

Blue Horizons for Young Wavemakers: Exploring Career Pathways in the Blue Economy

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Theme: Citizen engagement & education

Workshop organiser: Blue Bio Techpreneurs project coordinator

Workshop Summary

The workshop aimed to inspire young people to pursue a career in the Blue Economy. By learning from successful role models and understanding the skills needed to thrive in the field, the participants had an opportunity to explore potential pathways towards a job in various sectors of the Blue Economy.

According to the participants of the workshop, the biggest educational challenges in the Blue Economy are (1) gaps between educational content and industry needs, (2) a lack of awareness about career opportunities, and (3) a lack of multidisciplinary collaboration in training programmes. **Piret Liv Stern Dahl, founder of BonoLab**, then took the stage to introduce [BonoLab](#), an initiative that addresses some of the challenges. It aims, Piret Live explained, at making STEAM education accessible by creating lesson plans developed in collaboration with innovative companies. The initiative actively engages with educational technologies to explore, for example, real workplaces by means of virtual tours. **Katharina Kurzweil, project manager at SUBMARINER Network**, presented [Blue Bio Techpreneurs](#), a project offering a range of training and mentoring activities designed for students and recent graduates to foster the integration of transversal and entrepreneurial skills in blue economy education. The project hosts a series of webinars about entrepreneurship in the blue biotechnology sector, produces a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on relevant competencies, and organises hackathons that bring together students, start-ups, and other actors to develop practical innovative solutions.

To demonstrate the potential of hackathons to address real-world challenges, a winning team of the Nordic hackathon was invited to present their solution and share their experiences. **Sigmar Snær Gunnarsson, the founder of [Eat Myt](#)**, presented the challenge faced by his start-up aiming to reintroduce blue mussels as a sustainable, healthy and nutritious food. The challenge is to overcome consumer barriers when it comes to blue mussel consumption due to hesitation regarding their texture, safety concerns or lack of preparation skills. The team came up with [Seavory](#), a powder made out of blue mussels

which is easy to integrate into the everyday diet of young adults who want to eat something fast but healthy. Participation in the hackathon, the team highlighted, allowed them to engage in interdisciplinary work and test their problem-solving skills. They encouraged the young participants of the workshop to join hackathons when an opportunity presented itself to gain valuable insights into the field of the Blue Economy.

The workshop continued with the presentation by **Pascal Jacobs, a research coordinator at HZ University of Applied Sciences**, who discussed the potential of applied research to bridge the gap between fundamental science and society. She explained that applied research strives to answer questions posed by practical experience and through co-creation between researchers, students and practitioners. Pascal then introduced [Aquaculture in Delta Areas](#), a research project that aims to facilitate low trophic aquaculture (LTA) development by exploring some of the practical issues faced by entrepreneurs from the sector. More specifically, the project is focused on production optimisation (oyster cultivation), production prediction (offshore mussel production), and nature-inclusive aquaculture (oyster cultivation in combination with nature restoration). It brings together farmers, trade associations, public institutions, environmental organisations and researchers to find out the possibilities of LTA.

Françoise Meyer, an oceanographer and open for job offers, shared her pathway towards a career in marine science and communication. As a graduate of a Master's Programme in Marine and Coastal Systems at the University of the Algarve, Françoise began her career as an oceanographer by gaining experience in various European research institutions. It allowed her to sharpen her technical skills (e.g. data analysis, programming, scientific writing) and operational skills (e.g. data collection, data management) often required in ocean research. This experience allowed her later to join the work of Ocean & Climate Platform (OCP), a network that facilitates communication between the scientific community, civil society and policy-makers on oceans and climate. During her work at OCP, Françoise had a chance to work on a report on fisheries and aquaculture in the context of climate change and participate in a high-level event organised by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO. Overall, Françoise highlighted the importance of networking and encouraged the participants of the workshop to seek opportunities to connect with people from the industry.

The workshop then continued in group discussions where participants tried to answer the following questions:

1. Why do you think the blue economy sector is still not well-known?

The participants noted that the blue economy sector is often perceived as limited to

countries with coastlines. This perception, combined with a general lack of knowledge about the ocean, contributes to insufficient awareness of the sector's potential. Additionally, they highlighted that businesses may view activities within the blue economy as relatively high-risk compared to more established maritime industries, such as shipping or offshore wind energy. Furthermore, the lack of awareness among end consumers about blue economy initiatives creates uncertainty regarding return on investment, which may deter greater involvement in the sector.

2. How can we inspire more young people to engage with the blue economy?

The participants highlighted the critical need to raise awareness about the blue economy through education and citizen engagement initiatives. They proposed that schools incorporate ocean-related topics into both classroom instruction and extracurricular activities. Universities, they suggested, could develop multidisciplinary courses on the blue economy, integrating both business and non-business perspectives. They also stressed the importance of increasing the sector's visibility on social media platforms to make it more relatable and engaging for the public. An enhanced social media presence could not only promote careers in the blue economy but also encourage participation in related activities, such as hackathons.

3. What is your request to educators to help further develop the blue economy?

The participants underscored the importance of adopting a holistic approach to integrating blue economy and ocean-related topics into educational programs across schools or universities. For instance, environmental science programs often emphasize land-based issues, highlighting the need for a more multidisciplinary perspective. They recommended that educational institutions collaborate with industry to provide students with opportunities such as traineeships and job-shadowing in blue economy sectors. Partnerships with governments were also suggested to promote tailored scholarships. Establishing knowledge hubs at universities could further support students by offering relevant information, guidance, and training related to the blue economy.

4. How can ocean literacy be integrated into education?

The participants emphasized the importance of collaboration with public institutions responsible for national curriculum development to integrate ocean literacy into various school subjects, such as geography and biology. They highlighted the need to provide teachers with specialized training and information resources to effectively incorporate ocean-related topics into classroom activities. These activities should prioritize engagement and practicality over theoretical instruction, including initiatives such as excursions to the sea, cooking classes, virtual reality experiences, and diving lessons. A holistic approach is crucial to ensure that all communities, not just those in coastal areas, have access to ocean-related knowledge and educational opportunities.