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Workshop:

Co-creating the Blue Bioeconomy in Regions through Valorisation

Date: Wednesday, November 15th, 2023

Theme: Business

In this collaborative workshop brought by two EU-funded sister projects, BlueBioClusters and BlueRev, stakeholders were invited to explore innovative blue value chain development. Project presentations introduced vital concepts for the development of coastal regions: social innovation and ecosystem services. They particularly emphasised the concept of valorisation, the approach of giving value to marine and aquatic bioresources, also looking at side streams and by-products, whose valorisation can also reduce their environmental impact (e.g., reutilising fish skin, heads, etc. for high-value products, instead of dumping them back into the sea). This first part of the session laid the groundwork for the subsequent activity.

The second part of the workshop involved a collaborative exercise facilitated through the [Value Chain Facilitation tool](#), developed by the BlueBioClusters to aid stakeholders in identifying and valorising value chains, including ecosystem services. Participants were divided into four groups, each focusing on a specific biomass—Fish, Macroalgae, Bivalves, and Microalgae. The exercise aimed to identify value chains, allocate economic, social, and environmental values for the chosen value chain of the group, and analyse opportunities and challenges.

The diversity of stakeholders involved ensured lively discussions and produced critical insights. The visibility of value creation through value chains became apparent, demonstrating the interconnectedness of various players in the blue bioeconomy. Research for the circular economy was highlighted as a key pathway, emphasising the need to integrate blue initiatives into sustainability frameworks like the Green Deal and Mission Ocean. Skills development emerged as a crucial aspect, with a call for collaboration models between fishermen and an emphasis on creating an attractive sector for new generations. However, challenges such as market interest in mainstream products and the perceived difficulty in recognising the value of side streams were brought to light. Social innovation costs were also discussed, showcasing the potential of new value chains to create opportunities for communities. The concept of 'another type of profit' was introduced—highlighting that endless growth isn't the only model for the future. Stakeholders suggested diversifying income and extending the season by processing side streams, adding value to waste products. Challenges such as the lack of legislation for algae in some regions, low Technology Readiness Levels (TRL), and long waiting times for licences were acknowledged. Specific suggestions were made, such as developing systems for anti-eutrophication and bioremediation, particularly in the case of kelp. The importance of biodiversity awareness for local communities, including citizens in the process of growing mussels, and innovative approaches to restaurant waste management further enriched the discussions. Participants generally reinforced the significance of collaboration and innovation in shaping a sustainable blue bioeconomy.