

Opening Plenary: Setting the Stage for Mission Arena 4

Date: Monday, 28 April 2025

Theme: Mission Ocean & Waters

The opening session of Mission Arena 4, held in Sopot, set the stage for a dynamic exchange of ideas focused on the future of the blue economy and sustainable maritime actions. The event was marked by a blend of insights from EU initiatives, Polish stakeholders, and other key actors.

Angela Schultz-Zehden, SUBMARINER Network, Coordinator of the BlueMissionBANOS Project

Angela Schultz-Zehden opened the session by emphasising the importance of the Arenas in inspiring stakeholders to take Mission-driven actions for the ocean. She highlighted the special connotation of the event's location, noting that the University of Gdańsk, a SUBMARINER Network member, was highly involved in the planning process. The event was positioned as an opportunity for the pilot actions of projects to inspire innovation, particularly in Poland, and to influence policymakers. Angela Schultz-Zehden also mentioned the strategic timing of the event, which coincided with the EU presidency and provided a unique window to reach political decision-makers.

Magdalena Bem Andrzejewska from NCBR

Magdalena Bem Andrzejewska from the National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR) discussed the joint efforts between BlueMissionBANOS and the Blue Economy Forum. She reflected on the significance of the EU presidency in driving research, security, and infrastructure initiatives and the importance of networking and seeking new project partners. Last year's signing of the Mission Ocean and Waters Charter was highlighted as a milestone in fostering collaboration within the blue economy.

Michał Goszczyński, Deputy Director at the Ministry of Science and Higher Education

Michał Goszczyński from the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education emphasised Poland's commitment to supporting research and innovation in the blue economy, particularly in the context of EU cooperation. His speech highlighted Poland's ongoing efforts to facilitate research and development that addresses the maritime sector's challenges.

Jacques Delsalle from DG Mare

Jacques Delsalle from DG Mare discussed the role of past Arenas in fostering stakeholder ownership and engagement. Looking ahead, he spoke about the upcoming Horizon Europe calls, including a new lighthouse action call that will support specific activities within the ocean Mission. He also touched on the European Ocean Pact, which will align innovation, technology, and data with the goal of creating new businesses and jobs in the blue economy.

Jacek Zaucha from the University of Gdańsk

Jacek Zaucha from the GMU Maritime Institute at the University of Gdańsk provided an overview of the growing Polish blue economy. He noted that while Poland's economy is mainly land-based, key sectors such as tourism, shipbuilding, and fish processing are integral to its maritime activities. Zaucha emphasised that offshore energy, particularly floating systems, will be a game changer for Poland, aligning with the country's obligations to expand offshore energy use. He stressed the need for innovation and the adaptation of legislation, and he highlighted the success of macroalgae as part of the SUBMARINER project, which is now a reality. He also underscored the importance of continuing dialogues in the future.

Panel Discussion Highlights

The panel discussion brought together experts from various sectors, including SBEP, DG MARE, the Gdynia Maritime University, and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research Germany. Key points included:

- **Michał Goszczyński** from the Ministry of Science emphasised the need for increased international cooperation between universities and industries and the importance of linking funding solutions like Horizon Europe to enhance European competitiveness.
- **Peter Grönwoldt** from the German Federal Ministry of Education shared the work being done by the Baltic Sea Research Institute Rostock, including establishing a Mission-focused governance structure and a National Mission hub. He also mentioned the importance of the BlueMissionBANOS project in contributing to the EU Mission.
- **Angiolo Boncompagni** from the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership discussed the challenges of the fragmented blue economy and SBEP's goal to improve interventions across 30 countries.
- **Jan Marcin Węśławski** from IOPAN focused on the socio-cultural and scientific aspects of blue ocean science, advocating for a balanced narrative in marine research, particularly emphasising the importance of gender equality in marine science.

Action Points for the South Baltic

Several urgent action points were identified for the South Baltic region:

- **Michał Goszczyński** suggested allocating more funds to research entities and expanding opportunities for involvement.
- **Peter Grönwoldt** pointed out the pressing need to address eutrophication, biodiversity loss, and pollution from munitions.
- **Angiolo Boncompagni** emphasised the role of blue bioresources and the security and defence aspects tied to the blue economy, especially given the current geopolitical situation.
- **Jan Marcin Węśławski** discussed the potential for nature-based solutions to address long-term environmental issues but cautioned that global warming continues to threaten biodiversity.
- **Jacek Zaucha** highlighted the long-term impacts of sea activities and the need for ongoing research, innovation, and space preservation for future generations.

Closing Remarks by Angela Schultz-Zehden

Angela Schultz-Zehden concluded the session by promoting the significance of innovation and underscoring the importance of crowd-funded conferences. She encouraged participants to sign the Mission Ocean Charter, reinforcing the collaborative spirit and mission-driven approach to the future of the blue economy. Overall, the session fostered a dynamic conversation on the future of the blue economy in the Baltic Sea, highlighting the importance of cooperation, funding, innovation, and the inclusion of diverse perspectives in shaping sustainable maritime policies.