



# BLUE MISSION BANOS

Supporting the Mission  
Ocean Lighthouse in the  
Baltic and North Sea Basins

**Deliverable 2.3 - Annual  
BMB Assembly 3 & GRG  
Documentation**

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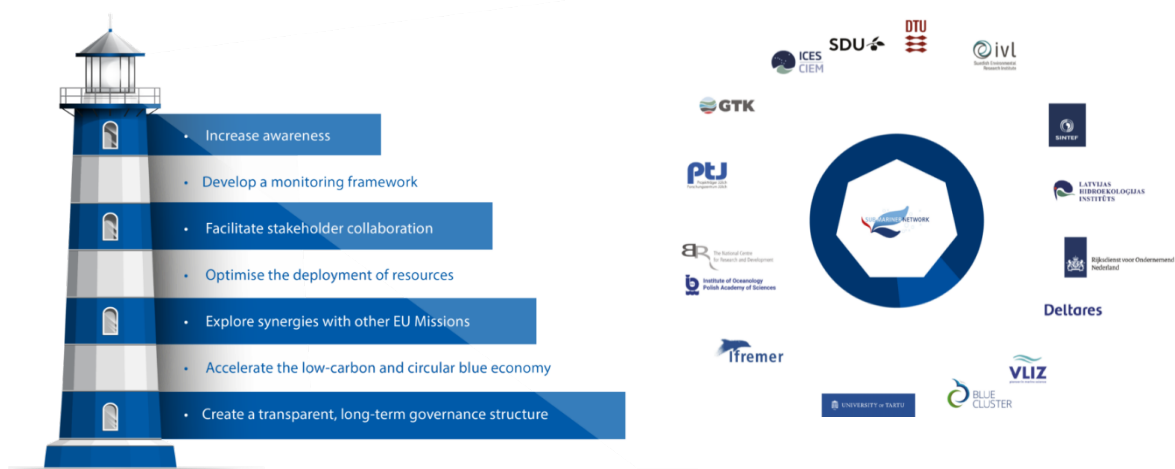
## BLUEMISSIONBANOS PROJECT

BlueMissionBANOS (BMB), as a Coordination and Support Action (CSA) for the Baltic and North Sea (BANOS) Mission Ocean Lighthouse, inspires, engages, and supports stakeholders across the BANOS region in taking positive action to reach the Mission Ocean objectives. In particular, we facilitate the uptake of a sustainable, carbon-neutral, and circular blue economy by connecting national, regional, and transnational actors from politics, industry, and science, thereby creating a governance model that is conducive to innovation.

While fostering the transition towards the blue economy, BlueMissionBANOS supports the prevention and elimination of water pollution and the protection and restoration of biodiversity and marine and freshwater ecosystems. The project focus is on work reducing governance fragmentation, facilitating evidence-based decision-making and fostering citizen engagement across the BANOS area. These supporting actions raise awareness, showcase opportunities, and inspire stakeholders to actively contribute to the transition and the preservation of oceans, seas and waters to 2030 and beyond.

To accelerate the transition towards an innovative and circular blue economy, in line with regions' strategic priorities, as defined by their Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3), BlueMissionBANOS organises regional pilot demonstration arenas (Mission Arenas) involving innovators, business support and training organisations, local stakeholders and any interested parties to accelerate the uptake of innovative solutions in support of Mission Ocean. Furthermore, BlueMissionBANOS develops a consistent monitoring framework to assess progress in achieving carbon neutrality and circularity.

Finally, BlueMissionBANOS facilitates synergies and matchmaking between actors working towards achieving the Mission Ocean objectives in the BANOS area by providing a catalogue of services, technical expertise and projects that can foster progress, collaboration, and knowledge sharing. The BlueMissionBANOS project is funded under the call HORIZON-MISS-2021-OCEAN-04 by the European Union under Grant Agreement ID 101093845 and runs from December 2022 until November 2025.



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## ACRONYMS

BMB	BlueMissionBANOS - Supporting the Mission Ocean Lighthouse in the Baltic and North Sea Basin
BANOS	Baltic and North Sea
D	Deliverable
DTU	Danish Technical University
EUSBSR	EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
GNSBI	Greater North Sea Basin Initiative
HELCOM	Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission
ICES	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea
IOPAN	Institute of Oceanology Polish Academy of Sciences
NCBR	National Centre for Research and Development Poland
OSPAR	Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic
SBEP	Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership
SDU	University of Southern Denmark
VASAB	Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Deliverable 2.2, published in December 2024, the various reference groups established in BlueMissionBANOS (BMB) were described in detail, laying out the framework for stakeholder input into BMB work. As a Coordination and Support Action for the EU Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030” (Mission Ocean), BMB connects authorities, innovators, enterprises and civil society across the Baltic and North Sea (BANOS) region to accelerate a sustainable, carbon-neutral, and circular blue economy, while also targeting the other two Mission Objectives; *i.e.* reducing pollution and increasing biodiversity in oceans and waters. The report details the formation and outcomes of three reference groups: governance, citizen engagement, and monitoring, as well as the first three Mission Arenas that convened over 1,000 participants from the quadruple helix.

The governance workshops (Gothenburg 2023, Amsterdam 2024) identified gaps in regulation, coordination, and funding mechanisms, producing eight action points for improved transnational governance and adaptive, multi-level frameworks. The citizen engagement reference group and associated workshops co-developed practical actions and guidelines to enhance public participation in the blue economy. Meanwhile, the monitoring group formulated and validated 50 sector-specific KPIs to track Mission progress, focusing on data-driven evaluation and future monitoring needs. The Mission Arenas, held in Gothenburg, Riga, and Amsterdam, showcased innovations, gathered regional priorities, and resulted in roadmaps for each Arena region. Overall, the report highlights BMB’s success in mobilising diverse stakeholders toward shared Mission Ocean goals, laying a strong foundation for final validation and implementation activities at the fourth and final Blue Mission BANOS Arena held in Sopot, Poland in April 2025.

For more information on these reference groups, including their formation and activities, please refer to Deliverable 2.2. This report, D2.3, is intended to be read as a follow-up to D2.2, outlining the reference group activities that have occurred since December 2024, as well as several other forms of stakeholder input not covered in D2.2.

## 2. FORMATS AND ENGAGEMENT WITHIN GOVERNANCE

### 2.1. MISSION ARENA 4

*Date: 28-29 April 2025*

*Place: Hotel Haffner, Sopot, Poland*

In Sopot, over 200 stakeholders from the South Baltic region came together to discuss seven blue economy themes (1) MSP and Multi-Use; 2) Marine Protection and Restoration; 3) Citizen Engagement and Education; 4) Blue Foods; 5) Governance; 6) Sustainable Maritime Infrastructure; and 7) Shipping and Ports) over the course of seventeen workshops and two plenary sessions. The Arena culminated in a [Roadmap for the South Baltic](#) region, laying out the top action points for decarbonising the blue circular economy of the region as formulated and voted for by Arena participants.

As with the other Arenas, described in D2.2, Arena 4 was an opportunity to receive input from stakeholders working in the BANOS region. With this Arena included, BMB has reached an audience of over 1,200 stakeholders in the Baltic and North Sea region. Through the regional roadmaps created after each event, participants have had an opportunity to have their voices heard on the future of their region. Together, these combined roadmaps provide a blueprint for future steps to be taken to reach the goals of Mission Ocean in the BANOS region. The Mission Arenas were therefore a crucial element of the project's overall reference group strategy, providing a major moment for reflection and input into the work of BMB and Mission Ocean overall.

In addition to this process, which ensured that a wide variety of stakeholders were included in the conversation and had a voice in shaping the regional narrative, the Mission Arenas were also significant due to their close connection with the existing transnational organisations, governing bodies and funding institutions working in the region. For example, representatives from the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM), EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), Greater North Sea Basin Initiative (GNSBI), International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), European Commission (DG RTD and DG MARE), and INTERREG secretariats attended and contributed to the Mission Arenas. Some were very actively involved in co-organising specific workshops, while some sent representatives as individual participants.

In addition, both Mission Arena 3 and Mission Arena 4 were organised in cooperation with the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership (SBEP). In both cases, SBEP organised their regional workshops back-to-back as part of the Mission Arenas. Through this process, SBEP workshop results were combined with BMB Arena results in the regional roadmaps. In addition, Mission Arena participants had the opportunity to engage with one another both through the lens of Mission Ocean in the Mission Arenas as well as through the lens of SBEP in their regional workshops. This collaboration was utilised as a further means of enhancing impact and synergies in the regional work. In addition to these transnational organisations, the Arenas were also attended by national and sub-regional authorities.

Moreover, Mission Arena 4 was organised under the patronage of the Polish EU Council Presidency and the Polish Blue Economy Forum associated with it. This was again an opportunity to align and raise the visibility of the EU Mission Ocean and Waters in general, and BMB work in particular, within a wider political context, thereby increasing its impact beyond the regional level. For more details on this experience, refer to Chapter 2.3.1 below.

Additionally, it should be noted that the Mission Ocean Conference held in Nyborg, Denmark in September 2025 followed this example, also being hosted in the context of the Danish EU Council Presidency. Even though that conference was formally not organised by BMB, the Danish BMB partners SDU and DTU were instrumental in organising the event, integrating many good practices learned from the previous four BMB Mission Arenas with numerous BMB partners playing an important role in driving and moderating the various conference elements. Refer to Chapter 2.3.2 for more details.

Through these partnerships, BMB contributed to increasing alignment among regional actors and helped connect policy with other work happening on the ground.

## **2.2 GOVERNANCE REFERENCE GROUPS**

D2.2 presented the results of the first two governance reference group meetings, which took the form of workshops at Mission Arenas 1 and 3. These 'Mission Ocean governance' workshops addressed gaps in regulation, financial mechanisms, environmental considerations, and research ongoing in the BANOS region and formed a baseline for the work carried out in BMB. Since the publication of D2.2, one further governance workshop has taken place, detailed here below. For more information on these workshops, please refer to *D2.5 - Foresight Report*.

### **Governance Workshop: Mission Arena 4**

#### **Exploring Future Governance Scenarios for Mission Ocean Implementation**

**Date:** Monday, 28 April

**Location:** Hotel Haffner, Sopot, Poland

The third governance workshop was organised as part of the 4th Mission Arena in Sopot and built directly on the outcomes of the previous sessions in Gothenburg (2023) and Amsterdam (2024). Its main objective was to explore and co-develop forward-looking governance scenarios for the effective and lasting implementation of Mission Ocean and Waters in the Baltic and North Sea regions. Building on the action points identified during earlier workshops, participants were invited to look beyond immediate policy and coordination challenges and to envision how the governance framework could evolve by 2030 and beyond.

The workshop gathered around 45 participants, including representatives from national ministries, EU institutions, regional organisations, research institutions, and civil society. It was structured around a foresight-based methodology that combined scenario building, backcasting exercises, and group reflection. Participants were divided into three thematic groups focusing on governance innovation, cross-basin cooperation, and long-term institutional sustainability. Through these discussions, they identified potential governance pathways, critical uncertainties, and enabling conditions needed to achieve Mission Ocean goals in the BANOS region.

Key outcomes included three distinct governance scenarios ranging from incremental coordination improvements to transformative governance models integrating Mission Ocean principles into national and regional frameworks. Participants also highlighted the need for sustained political commitment, harmonised data systems, and permanent transnational coordination structures. The results of this workshop fed directly into the BlueMissionBANOS foresight report and will inform recommendations for a durable governance model for Mission Ocean implementation beyond the project's lifetime.

## **2.3 POLISH AND DANISH COUNCIL PRESIDENCIES**

In addition to the opportunities for input and collaboration presented above, BMB also had the opportunity twice to work closely with EU Council presidencies from the BANOS region. Both of these experiences helped to streamline efforts and to bring the work of BMB closer with EU-level governance. In both cases, the collaboration led to increased publicity for BMB and helped to propel project results to a wider audience. In addition, these were two moments again for external reference,

providing an opportunity to ensure that project goals and work were in alignment with the broader work ongoing on the European level.

### 2.3.1 POLISH PRESIDENCY

Mission Arena 4 was organised by the BMB consortium, led by SUBMARINER and the Institute of Oceanology, Polish Academy of Sciences (IOPAN) and supported by the former BMB project partner, the Polish National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR). Through their work within the Polish government, NCBR established a link with the Polish EU Council Presidency (January-June 2025), which served as the official patrons of the event. Through this patronage, the fourth Mission Arena gained weight and visibility, lending enhanced legitimacy and helping to draw the attention of higher-level policymakers and institutions across the EU.

This elevated status helped the event reach a broader audience, particularly in Poland, and helped to anchor the roadmap developed in Sopot more firmly within the strategic agenda of the region and the EU at large. Working with the EU Council presidency provided a solid opportunity for BMB and was viewed very positively by Mission Arena participants.

### 2.3.2 DANISH PRESIDENCY

In addition to its collaboration with the Polish EU Council Presidency, BlueMissionBANOS (BMB) also worked closely with the Danish EU Council Presidency (July-December 2025) through active participation in the Danish Mission Ocean Conference held in September 2025. Although this was not a BMB-organised event, it provided a valuable opportunity to showcase BMB's work to a broader European audience and strengthen ties within the wider Mission community.

BMB's involvement took several forms:

- 1) The event was co-organised by BMB partners at the Danish Technical University (DTU) and the University of Southern Denmark (SDU).
- 2) BMB partners moderated several of the breakout workshops, helping guide discussions and facilitate stakeholder exchange:
  - A. Governance for change – implementing Mission Ocean and Waters (PtJ)
  - B. Mission based economy – good examples of industry adoption of Mission Ocean and Waters (Submariner)
  - C. Advancing Knowledge for Mission Ocean and Waters (ICES)
  - D. Protect and restore marine and freshwater ecosystems (Submariner)
  - E. Make the sustainable blue economy carbon neutral (Submariner)
- 3) Angela Schultz-Zehden (Submariner) presented the results and progress of BMB during Session 3: Deepening Mission Adoption, alongside representatives from the other Lighthouse CSAs.
- 4) BMB also hosted an information stand, highlighting in particular the regional roadmaps developed through the Mission Arenas.

Through this collaboration, BMB reinforced its visibility and credibility as a leading Coordination and Support Action under Mission Ocean. The Danish Presidency's platform amplified the reach of

BMB's outcomes and fostered closer coordination among the Lighthouse projects, contributing to a more coherent and connected approach to Mission Ocean implementation across Europe.

## **2.4 EXTERNAL WORKSHOPS**

In addition to the official work undertaken within the project, additional opportunities for external reference have come through participation in external events. This participation has taken the form of the organisation of workshops, individual networking moments, and through collaboration with a variety of other projects over the course of BMB. Each of these external events have provided opportunities for insight and input into project work and a chance to increase synergies and collaboration outside of BMB. Many such events have taken place over the course of BMB. In 2025 alone, BMB was presented through presentations or exhibitions at a large variety of events, including European Maritime Day 2025, Ocean Days 2025, the 2<sup>nd</sup> EU Algae Awareness Summit, the MSP Forum 2025, and the third United Nations Ocean Conference, among others.

## **3. LOGIC OF ENGAGEMENT**

The reference group work in BMB is built on a multi-level, multi-actor logic that brings together people and organisations from across the BANOS region. Because achieving Mission Ocean goals requires cooperation across many fields and governance levels, BMB's engagement model combined top-down coordination with bottom-up participation. It connects political institutions, researchers, industry actors, and citizens in a shared effort to address the goals of Mission Ocean and to ensure the project contributes to the outcomes called for by regional stakeholders.

At the core of the project's engagement with these reference groups is the idea of working within and alongside existing structures and networks, rather than creating new ones. By building on and working within platforms and institutions such as SBEP, EU Council presidencies, the EUSBSR, GNSBI, HELCOM, OSPAR and VASAB (to name a few) and other project work, BMB avoids duplication and strengthens ongoing efforts.

Although numerous transnational organisations on the 'blue' already exist in the Baltic Sea Region, the work of BMB in connecting these stakeholders across the quadruple helix in a systematic way has continued to be highly appreciated by all stakeholders. BMB is not an additional burden to stakeholders, but instead helps to achieve alignment in a more effective and efficient way. Mission Arenas have been one example, where workshops – which are typically held individually by organisations and/or projects – were consolidated to occur at a single location at a specific time, hence increasing stakeholder attention while also reducing the efforts required by individuals.

The project, therefore, acts as a connector and amplifier, aligning actions across governance levels and helping successful approaches spread more widely.

BMB engagement takes place on several levels at once. The reference groups on governance, citizen engagement, and monitoring bring together ministries, EU representatives, scientists, businesses, NGOs, and local actors to co-create practical actions. These groups help translate the broad Mission objectives into specific steps for the BANOS region, while also feeding local experiences

back into higher-level decision-making. The Mission Arenas, on the other hand, serve as large-scale public events where diverse stakeholders meet to exchange knowledge, discuss regional challenges, and agree on common priorities for implementation.

A key feature of this approach is also that our work goes in both ways: we go to them, and they come to us. Project partners regularly take part in existing events, networks, and meetings to reach stakeholders in their own environments. At the same time, BMB provides open spaces for collaboration through the Mission Arenas, thematic workshops, and other smaller gatherings. This combination ensures that dialogue is continuous, inclusive, and relevant to real needs across the region.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

The activities described in this deliverable demonstrate the continued progress of BMB in advancing the objectives of Mission Ocean within the BANOS region. Through Mission Arenas, governance reference groups, and collaboration in other formats over the past year, BMB has succeeded in strengthening connections between policy, science, and practice while promoting alignment among key actors across governance levels.

The Mission Arena 4 in Sopot and the governance workshop that took place there have been particularly instrumental in translating stakeholder insights into concrete pathways for achieving a sustainable, carbon-neutral and circular blue economy. The integration of foresight-based approaches and collaboration with initiatives such as SBEP further ensured that project outputs are grounded in regional needs while also supporting wider European priorities. Overall, BMB's engagement logic, anchored in inclusivity, co-creation, and the use of existing governance structures, has proven effective in fostering durable cooperation and policy coherence.