Mission Ocean and Waters Governance: From pathway to best case scenario

Date: Monday, 28 April 2025
Theme: Governance

As part of the fourth edition of the Blue Mission BANOS Arena series, this workshop focused on refining and advancing governance scenarios essential to delivering the EU **Mission Ocean and Waters**. Building on the insights and foundations laid during previous events, this workshop aimed to identify practical pathways toward effective governance models that can support the Mission's long-term success.

The session opened with an introduction by **Careen Krüger**, who provided a comprehensive overview of the Mission's objectives, the contributions of the Blue Mission BANOS project, and the evolving role of the Mission Arenas as hubs for stakeholder engagement and innovation. Following this, **Dorothy Jane Dankel** & **Emily Cowan** from SINTEF introduced a dynamic and participatory *role-play governance game*, designed to simulate real-world decision-making environments and spark discussion among participants.

Workshop Methodology: Role Play and Scenario Refinement

The core of the workshop was structured around an **interactive role-play exercise**, inspired by a *World Café* format. Participants were divided into groups and asked to critically examine and refine **three governance scenarios**—one each for the **global**, **national**, and **local** levels. These scenarios were developed in earlier workshops and served as starting points for in-depth discussion.

Each participant was assigned one of five roles within their group:

- **Mediator**
- **Proponent**
- **Disruptor**
- **Skeptic**
- **Innovator**

These roles encouraged participants to challenge assumptions, propose creative solutions, and balance competing priorities, mirroring the complexities of real governance dynamics. Each scenario was examined through the lens of these roles, aiming to identify gaps, strengths, and areas for improvement.

Key Findings by Governance Level

Local Governance

Discussions at the local level highlighted the importance of bridging communication gaps with national and global stakeholders, particularly on decisions with major local impacts. Key challenges identified included limited access to knowledge, funding, and capacity.

Recommended Actions:

- Strengthen **dialogue between local and higher governance levels**, ensuring that the voices of communities, such as fishers, are heard and integrated.
- Boost **local capacity building** through education and training to increase implementation feasibility.
- Recognise the **blurred boundaries** of local/global challenges—many global issues have direct local consequences.
- Integrate **local knowledge** into research and decision-making, while also improving access to current scientific results.
- Simplify overly ambitious scenarios by focusing on **tangible support mechanisms**— knowledge access, capacity development, and funding.

National Governance

At the national level, governance strategies should evolve to better integrate cross-sectoral perspectives and overcome ministerial silos. A shift in values and governance culture was emphasized as necessary to support transformation toward a sustainable blue economy.

Recommended Actions:

- Encourage the **integration of land-based and emerging sectors** within blue economy strategies.
- Facilitate **cross-ministerial cooperation** to reduce policy fragmentation and foster agile governance.

- Develop a **new set of success indicators and evaluation methodologies** that reflect social, ecological, and economic goals.
- Promote **finance mechanisms for innovation** and transition, supported by a shift in governance culture.
- Involve **citizens and ministries** in education and co-design of policies from planning to evaluation.
- Establish **advisory groups** to bridge science and policy.
- Avoid excessive delays by setting **realistic short-term targets** and conducting regular policy reviews.

Global Governance

Global discussions revealed concerns over the **slow pace of international coordination** and the need for improved alignment across policy areas and governance levels.

Recommended Actions:

- Accelerate **implementation at the global level,** ensuring timely action aligned with sustainability goals.
- Improve **policy coherence and multi-level governance** communication.
- Introduce a **supraregional governance level**, such as the Nordic region, to bridge the gap between national and global efforts.
- Scale up successful models like **Erasmus-style programmes** tailored to marine jobs and cross-border cooperation.
- Focus on **implementation of existing EU directives**, avoiding policy overload.
- Pursue **harmonised data collection** strategies across and within sea basins.
- Adapt global governance to **geopolitical and security realities**, while maintaining environmental commitments.

Prioritisation and Evaluation of Actions

In the final session, participants voted on the proposed actions for each governance level using the **Ocean Resilience Scorecard** method, which assessed feasibility, resilience, and scalability (1 = not likely/practical, 5 = very likely/practical). Actions with the highest scores —marked in bold in the lists above—will be integrated into refined "best-case" governance scenarios for the next phase of Mission Ocean implementation.

Local level Ocean Resilience Scorecard:
The top two actions to move forward with from the local level scenario refinement were the following:

1) **Strengthen dialogue between local and higher governance levels**, ensuring that the voices of communities, such as fishers, are heard and integrated.

2) **Integrate local knowledge into research and decision-making**, while also improving access to current scientific results.

From these actions the workshop participants ranked the feasibility, resilience and scalability of these actions. For the action point 1) The average score was **3.8 for feasibility** of this action, a **4.1 for resilience** and **scalability**. For action point 2) The score was a **5 for feasibility** and a **4.5 for resilience** and **scalability**. These results suggest strong support for bottom-up approaches that include local knowledge and improved information flows between communities and decision-makers. Moving forward, local-level implementation of Mission Ocean could prioritise mechanisms that enable co-production of knowledge and sustained dialogue across governance levels.

National level Ocean Resilience Scorecard:

The top two actions to move forward with from the national level scenario refinement were the following:

1) **Encourage the integration of land-based and emerging sectors** within blue economy strategies.

2) **Facilitate cross-ministerial cooperation** to reduce policy fragmentation and foster agile governance.

From these actions the workshop participants ranked the feasibility, resilience and scalability of these actions. For the action point 1) The average score was **3.2 for feasibility** of this action, a **4 for resilience** and **5 for scalability**. For action point 2) The score was a **4.5 for feasibility** and a **5 for resilience** and **scalability**. The high scores for cross-ministerial cooperation underscore its perceived practicality and transformative potential for fostering coherent, adaptive governance. To advance Mission Ocean nationally, efforts should focus on breaking down policy silos and aligning blue economy strategies with both established and emerging sectors.

Global level Ocean Resilience Scorecard:

The top three actions to move forward with from the global level scenario refinement were the following:

1) **Accelerate implementation at the global level**, ensuring timely action aligned with sustainability goals.
2) **Improve policy coherence** and multi-level governance communication.
3) Pursue **harmonised data collection** strategies across and within sea basins.

From these actions the workshop participants ranked the feasibility, resilience and scalability of these actions. For the action point 1) The average score was **3.3 for feasibility** of this action, a **3.5 for resilience** and **unranked for scalability**. For action point 2) The score was a **4 for feasibility** and a **5 for resilience** and **scalability was unranked**. 3) The average score was **3.8 for feasibility** of this action, **no rankings for resilience** and **4.2 for scalability**. The emphasis on policy coherence and harmonised data collection highlights a strong demand for globally coordinated yet flexible frameworks that can support regional implementation. Moving forward, global-level efforts should prioritise enabling structures for timely action, clearer communication across governance levels, and interoperable data systems to guide decision-making.

This workshop resulted in the following Action Points as a contribution to the Arena 4 roadmap:

1. Establish and expand national Mission Hubs to foster cross-ministerial cooperation and to actively support the transformation of the Blue Economy sector.
2. Support the implementation of the European Ocean Pact through better coordination of existing EU directives and align relevant policy areas to ensure coherence on the supranational level.
3. Develop and implement localised action plans in the BANOS region rooted in science-policy interfaces, citizen engagement and capacity building.