

sailing towards 2020



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Blue Growth and coastal development

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'Blue growth' represents a long-term strategy, supporting smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe's marine and maritime sectors. It can open up new opportunities for coastal and fisheries communities. FLAGs can take advantage of this to overcome local development challenges and promote well-informed, systematic, and mutually beneficial forms of socio-economic activity that respect the 'carrying capacities' of individual coastal ecosystems.

EU integrated maritime policy and blue growth

Maritime assets are very important for Europe, for a number of reasons: economic (jobs, industry), access to natural resources, transportation, climate and biodiversity, geopolitics...

Taking into account the importance of the sea to the EU and the huge potential for future maritime activities, as well as the growing need for environmental protection and regulation, in 2008 the EU launched an ambitious **Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP)**. The IMP encompasses all marine and maritime issues, with ambitious economic, social and environmental objectives.

It highlights the cross-cutting components of a holistic policy: a shared vision (long-term, consistent and sustainable objectives), governance (cooperation within stakeholders in order to ensure strategies and decisions are consistent), common instruments and approaches (knowledge, planning, monitoring, regional approaches...).



For a number of years now, the EU has focused considerable attention on the aim of achieving and preserving the good environmental status of EU marine waters, mainly through the Water Framework Directive (coastal waters) and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (all maritime areas under EU jurisdiction).

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The « **Blue Growth** » initiative (2012) aims to foster the development of existing or new economic activities, based on the sustainable use of marine resources and maritime space. Among the sectors with identified potential, the EU targets aquaculture, biotechnology, marine renewable energy, seabed mining and tourism.

In fact, thanks to scientific and technical progress during the last decades, it is now possible to exploit more and more marine resources:

- **biological resources**: fish, but also algae, marine molecules...
- **mineral resources**: oil and gas, sand and gravel, metals and dissolved substances, desalinated water...
- **energy resources**: wind, wave, tidal, thermal energy...

Blue growth can also open up new uses of maritime space (laying of sea cables, pipelines, underwater drones, offshore permanent platforms...), which will lead to the development of new forms of maritime activities and industries in the fields of biotechnology, energy, monitoring and surveillance, mining, housing, robotics and scientific exploration,...

These activities create jobs:

- on the sea (sailors, maintenance technicians, operators...);
- above the sea (pilots, operators..);
- under the sea (underwater workers);
- in laboratories, workshops, shops, information and communication centers.

This calls for the development of the related education programs and specialized training centers.

Blue Growth: threat or opportunity for coastal communities?

1. Blue growth activities can bring important changes for the coastal zone and coastal communities.

It is interesting to note that even when they exploit offshore resources and space, **maritime activities nearly always begin and end on the coast** (ports, cable landings, quays, pipelines, maintenance bases...). In addition, before targeting offshore resources and space in the open sea, maritime activities usually begin life in the coastal zone, which is more accessible.

Hence, coastal zones are already, and will be even more so in the future, key areas for Blue Growth: without coastal space, no Blue Growth will be possible. Every Blue Growth project requires some space on or near the shoreline.



For coastal communities, such activities are often considered to be **threats**, as the spatial, economic and cultural modifications they represent are often seen as overwhelming. But these changes also present real **opportunities**, by providing new resources (e.g. inexhaustible energy, materials for local industry, tourists) and jobs, which are often permanent (not seasonal), highly skilled and well paid. Furthermore, the communities and local stakeholders that manage to catch

the tide and harness blue growth benefits, within the framework of a local strategy, will position themselves as change-makers and role models for other areas.

2. Coastal communities: an entry point to sustainable blue growth

There are strong drivers for the development of the “blue economy”: access to new strategic resources (energy, food, metals...) and space, the creation of new jobs and contribution to tackling climate change. Such developments will soon concern most if not all European coastal areas and must be carried in a sustainable way, fully taking account of the need to protect the fragile coastal and marine environment, and to support local development in coastal areas. In facing such challenges, three responses are possible:

- **Opposition:** coastal communities can systematically *oppose new activities or discourage* developers and investors in order to protect their traditional identity and traditional activities. Many of these developments require considerable investment and expertise, which are often provided by large external firms with no links to the area, hence promoting a sense of exclusion and powerlessness among local stakeholders which can fuel their opposition;
- **Denial:** It is also possible for coastal communities to *remain detached* from these developments, although ultimately they will have to adapt. This default response is probably not the best way to ensure the community benefits from these projects and will, inevitably, impact on the sense of ownership of local communities in relation to their coastal and maritime resources;
- **Positive action: the best option for local communities is to play an active role in these developments**, in order to **maximize the benefits and minimize the negative impacts**. Through strategy development, partnership building and project support and design, Community Led Local Development and FLAGS can be key partners in supporting communities to:
 - **contribute to the selection of new activities** to be developed in their area, rather than just waiting for outside interests to propose something, purely on the basis of technical criteria;
 - **claim a larger part of the value chain** (jobs, industry, capital...) for the community, and promote a long term perspective, rather than receiving only marginal benefits in the short term (for example, from licenses for the exploitation of marine resources, the use of local space or networks, or from some initial infrastructure works);
 - **create new economic activities linked directly or indirectly with these blue growth developments;**
 - **control the impacts of projects** on local natural, human and social environment;
 - **shape their image and identity**, combining traditional aspects, based on fishing, with new ones based on modern maritime activities;
 - **control their destiny.**

Strategic guidance for FLAGs to support the involvement of local communities in blue growth projects

As highlighted during the exchanges in the Sailing Towards 2020 conference, FLAGs can support the involvement of local communities in blue growth projects in a number of different ways. We have classified them here into three broad categories:

1. Community empowerment. New activities should not develop without the real involvement of coastal communities.

It is not easy for local communities to gain access to or engage in this field, as maritime activities are usually strongly business-oriented, regulated in a very sectoral way, and often not at local level.

Nevertheless, most local communities have valuable **assets** they can exploit: space (harbors, industrial space, maritime and coastal space...), networks (roads, railways, cables...), industrial infrastructures, maritime skills, quality of life, image, etc., these are all assets that are locally owned and have real value when it comes to developing high technology maritime activities.

An important step towards empowerment is identifying **what the local community wants/doesn't want** for its area (e.g. which environmental assets does it want to protect, what resources can be exploited, or not, what part of the coast should be reserved for other activities...), and how best to achieve this.

In this sense, an important role for FLAGs could be to **support capacity building in coastal communities**, focusing in particular on the **design of a local strategy**. This should be based on extensive analysis and a long term vision of *local coastal and maritime assets*, with a clear definition and common understanding of what "blue growth" means in the local context, and the community's expectations in relation to this.



Existing approaches such as **ICZM (integrated coastal zone management)** or **MSP (maritime spatial planning)** can be used to support the FLAGs integrated strategies. FLAGs can build on the implementation of these approaches and ensure they maximize the benefits for local communities.

2. Ownership. The best way of being involved in a project is to be a shareholder.

FLAGs can support the involvement of local communities in blue growth projects in several different ways. They can support local communities in developing their own projects, such as: **marine litter reduction initiatives, recycling schemes for fishing gear, the integration of aquaculture activities into offshore wind farms; or the better use of discarded marine species.** A range of ideas were suggested during the conference.

Local communities can also support the local financing of the projects or activities by citizens and stakeholders, through: local ownership, crowd funding, community supported initiatives, (e.g. fishing boats/quotas, aquaculture installations, marine energy production...) and other mechanisms.

To ensure match-making between “blue growth” job providers and local workers, FLAGs can support a proactive approach to “mapping” the supply and demand for skills. This could be done by identifying the needs of local blue growth enterprises and then developing specific training programs and skills acquisition schemes that target the local fisheries communities. This would support diversification and job creation in a “short-circuit”, a key for sustainable and endogenous growth and job creation.

To foster ownership and creativity, there is a real opportunity for local communities to develop local and participative innovation hubs, such as [FABLABs](#) or MakerSpace. These can act as innovation catalysts, allowing local communities to access tools and expertise to tap into blue growth opportunities.

3. Partnership. Coastal communities can be a driving force in seeking synergies between existing and new activities.

Partnership is a good way to minimize conflicts, to reduce competition, and to optimize the use of space and capital. Blue growth stakeholders are usually keen to find synergies with local stakeholders, in order to reduce technical and economic risks for their projects, and they are generally happy to use local skills when available.

Governance is a major issue, however. Involving maritime stakeholders in local governance and involving coastal communities in maritime governance is essential. This is usually not easy to achieve through existing institutional set-ups, which are generally focused on terrestrial issues and limited to land-based stakeholders.

FLAGs could support, mediate or even be part of the development of **local blue growth steering groups**, pooling local maritime and coastal governance experience, where new projects could be presented and discussed at an early stage, and then followed-up in a transparent way.

FLAGs can also use their network to unite local stakeholders in support of the projects they approve, or in opposition to non-desired projects or projects with not enough local benefit.

FLAGs can act as hubs, connecting local communities and new blue growth stakeholders, while seeking to maximize opportunities for a more sustainable and inclusive development in their areas.