

Atlantic–WestMED Stakeholder Conference

16 September 2026



UNIVERSITY OF
LAS PALMAS DE GRAN CANARIA,
SPAIN

University of Las Palmas De Gran Canaria | Aula Magna
Edificio de Humanidades Campus Universitario del Obelisco Calle Pérez del Toro | Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain

AGENDA

08:30-09:15 Registration & Welcome

09:30-09:45 High-Level Opening Ceremony

Official opening of the joint Atlantic–WestMED Stakeholder Conference, bringing together representatives from European institutions, national authorities, regional governments, and sea-basin governance initiatives.

This session will set the political and strategic context for enhanced cooperation between the Atlantic and WestMED regions within the framework of the European Ocean Pact and related EU priorities.

Speakers

- Representative from the regional Canary Islands Government
- Representative from the Spanish Co-Presidency and the Tunisian Co-Presidency
- Representative from the EC

9:45-10:45 Islands, Coastal and Outermost Regions: Shared Challenges and Opportunities

This interactive session will explore common challenges faced by islands, coastal territories, and outermost regions, including connectivity, climate resilience, sustainable tourism, demographic pressures, and blue economy diversification.

Format: Roundtable with interactions from the audience



Moderator: Irene Vecchiato (DG MARE)

Speakers

- Representative from the Canary Islands Region (TBC)
- Javier Garat, President of the Association of National Organisations of Fishing Enterprises in the European Union (Europêche) and Representative from the EESC (NAT - Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment section)
- Nesrine Ziad, Programs Director. Leancubator | Sustainable Innovation Hub Algerian Blue Innovation Cluster & Leancubator - Algerian Hub for Sustainable Innovation
- Marianna Venuleo, Canary Islands Institute of Technology (ATL.A.HUB EMFAF project)

10:45-11:15 COFFEE BREAK & NETWORKING

11:15-12:00 Investing in sustainable blue economy for resilient coastal communities

This session will explore how sustainable innovation can create opportunities for private investors and other donors, such as the EIB and accelerators, to support healthier marine and coastal ecosystems while strengthening the resilience and competitiveness of Atlantic and western Mediterranean coastal communities.

The discussion will focus on the importance of small-scale financing for early-stage, high-impact solutions. Such support can help pilot innovative approaches, assess market potential, and develop viable business models for wider commercialisation.

Format: Roundtable with interactions from the audience

Moderator: Matteo Bocci (EU Sea Basins Assistance Mechanism team)

Speakers

- Elisa Ulazzi, Regional Project Manager, WWF Mediterranean (Rome)
- Javier Fraga Diaz, Director ABANCA MAR | Director of the Executive Master in Seafood Management - Universidad Intercontinental de la Empresa (UIE)
- Alessandro Silvestri, Managing partner MALTAccelerate
- FANBEST (TBC)

12:00-13:00



PARALLEL SESSION 1 | Ocean Data, Knowledge and OceanEye: Strengthening Maritime Decision-Making

This session will explore the role of marine data, observation systems, digital tools, and knowledge-sharing in supporting evidence-based policymaking and sustainable blue economy planning.

Particular attention will be given to the recently launched European Commission initiative [OceanEye](#), aimed at strengthening Europe's ocean observation and monitoring capacities and reinforcing global cooperation on ocean knowledge.

Format: Roundtable with interactions from the audience



Moderator: To be confirmed (DG MARE)

Speakers

- DG MARE representative - OceanEye
- Andrej Abramić, Science Director at Maritime Affairs, Data & Analytics (MADA)
- IEO Spain representative (TBC)
- Prof. Mohamed Salah, General Director of Institut National des Sciences et Technologies de la Mer - Tunisia (INSTM)



PARALLEL SESSION 2 | Review of the AAM

Review of the Atlantic Maritime Strategy Action Plan: Lessons Learned and Priorities for the Next Phase of Atlantic Cooperation

Session Concept

The Atlantic Maritime Strategy and its Action Plan have provided the framework for cooperation across the Atlantic basin for more than a decade, bringing together Member States, regions and stakeholders around shared maritime priorities.

The session takes place at an important moment for Atlantic cooperation. The European Ocean Pact is moving into implementation, with the recently adopted Coastal Communities Communication, the “Ocean Eye” Initiative, the [Maritime Industrial Strategy and the Ports strategy](#) and preparations for **the Ocean Act**. In parallel the European Council has invited the European Commission in December 2025 to develop a new Atlantic Macro-Regional Strategy by 2027, taking into account the existing Atlantic Maritime Strategy.

Accordingly, the European Commission suggested to call the new strategy Atlantic Maritime and Macroregional Strategy in order to give full recognition of the maritime dimension of the new strategy building on the existing sea-basin strategy. In this context, the Commission is engaging with Member States and stakeholders to reflect on the future of Atlantic cooperation.

The discussion will also explore how future cooperation can remain coherent with evolving EU priorities while building on the strengths of the existing Atlantic maritime framework.

Session Objectives

- Take stock of what the Atlantic Maritime Strategy and its Action Plan have achieved;
- Introduce the emerging priorities Atlantic cooperation must address, and establish which elements must be maintained as the region moves towards a broader strategic framework;
- Introduce the regional perspective and cooperation priorities;
- Exchange on possible ways forward towards the Atlantic Maritime and Macro-Regional Strategy.



13:00-14:00 NETWORKING LUNCH & PROJECT EXHIBITION

Exhibition stands

During the lunch, participants will have the opportunity to visit several exhibition stands showcasing inspiring initiatives and innovative projects contributing to the sustainable development of the Mediterranean blue economy.



Clúster Marítimo de Canarias

Discover the [Clúster Marítimo de Canarias \(CMC\)](#), a key driver of the Canary Islands' blue economy. Learn how its innovative initiatives, partnerships and Interreg MAC-funded projects A3MAtlantic and BlueSupplyChain are advancing maritime competitiveness, sustainability and cooperation across national and international markets.



Plataforma Oceánica de Canarias (PLOCAN)

Discover [PLOCAN](#)'s ocean innovation ecosystem, showcasing how open ocean test sites, observatories and advanced infrastructures accelerate marine technology development. Explore projects in renewable energy, autonomous systems, ocean observation and restoration supporting a sustainable blue economy and maritime resilience.



EU4Ocean Coalition

Discover the [EU4Ocean Coalition](#) and how it is strengthening ocean literacy across Europe. Explore opportunities to collaborate through Partners4Ocean, the Youth4Ocean Forum and the Network of European Blue Schools, and connect with a growing community driving a sustainable blue economy.



MPAs Canary Islands

Discover the [MPAs Canary Islands](#) initiative and its work to strengthen marine protected areas across the Canary Islands and Macaronesia. Explore innovative tools, collaborative conservation approaches and actions supporting the global goal of protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030.



ATL.A.HUB

[ATL.A.HUB \(Atlantic Hubs to boost Marine Algae Land-based Aquaculture and Biotechnology\)](#) links Europe's major land-based algae facilities to speed innovation, scale-up and market uptake, strengthening the algae value chain and advancing the Atlantic Blue Bioeconomy.





14:00-16:30 Atlantic–WestMED Blue Economy Hackathon: From Ideas to Cooperation Projects

After the coffee break, participants will split into **four parallel hackathon sessions**, bringing together stakeholders from the Atlantic and WestMED regions to co-develop innovative cooperation project ideas, address shared blue economy priorities, and lay the foundations for future joint initiatives.

Structure of each hackathon session

Based on the thematic preferences selected by participants during registration, participants will work in thematic groups following the structure below:

1. 10-minute introduction: Context setting, overview of funding opportunities, insights from previous projects, optional keynote, and session instructions.
2. 60-minute pitch session: Participants present project ideas in short pitches (approximately 5 minutes per idea).
3. 60-minute collaborative workshop: Participants vote on the most promising ideas and work together to further develop the selected concepts.



Hackathon 1 - Sustainable Tourism

Facilitators: Stephanie Vella (WestMED National Hub Malta) and Marta Pascual (WestMED and Atlantic National Hub Spain). Both WestMED Sustainable Tourism Technical Group Coordinators

This interactive working group will bring together stakeholders from across the Atlantic and Western Mediterranean to co-design innovative cooperation project ideas that strengthen the sustainability, resilience and competitiveness of coastal and maritime tourism.

Building on the work of the [WestMED Technical Group on Sustainable Tourism](#), participants will identify common challenges, explore opportunities for cross-basin cooperation, and develop project concepts addressing priorities such as sustainable destination management, diversification of tourism activities, blue and nature-based tourism, digitalisation, community engagement, skills development, and climate resilience.

The session will also provide an overview of upcoming European funding opportunities for sustainable tourism cooperation, with particular attention to Interreg multi-programme calls and other relevant EU funding instruments. Participants will discuss how these programmes can support the implementation and scaling-up of innovative project ideas.

The working group will benefit from practical experiences and lessons learned from existing initiatives, including the FISATUR EMFAF project (TBC) and the Regione Lazio, Italy (TBC), which will share examples of successful approaches to sustainable tourism development and cooperation.



By the end of the session, participants will have identified potential project partnerships, defined preliminary cooperation concepts, and explored concrete pathways towards future EU funding opportunities.



Hackathon 2 - Blue Skills and Careers

Facilitators: Céline Liret (Atlantic Pillar 2 Coordinator), Frédéric Herpes (WestMED and Atlantic National Hub France), plus WestMED Blue Skills Technical group coordinators: Imed Zammit (WestMED National Hub Tunisia) and Frederico Ferreira (WestMED and Atlantic National Hub Portugal).

Building on the achievements of the [Atlantic Action Plan Pillar 2 – Skills, Knowledge and Ocean Literacy](#) and the recently launched [WestMED Technical Group on Blue Skills](#), participants will identify common challenges, exchange good practices, and explore opportunities for cross-basin cooperation to strengthen education, training and workforce development across maritime sectors.

The session will begin with an update from the [EU4Ocean Coalition](#), highlighting ongoing European initiatives promoting ocean literacy, blue skills development, stakeholder engagement and synergies across existing networks and projects. This will provide the context for discussions on how to better align regional actions with wider European priorities and maximise collaboration between Atlantic and WestMED stakeholders.

Participants will then work together to develop project ideas around topics such as blue careers, upskilling and reskilling, ocean literacy, education-industry cooperation, youth engagement, gender inclusion, lifelong learning, and the skills needed for the green and digital transitions.

By the end of the session, participants will have identified potential project partnerships, defined preliminary cooperation concepts, and explored opportunities to access future European funding programmes supporting blue skills and workforce development.



Hackathon 3 – Renewable Marine Energies

Facilitators: Emer Dennehy (Atlantic Pillar 3 Coordinator) & PLOCAN.

This interactive working group will bring together stakeholders from across the Atlantic and Western Mediterranean to co-design innovative cooperation project ideas that accelerate the deployment of marine renewable energy while fostering knowledge exchange between the two sea basins. The session will build on the work of [Pillar III of the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0 – Marine Renewable Energy](#), promoting stronger collaboration between Atlantic and WestMED stakeholders to support Europe's clean energy transition.



Although both regions share the ambition of expanding offshore renewable energy, they are at different stages of development and face distinct opportunities and challenges. The Atlantic has become a leading hub for large-scale offshore renewable energy, particularly offshore wind, supported by extensive testing facilities, industrial value chains and demonstration projects.

In contrast, the Western Mediterranean is characterised by emerging markets, where development is progressing at a different pace and increasing attention is being given to smaller-scale offshore renewable solutions for ports, islands, coastal communities and local energy systems.

The session will begin with an overview by [PLOCAN](#), drawing on its extensive experience under the Atlantic Action Plan in marine renewable energy research, testing and demonstration.

The introduction will highlight the complementary strengths of both sea basins, identify common challenges, and demonstrate how knowledge transfer, technology uptake and cross-basin collaboration can accelerate innovation, investment and deployment across Europe.

Participants will then work collaboratively to develop project ideas around topics such as testing and validation infrastructures, floating renewable energy technologies, renewable energy solutions for islands and ports, environmental monitoring, permitting procedures, stakeholder engagement, skills development, and strengthening regional innovation ecosystems.

By the end of the session, participants will have identified potential project partnerships, developed preliminary cooperation concepts, and explored opportunities to access future European funding programmes supporting marine renewable energy, innovation and the decarbonisation of maritime regions.



Hackathon 4 – Decarbonisation of maritime fleets and ports

Facilitators: Leonardo Manzari (WestMED National Hub Italy and Technical Group Coordinator Green Shipping and Ports) & Gerardo Gonzalez (Port of Vigo – Atlantic Pillar 1 Coordinator).

This interactive working group will bring together stakeholders from across the Atlantic and Western Mediterranean to co-design innovative cooperation project ideas that accelerate the decarbonisation of maritime transport, ports and coastal logistics.

The session will build on the work of [Pillar I of the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0 – Ports as Gateways and Hubs for the Blue Economy](#) and the [WestMED Technical Group on Green Shipping](#), fostering stronger cooperation between the two sea basins to support the green transition of the maritime sector.



As Europe moves towards climate neutrality, ports and maritime transport face increasing pressure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while remaining competitive and resilient. Although both sea basins share this ambition, they face different challenges and opportunities depending on their traffic patterns, port infrastructure, fleet composition and energy ecosystems. The session will explore how cross-basin cooperation can accelerate the uptake of innovative solutions, facilitate knowledge exchange and support the development of joint projects.

The session will begin with practical insights from the Port of Tenerife (Cristina Rodríguez), winner of a previous Atlantic Project Award, and the EMFAF GreenMED project (Manolis Annetis), showcasing successful initiatives and lessons learned in port decarbonisation, alternative fuels, clean energy infrastructure and the transition towards more sustainable maritime operations.

Participants will then work collaboratively to develop project ideas around topics such as the decarbonisation of ports and vessels, shore-side electricity, alternative fuels and bunkering infrastructure, smart and green port technologies, energy efficiency, port energy hubs, sustainable logistics, regulatory and investment challenges, and cooperation between ports, industry and public authorities.

By the end of the session, participants will have identified potential project partnerships, developed preliminary cooperation concepts, and explored opportunities to access future European funding programmes supporting the decarbonisation of maritime transport, green ports and sustainable shipping.

16:10-16:30 Hackathon outcomes

Each hackathon group presents its key outcomes and next steps in the Aula/ plenary room.

16:30-16:45 Award Ceremony – Blue Challenge | Atlantic-WestMED Best Projects

Winners of the **Blue Challenge Initiative** and the **WestMED Best Project Awards 2026** will be officially announced. The ceremony celebrates outstanding achievements across the Atlantic and Mediterranean, recognising innovative, high-impact projects driving blue skills & ocean literacy, maritime spatial planning, healthy oceans & coastal resilience, and the green transition in maritime transport and ports.

16:45-17:00 Wrap-up and Conclusions

WestMED National Coordinator Spain

Atlantic Maritime Strategy

<https://atlantic-maritime-strategy.ec.europa.eu>

WestMED Initiative

<https://westmed-initiative.ec.europa.eu/>