

# WESTMED

5th edition

## STAKEHOLDER CONFERENCE

## CONFÉRENCE DES PARTIES PRENANTES

# 2025

Shaping the future of the Mediterranean Blue Economy

## Agenda

28 November 2025  
Royal Asbu Hotel | Tunis, Tunisia



CINEA/EMFAF/2022-3.5.1/SI2.881692

WESTMED  
blue economy initiative

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وزارة الشؤون الخارجية والهجرة والتونسيين بالخارج  
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Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad



رئاسة الحكومة  
الكتابة العامة لشؤون البحر  
Presidency of Government  
General Secretariat for Maritime Affairs

Direção-Geral de  
Política do Mar



Simultaneous interpretation in English/ French will be available during the plenary sessions of the conference

09:00-09:30

## Registration

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09:30-10:00

## Welcome, objectives of the day and opening remarks

**Setting the scene: The political/institutional framework for the development of sustainable blue economy in the WestMED**

*Moderator: Javier Fernández (Team Leader EU Sea Basins Assistance Mechanism)*

- ▶ Official welcome by Tunisian Government
  - ▶ WestMED Portuguese Co-Presidency: video-message from Marisa Lameiras da Silva
  - ▶ Giuseppe Perrone, EU Ambassador to Tunisia
  - ▶ Iglia Yakova, DG MARE
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10:00-11:00

## Strengthening Blue Skills and Ocean Literacy for a Resilient Mediterranean

*Moderator: Celia Murcia (WestMED Project Coordinator)*

### Set up the context

- ▶ Tarak Ben Salem, Arab Maghreb Union
- ▶ Shaping the Future: aligning blue skills with Mediterranean Priorities (Anja Detant, CINEA)
- ▶ WestMED perspective: From Awareness to Action: Building Blue Skills and Ocean Literacy (Imed Zammit, Tunisian National Hub)

### Project highlights

- ▶ Masterclass Experience on the Law of the Sea and Maritime Activities. (Asma Sehiri Laabidi, SGAM and Prof.Kaouthar Debbeche, FSJPST)
- ▶ Gestion durable et innovations en aquaculture: perspectives du projet CIFAA en Tunisie (Habib Majdoub)
- ▶ MARMED project: MARitime cluster Management Education Development (Elisa Van Engelenhoven, Formare)

## Roundtable

*Moderator: Imed Zammit (WestMED Tunisian National Hub)*

- ▶ Wissem Gaida Mahjoub, Mediterranean Institute for Training in Maritime Professions (TBC)
- ▶ Prof. Chedly Abdelly, National Agency for the Promotion of Scientific Research (TBC)

This roundtable will explore how the new WestMED Technical Group on Blue Skills can accelerate capacity-building, training, and talent development across the Mediterranean. Bringing together regional leaders in education, research, and maritime cooperation, the session will highlight current gaps, emerging opportunities, and the strategic actions needed to equip the next generation of professionals for a sustainable blue economy.

### Key questions include:

1. What should be the top priorities of the new WestMED Technical Group on Blue Skills?
2. What are the most urgent skill gaps across maritime sectors in the Maghreb and the wider Mediterranean?
3. Where do you see opportunities for regional cooperation between research agencies, training centres, and industry?

11:00-11:30

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## The European Ocean Pact and the Pact for the Med: role of the WestMED in their implementation

*Moderator: Matteo Bocci (WestMED Central Team)*

- ▶ Iglia Yakova, DG MARE (Ocean Pact)
- ▶ EU Delegation to Tunisia (Pact for the Med)
- ▶ WestMED Country Representatives: Gonzalo Eiriz (Spanish National Coordinator) & Zied Bouzouita (Tunisian National Coordinator)

This session will explore the specific role of the WestMED Initiative in translating the Ocean Pact into tangible action in the Mediterranean, with a focus on north–south cooperation, multi-stakeholder dialogue, and synergies with ongoing projects and policies.

The European Commission (DG MARE) will open the session with a short presentation on the Ocean Pact and outline the next steps for its implementation. It will be followed by a short presentation on the Pact for the Med by the EU Delegation to Tunisia.

The discussion will then continue in the format of a round table, bringing together institutional representatives and national stakeholders to exchange views and share perspectives.

**Key questions include:**

1. How can the WestMED Initiative act as a bridge between EU policies and regional priorities?
2. What mechanisms are available to foster joint implementation across northern and southern Mediterranean countries?
3. How can regional stakeholders, including governments, industry, and civil society, contribute to the goals of the two new Pacts?

11:30-12:00

## COFFEE BREAK

12:00-13:00

### Strengthening Maritime Clusters for a Sustainable and Competitive Mediterranean

*Moderators: Matteo Bocci (WestMED Central Team) & Hassan Agouzoul (WestMED Moroccan National Hub)*

- ▶ WestMED Cluster Alliance: cooperation in the western Mediterranean and beyond. (Matteo Bocci)
- ▶ Round table: Maritime Clusters — Bridging Research, Innovation and Business
  - Emna Sohlobji, President of the Tunisian Maritime Cluster
  - Giorgio Ricci Maccarini, President Blue Italian Growth Technology Cluster (BIG Cluster)
  - Raissa-Julie Ada Allogo, African Union
  - Saloua Sadok, National Institute of Marine Sciences and Technologies, Cluster Alliance ARIBIOTEC: A Cross-Border Experience in Blue Biotechnology Research and Innovation
  - Mohamed Trimeche, Société Tunisienne d'Élevage de Poissons (STEP), Winner of the grand prize of the 2025 edition of BlueInvest Africa matchmaking event

This session will open with a presentation on the progress achieved under the WestMED Maritime Cluster Alliance, launched in 2021 to promote cluster dialogue, strengthen southern maritime clusters, and foster north–south cooperation and capacity building.

The discussion will then continue in a round table format, focusing on the role of maritime clusters as enablers of local business ecosystems, research, and innovation. Participants will explore how clusters can accelerate the development of the blue economy across the region, and discuss new opportunities for enhanced collaboration - including the launch of the Maghreb Maritime Clusters Alliance.

**Key themes include:**

1. How can local maritime clusters generate a broader regional impact across the Mediterranean?
2. In what ways can clusters act as enablers of local ecosystems, supporting business development, research, innovation, and the advancement of blue skills?
3. How can clusters contribute to accelerating the blue economy in their regions?
4. What role can cooperation between Maghreb and EU clusters play in fostering innovation, competitiveness, and sustainable growth?

13:00-14:30

## NETWORKING LUNCH



### Thematic Stands

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

The exhibition area will serve as an informal space to exchange ideas, foster partnerships, and discover ongoing actions supporting youth engagement, ocean literacy, and marine ecosystem restoration.

**1. Stand/desk 1: ECOP Programme** – Early Career Ocean Professionals:

This stand will introduce the ECOP Programme, a global network supporting early-career ocean professionals in developing their skills, visibility and connections within the marine and maritime sectors. It will be an opportunity for young people to learn more about how to get involved, exchange experiences with peers, and explore career pathways in the blue economy. The initiative also marks the first step toward establishing an ECOP National Node in Tunisia, creating a local platform to connect, empower and engage the next generation of ocean professionals.



**2. Stand/desk 2: The ORIENTATE.TN project**, coordinated by the University of Sfax, promotes the use of seagrass transplantation as a nature-based solution to combat coastal erosion and enhance marine ecosystem resilience. The stand will feature a public awareness exhibition showcasing the vital role of seagrass meadows in protecting coastlines, supporting biodiversity, and contributing to a healthier Mediterranean.



**3. Stand/desk 3: LIFE OASIS**. The project tackles the challenge of drifting marine debris in the Mediterranean Sea and its harmful interactions with protected species such as the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*). Working across Malta, Italy and Spain via artisanal anchored fish-aggregating device (aFAD) fisheries, the initiative brings together fishers (CEPESCA), navigators, patrol boats, scientists, technology providers (Satlink) and policymakers to co-develop innovative, sustainable solutions for both ocean conservation and responsible fishing practices. The Spanish Fishing Confederation, CEPESCA, leads the replication and dissemination effort, extending its impact into North Africa and beyond.



**4. Stand/desk 4: CHITELIX.** CHITELIX is a Tunisian deep-tech start-up pioneering the circular blue bioeconomy by transforming seafood industry waste into high-value biopolymers and bio-ingredients. Through an eco-friendly extraction process, CHITELIX produces Chitosan and its derivatives, natural biopolymers that replace Chemicals in agriculture, cosmetics, water treatment, and medical applications. Based in Bizerte, Tunisia, CHITELIX reflects the new Mediterranean innovation movement by turning what was once waste into high-value circular products creating new industrial value chains while reducing marine pollution, lowering CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and generating local jobs for coastal communities.



**5. Stand/desk 5: BLUEPSOL.** Tunisian startup providing solar and connected energy solutions for sustainable fishing and aquaculture. At the heart of the blue economy, the company supports marine communities in their transition from fuel dependency to energy autonomy, combining innovation, social impact, and environmental protection. Bluesol was created for marine communities seeking to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels and embrace clean, affordable, and reliable energy. Through solar technologies, efficient electrical generators, smart storage systems, and aquaculture monitoring tools, the company helps lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, cut operational costs, and improve working conditions for small-scale fishers and aquaculture farmers.



**6. Stand/desk 6: MEDIGREEN.** The project aims to explore how Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) can serve as a key driver for the green transition in the Mediterranean Sea. It explores how MSP can promote and strengthen both sectoral and cross-sectoral responses to sustainability challenges, while considering the unique characteristics of this semi-enclosed and highly interdependent basin—its complex ecosystems, socio-economic dynamics, governance frameworks, and shared cultural heritage. By engaging both EU and non-EU countries under the Barcelona Convention, the project is helping reinforce the European Green Deal objectives within the current MSP plans implementation and, specifically for aquaculture, fisheries, offshore renewable energies and nature protection, while laying the groundwork for more coordinated, basin-wide, and climate-oriented marine management in future planning cycles.



14:30-16:00

## Thematic parallel sessions

### SESSION 1 | Room Oulaya 3

#### Maritime Spatial Planning (CoP MSP MED and MEDIGREEN)

*Facilitators: Thanos Smanis (WestMED Central Team/ CoP) & Cristina Cervera (MEDIGREEN/ CoP)*

In the lead-up to the 5th WestMED Stakeholder Conference, a series of events on 25–27 November—led by PAP/RAC, MEDIGREEN and the MED-MSP-CoP—will set the stage for a regional dialogue on Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) in the Mediterranean. The 28 November MSP session will build on this momentum to promote a shared, basin-wide approach that aligns national efforts with WestMED priorities such as sustainable aquaculture, green ports, blue skills and ocean literacy.

Bringing together authorities, experts and industry, the session will present the UNEP - MSP 2030 Roadmap and key findings from recent workshops, discuss common challenges and opportunities, and outline next steps for coherent MSP implementation through pilots, training and cross-border collaboration.

### SESSION 2 | ROOM FEYROOZ 1/2

#### Energy Transition of Blue Economy Sectors: Efforts from the EU Energy Transition Partnership

*Facilitators: Leonardo Manzari (WestMED Italian National Hub and Coordinator of TG on Green Shipping and Ports) & Marta Pascual (WestMED Spanish National Hub)*

This session will explore the ongoing energy transition within EU fisheries and aquaculture, highlighting progress made under the EU Energy Transition Partnership (ETP). As blue economy sectors move away from fossil fuels toward cleaner and more resilient energy sources, coordinated action across stakeholders has become essential. The session will present the structure, objectives, and first recommendations of the ETP - established to guide the sector's path toward climate neutrality by 2050 - and will provide a platform for dialogue among EU and non-EU Mediterranean countries.

Through an interactive format, participants will discuss practical challenges, opportunities, and policy implications for decarbonising fisheries and aquaculture, while identifying key messages to feed into the ongoing EU ETP process.

**SESSION 3 | ROOM OULAYA 1/2**

**EU Funding Mechanisms in the Blue Economy**

*Facilitators: Celia Murcia (WestMED Project Coordinator) & Frédérick Herpes (WestMED French National Hub)*

This interactive workshop will provide an overview of key EU funding programmes that support blue economy initiatives—such as Horizon Europe, Interreg NEXT MED, LIFE, and EMFAF—with a particular focus on opportunities open to Southern Mediterranean/non-EU countries.

Participants will learn how to identify the most relevant funding calls, gain practical tips on preparing successful project proposals, and take part in a short hands-on exercise to apply these insights to real examples.

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**SESSION 4 | ROOM FEYROOZ 3**

**Sustainable Fishing and Aquaculture**

*Facilitators: Samir Bachouche (WestMED Algerian National Hub and Coordinator of AquaWEST) & Masauda Abuarosha (WestMED Libyan National Hub) in collaboration with Alessio Bonaldo (University of Bologna)*

This workshop will bring together policymakers, researchers, and industry representatives to review recent achievements and discussions from the Aquaculture Technical Group and related initiatives such as the COST Action. Building on these outcomes, participants will identify key challenges and areas for future collaboration to strengthen sustainability, innovation, and competitiveness in Mediterranean fishing and aquaculture. The session aims to deliver a tangible output: a concise set of actionable recommendations and 2–3 priority project concepts that directly contribute to the WestMED Initiative’s objectives and guide the next steps for joint action in the region.

**16:00-16:15**

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**Wrap-up from the thematic parallel sessions**

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16:15-16:45

## WestMED Initiative Project Awards

*Moderators: Javier Fernández & Imed Zammit (WestMED Tunisian National Hub)*



Announcement of the winners of the 4 different project award categories



Pitching of the category winners to a selection panel with a focus on transferability/ replicability – to compete for the overall 2025 WestMED Initiative Award



Voting for the WestMED Initiative Project Award 2025



Announcement of the best 2025 WestMED Project Award winner

16:45-17:00

## Final remarks and closing

- ▶ Iglia Yakova, DG MARE
- ▶ Zied Bouzouita, Tunisian WestMED Co-Presidency

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