

BIG TC

# INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER



# BIG TC

BLUE ITALIAN GROWTH TECHNOLOGY CLUSTER

**THE INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGY  
OF BLUE TECHNOLOGY CLUSTERS:  
CREATING NETWORKS TO ACCELERATE  
TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND SCALE UP.**

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*LEONARDO MANZARI*



THE BIG TC INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER AIMS TO GIVE VOICE TO THE MOST INCISIVE INITIATIVES AND REFLECTIONS CARRIED OUT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BLUE ECONOMY AT AN INTERNATIONAL LEVEL.

**IN THIS ISSUE YOU WILL FIND:**

**Roberto Cimino**, Blue Italian Growth Technology Cluster - BIG TC Vice President, in his opening statements underlines the role played by **Technological and Industrial Clusters in European industrial policy**, focusing to the Clusters role in gathering academia/research centers and firms, especially SMEs, thus accelerating the process of technology transfer and scale up. His contribution analyzes how the internationalization strategy, based on the cooperation implemented by the Technological Clusters operating in the Mediterranean Sea, is just the beginning of a roadmap already underway for a shared sphere of prosperity in our common sea.

**Sara Tedesco**, Senior Program Manager at Blue Italian Growth Technology Cluster - BIG TC, explains how Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (**COSME**) program aims to help SMEs in accessing the market as well as to strengthen their entrepreneurial education through support services. Through the Mediterranean Blue Acceleration Network (**MedBAN**) and **IKAT** projects, the goal is to provide support to SMEs that will actively contribute to the achievement of the EU's sustainable and digital objectives.

**Mounir Ghribi**, Director of ICAP (International Cooperation and Research Promotion) at the National Institute of Oceanography and Experimental Geophysics (OGS) with his article **"Internationalization of the Blue Economy in the Mediterranean: the role of OGS"** underlines the several opportunities in the blue economy sectors in the Mediterranean. The article aims to spread the

vocational training objectives carried out by OGS for the development of skills to feed blue jobs in the Mediterranean.

**Domenico De Martinis**, Scientific Attache' at the Embassy of Italy in Cairo, with his contribution takes stock of the two-days workshop on the Development of Skills and Circulation of Talents for Sustainable Blue Economy held on June 11th and 12th 2022 in Egypt. The workshop seized the opportunity to sign a memorandum of understanding for future scientific collaborations and a relevant opportunity for the international scientific community to discuss the importance of the marine and maritime industry and their impact on the Mediterranean environment and society.

**Leonardo Manzari**, WestMED Assistance Mechanism at the National Hub Italy, reports in his contribution, what happened during the Italian event **'WestMED in my country': "Blue Accelerators & Incubators: the main challenge for Blue Growth in Italy"** held in the new museum Darwin Dohrn in Naples, on 26 and 27 May 2022. Manzari, suggesting the possible directions that emerged during the meeting for an Italian Blue economy increasingly present in the national economy.

Thanks to everyone for the contributions.

# THE INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGY OF BLUE TECHNOLOGY CLUSTERS: CREATING NETWORKS TO ACCELERATE TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND SCALE UP



Technology and Industrial Clusters are an important part of the European Industrial Policy: there are more than 3000 specialized clusters in Europe, often showing resilience in economic downturns due to the value-added created by the facilitation of cross-sectoral exchange of practices and ideas (European Commission, 2021).

Besides, Clusters can provide excellent opportunities for the reskilling and upskilling of people and can contribute to the economy of the regions where they operate.

Technology Clusters, in particular, have the advantage of gathering academia/research centers and firms, with a particular focus on SMEs, and can therefore accelerate both technology transfer and the scale-up and internationalization of SMEs.

The portfolio of services that the excellent Clusters offer include scouting for opportunities, matchmaking among partners, acceleration of the idea-to-project and technology transfer phases, funding and reaching out to different sectors.

Their main focus lies with connecting firms of different sectors, academia/research centers and with facilitating the involvement and growth of SMEs, also by fostering their internationalization.

The Blue Italian Growth Technology Cluster (BIG TC), established in 2018 and co-financed by the Italian Ministry of Research (MUR), is aggressively being pursuing an internationalization strategy across the Mediterranean basin, where Italy enjoys an unparalleled geographic position. Its strategy focuses on two major axes: building networks across the countries facing both Northern and Southern shore and promoting international blue projects favoring on the one hand its strong SMEs basis and, on the other, promoting collaboration and cooperation

among blue partners from different countries.

As far as the first axis is concerned, BIG TC has promoted, in 2021, along with Forum Oceano (Portugal), Cluster Maritime Tunisien (Tunisia) and Polmer (France), under the umbrella of the WestMED Initiative, the WestMED Cluster Alliance, enlarged to the eastern Med Basin to the Strategis Cluster (Greece). As for the promotion of international projects, such network has been pivotal to have three projects approved in 2022, two within the COSME framework ([see the dedicated article in this newsletter](#)) and one within Erasmus+ program.

These three projects will allow strengthening the ties among blue Mediterranean actors across the basin, promote capacity building on the Southern Shore and provide more than €300.000 for Italian SMEs to offer specialized dedicated services focused on the Blue Economy.

These are only the first steps of a roadmap aimed at building bridges in the Mediterranean, promoting dialogue and cooperation which are vital components for a common shared sphere of prosperity in our common sea.



# COSME PROJECTS: NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR SMES

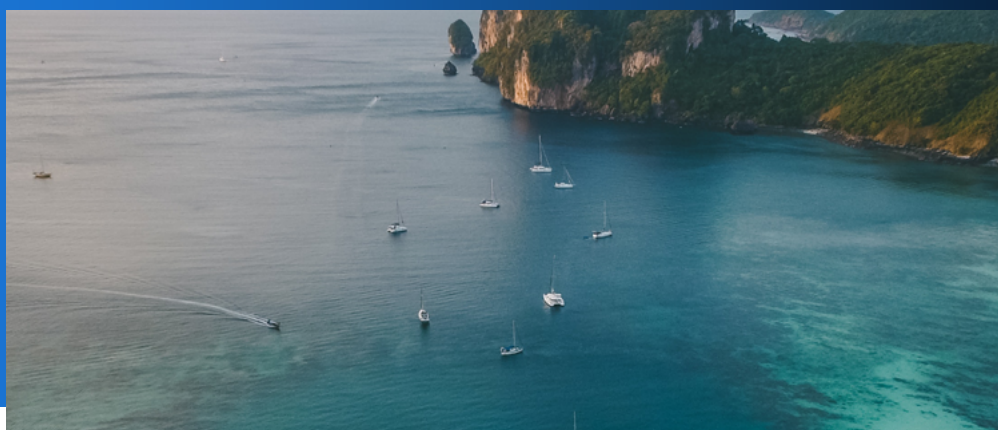
**BiG**  
Blue Italian Growth  
Technology Cluster

COVID-19 has caused several setbacks, and also for this reason the EU has promptly brought new solutions to help Europe's recovery, as well as to facilitate the EU's twin transitions to a sustainable and digital economy, through the Single Market Programme (SMP), an EU funding programme that aims to help the single market reach its full potential. In particular, under the SMP, the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (COSME) programme aims to help SMEs in accessing the market, as well as to strengthen their entrepreneurial education through support services.

Pursuing the same goals as the EU, the Blue Italian Growth Technology Cluster (hereafter "BIG TC") will actively engage the creation of new opportunities for its associated SMEs working in the blue economy through the realisation of two projects recently funded for an amount of around €320.000 by the European Commission through the COSME programme. Both projects have digitalisation and internationalisation at the core of their activities.

The Mediterranean Blue Acceleration Network (MedBAN) project's core concept is the creation of an innovation platform and acceleration services for SMEs and start-ups working in the blue economy field. Through MedBan, several SMEs will receive financial support in the process of green and digital transition, and will have the chance to transform their business models towards a smart ESG paradigm, in line with EU Taxonomy. Alongside with BIG TC, the consortium is formed by other five cluster organisations coming from France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

The IKAT project aims to provide innovation, acceleration, mentoring, training and internationalisation services to SMEs working in tourism, to make them more resilient and support their recovery. Not only through the realisation of IKAT there will be an increasing knowledge of the tourism ecosystem, but it will be also crucial for the achievement of the EC's most recent tourism policy.



In addition, a Consortium will be created to set up a democratic, agile and flexible work method, and to carry out activities to support the tourism ecosystem in the short and medium term. The main focus areas will be the Mediterranean and Black Sea and the consortium is formed by seven cluster organisations from Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain, including BIG TC.

The upcoming two years will be full of exciting opportunity for all SMEs associated to BIG TC, opportunities that will bring new huge results in the blue economy field at the national level, and that will actively contribute to the realisation of the EU's sustainable and digital goals.

SARA TEDESCO  
**SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER**  
BLUE ITALIAN GROWTH TECHNOLOGY CLUSTER - BIG TC





# INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE BLUE ECONOMY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: THE ROLE OF OGS

## SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

There are several opportunities in the blue economy sectors in the Mediterranean. Local governments should take advantage and raise awareness of such potential and work more closely with industry and the private sector to develop more innovative models to maximize job opportunities. Private-public partnerships has to be encouraged and dialogue between research and academia, the productive sector (industry, trade and business) and governance has to be fostered.

Today, as in all moments of historical change and due to the drastic economic situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the global food crisis and the war in Ukraine, we have the opportunity to steer our future in a better direction to rebuild our economies and societies. To do this, it is necessary to build trust in institutions and government commitment, reduce financial concerns, eliminate emotional distress and prepare new leaders. A new generation of young managers capable of driving the change by introducing a new development model, that guaranty a transition from a linear development model, often destructive, to a circular development model based on an ecological transition and a digital transformation of our companies. There is also a need for international cooperation and dialogue to lay the foundations for successful partnerships and explore the best ways to create jobs and develop local economies. The sea, and therefore the Blue Economy, is undoubtedly the most important resource on which to base the relaunch and development of the Mediterranean economy.



*Sustainable blue economy in the Mediterranean region a sea of opportunities*

# INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE BLUE ECONOMY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: THE ROLE OF OGS

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS TO FEED BLUE JOBS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: THE ROLE OF OGS

In line with the EU Skills Agenda for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Equity and Resilience, the EU Strategy for Blue Growth and the EU strategy for next generation Europe, the National Institute of Oceanography and Experimental Geophysics (OGS), in collaboration with other partners in the public and private sector (universities, research institutions, government bodies, industries), is promoting a training path aimed at overcoming the existing “skill mismatch” in the Mediterranean to better respond to the labour market. This program includes a master’s degree, a summer school, doctoral research fellowships and a mobility program. It has received a label from the Union for the Mediterranean for product quality and has also received the best project award in the Mediterranean from the WestMED initiative for the development of skills and circulation of talents.



134 applications



36 participants



9 Nationalities



23-53 Years old



18 full fell. 13 fees



*Second level Master in Sustainable Blue Economy organized by OGS in collaboration with the University of Trieste and financially supported by MUR*

OGS training offer has an international vocation, and it promotes career opportunities in the Blue Economy by developing skills, leveraging innovation, exchanging knowledge and enhancing research for a more sustainable Mediterranean Sea. It aims to develop new curricula and increase employability in the maritime and maritime sectors.

In addition to developing skills and developing capabilities, the aims is also to strengthen geopolitical dialogue in the Mediterranean region through increased international scientific cooperation and science diplomacy.



4000 applications



244 participants



27 Countries



24-50 Years old

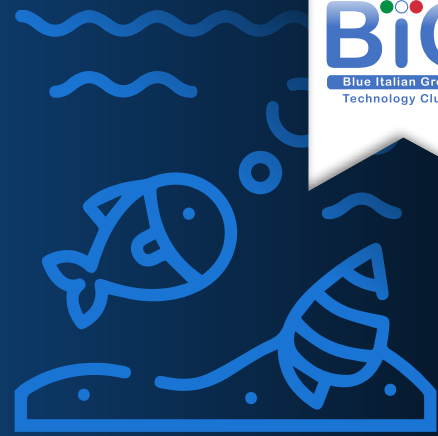


100% Fellowship

*Summer School on Blue Growth in the Mediterranean yearly organized by OGS with the financial support of the Ministry of University and Research (MUR)*



# DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE MEDITERRANEAN ECONOMY



These past 11 and 12 May 2022, the Embassy of Italy to Egypt in collaboration with the Egyptian National Institute For Oceanography & Fisheries (NIOF), the Italian National Institute of Oceanography and Applied Geophysics (OGS), and the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, hosted the event Blue Economy: Develop a Sustainable and Equitable Ocean Economy, a two-days workshop on the Development of Skills and Circulation of Talents for Sustainable Blue Economy.

The workshop was embedded in the broader event “African Conference on Priority Setting & Partnership Development for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development: Current Status, Challenges and Opportunities”, under the auspices of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, and in this framework, NIOF and OGS seized the opportunity to sign a memorandum of understanding for future scientific collaborations.

It has been a relevant opportunity for the international scientific community based in Egypt to discuss the importance of the marine and maritime industry and their impact on the Mediterranean environment and society.

The so-called “Blue Economy” sector is an engine to develop economies in the entire Mediterranean region and that is expected to grow. Taking full advantage of this sector’s potential will require new skills, a workforce from a wide variety of marine and maritime professional backgrounds and areas, which will necessitate new knowledge and training.

It is however important to ensure that the blue

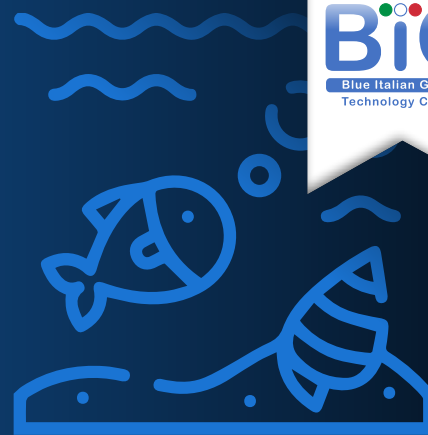
economy’s growth will not result in an exploitation of the resources, but will be tied to sustainable economies on both land and at sea. A sustainable blue economy should facilitate the development, but also looks for synergies in the maritime space, without damaging the environment. It should also help to identify real needs for investment in research, skills and innovation for climate change mitigation, circular economy and biodiversity preservation.



*Closing remarks of H.E. Nasser Kamel, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean.*

Currently, a wide variety of support tools and programs, tackling skills development and promoting international mobility, is in place. However, there is a need to map and rationalize them to avoid duplication and loss of efficiency. The workshop presented a number of successful best practices and stories in development of skills and circulation of talents for a sustainable blue economy. This enabled us to describe the concept of “Blue Economy” under different angles; the ecological and climatic issue, food security, technological opportunities as well as education.

# DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE MEDITERRANEAN ECONOMY



We hopefully identified what will be the path to the future (e.g. with the EU *Starfish Mission to regenerate the Mediterranean Sea*), and how the socio-economy of the Mediterranean region will benefit.

As mentioned during the works, the Mediterranean Sea, although it represents only a small part of the world's ocean surface, is one of the richest areas in the world in terms of biodiversity, but, unfortunately, it is also an area facing a "double jeopardy"; the region is not only warming up faster than any other inhabited area, but it is also one of the main "hotspots" of marine pollution.

Adaptation strategies and science-based policy responses to global challenges are urgently needed and therefore Blue Economy is undisputedly a high priority area ensuring a sustainable use of ocean resources that is essential to economic growth, better livelihoods, and job creation.

On the eve of COP27 coming soon in Egypt, a common will and a shared responsibility is instrumental to ensure the best possible future for the Mediterranean.

Against this backdrop, the workshop has been an important opportunity to appreciate how much the Mediterranean area is able to advance under difficult climatic, social and economic circumstances: in a region with high youth unemployment, which often increases with the level of education, development of skills and circulation of talents will facilitate the transition from a purely academic environment to highly qualified roles in the productive sector in their own countries.



*A moment of the workshop; Sustainable and circular management models in the Blue Economy Dr. C. Chiavetta, ENEA.*

**DOMENICO DE MARTINIS**  
**SCIENTIFIC ATTACHE'**  
**EMBASSY OF ITALY IN CAIRO**





# A NEW BLUE ECONOMY SUPPORT ECOSYSTEM PROPOSED DURING ITALY'S WESTMED NATIONAL EVENT IN NAPLES



Within the beautiful setting of the new museum Darwin Dohrn in Naples, on May 26th and 27th 2022, the WestMED National Coordinators and the National Hubs organized the Italian 'WestMED in my country' event: **"Blue Accelerators & Incubators: the main challenge for Blue Growth in Italy"**

With the fundamental support of Blue Italian Growth Technology Cluster and Federazione del Mare, the endorsement of the Department of Cohesion within the Presidency of Council of Ministers and of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this was also recognized as an official EMD in my country 2022 event.

It was opened with speeches from the Mayor of Naples, Gaetano Manfredi (former Dean of the University Federico II) and the Regional Counsellor for Research, Innovation and Start-ups of the Campania Region, Valeria Fascione.

Starting from the structural gap of the Italian ecosystem of the Blue Economy, the idea proposed was the implementation of a national supply chain of support for innovation, new entrepreneurship and employability, based on the alliance among Maritime Clusters, Accelerators&Incubators, Investors&Fund Managers (public&private).

Such a supply chain could facilitate and expedite the search for partners & financial resources by the promoters of a Blue Economy initiative; at the same time national and regional maritime clusters could help

mitigate the risks taken by investors and accelerators/incubators, through the support in the identification of the most deserving and really innovative initiatives.

Participants could also avail on international experiences on this topic, thanks to dedicated contributions by involved organizations, through direct speeches (in presence or online).

Therefore this two-day event gave the opportunity for Italian stakeholders to:

- become further acquainted with the WestMED Initiative activities in Italy and in the sub-basi over the last four years;
- become aware of the strategic agreement among the two national maritime clusters (proposed and supported by the WestMED National Coordinators and Italian National Hub) and the excellent results already achieved;
- network and meet, (Italian and foreign) representatives in-person from over 50 clusters, accelerators and incubators, venture capital companies, start-ups, research institutes, EU platforms, EU funds managing authorities.



# A NEW BLUE ECONOMY SUPPORT ECOSYSTEM PROPOSED DURING ITALY'S WESTMED NATIONAL EVENT IN NAPLES



More than 70 experts and professionals from the whole country joined in-person with an average of 40 participants who followed the event online.

To complement the programme, the visitors were treated to a guided tour of the museum by Prof. Ferdinando Boero, who described the 150 years history of Stazione Anton Dohrn and highlighted the significant contribution of the two scientists Dohrn and Darwin to marine zoology and their studies preserved in this museum, as well as drawing attention to the Gulf of Naples, as being the richest marine biodiversity site.

All participants who joined in-person, received a free conference kit.

As a follow-up, the WestMED National Coordinators and Italian National Hub are already undertaking the steps subsequent to the opportunities that emerged during this event.



**LEONARDO MANZARI**  
**WESTMED ASSISTANCE MECHANISM**  
**NATIONAL HUB ITALY**



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BLUE ITALIAN GROWTH TECHNOLOGY CLUSTER

## ARE YOU A CLUSTER MEMBER? CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEXT ISSUE!

Cluster invites members to suggest topics and insights of interest for future issues.  
Write to the contacts, listed at the bottom, the contributions you would like to find in the next newsletter.

## NOT A CLUSTER MEMBER? REGISTRATIONS ARE OPEN!

Do you represent a business, organization, university, research center, or other institution interested in the Blue Economy and would like to know more about the Cluster?

**Contact us, we will be happy to provide you with all the information.**

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