

## Integrating Blue in Green

**Date:** Tuesday, 29 April 2025

**Theme:** Governance

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### Part 1: Context

The ShapingBio project is an EU-wide project providing mappings and analysis of initiatives, policy instruments and gaps in the bioeconomy across Europe. Throughout the project-life, partners have collected data through 40 works with 1500 participants and desk research. All project outputs available on the ShapingBio website.

The moderator Silvia Tosatto from SUBMARINER Network briefly presented the ShapingBio policy recommendations which also fed into the Mission Arena action points:

- Cross-sector collaboration and partnerships: Intermediaries such as innovation hubs have an important role, therefore we need to strengthen these.
- Applied R&D in Bioeconomy: Focus on advancing low-technical products to high-value products in European and non-European markets. The most challenging part I to bridge the gap between academia and business.
- Incentives to create demand for sustainable blue bio-based products.

Fredric Nilsson, the EUSBSR Policy Area (PA) Coordinator for Bioeconomy, talked about the EUSBSR's three objectives: Save the Sea, Connect the Region and Increase Prosperity. Each objective has several subgoals. As the PA's do not receive no funding for the strategy, its main tasks are stakeholder engagement through events and workshops. EUSBSR is currently revising its Action Plan, and the new plan includes three objectives: 1. Enhanced food system resilience and rural cohesion in the BSR. 2. Reduce nutrient run-off. 3. Increase blue and green sustainable, resilient, resource efficient bioeconomy in the Baltic Sea Region.

## Part 2: Q/A session with Tanel Illjärv, CEO of Vetik

Tanel started his company in 2017 aiming to unlock the potential of local red seaweed which grows along the coast of the island Saaremaa, Estonia. Vetik is looking into different possibilities to utilise the biomass, with the main product being biostimulants, as there is a lot of market potential even if agriculture is a conservative sector. Vetik is also looking at other ways to valorise the biomass, for example through producing colourants and bioplastics.

Vetik are facing challenges such as a lack of trust for new products, although scientists can facilitate the process. Regarding the question on expanding pilot and demonstration sites, Tanel points out that having access to pilot facilities is good to do initial testing. However, Vetik has to build their own processing sites as no infrastructure currently exists that support their production as it's such a specific biomass. One major challenge is that seaweed aquaculture currently has to adhere to the same regulations and legislation as fish aquaculture, which makes it complicated. For seaweed cultivation to become a business, regulation has to adapt.

## Part 3: Discussion

- It is important to gain access to piloting and demonstration infrastructure, but stakeholders have to learn how to use existing ones before creating new ones.
- There should be simplified regulation to give people access to demonstration cases in other regions. Connect permitting in large companies with giving access to smaller ventures.
- SMEs need to get better at using existing innovation networks. Connecting citizen engagement and science in piloting and demonstration sites.
- Change starts at the national level, however stakeholders will need support from EU to cooperate on a wider level. Budget limitations in some funding programmes need to be removed to allow for bigger ventures.