BEST PROJECT AWARDS



[Submit your project](#)



Winner of the 2021 WestMED Award  
'Blue Skills and Circulation'



*The WestMED award was an acceleration springboard for our hub of innovation, apart from the great support we had and the visibility among potential Mediterranean partners.*



**Nesrine Ziad**  
Cofounder Leancubator

*We are very honored by the trust and recognition that has been given to us allowing us to take part in important consortiums.*

**WESTMED**  
blue economy initiative



# National Hub

# ITALY



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