



blueconnect-project.eu

INTERNAL NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2025 - ISSUE #4

INTRO

This summer has been full of busy bees leading to promising project progress, collaborations, and opportunities. In this edition, we share the latest project updates, submitted deliverables, upcoming events, suggested reads, and can't-miss webinars. Catch up on what's happening on the ground and more.

Enjoy exploring!



★ HIGHLIGHTS

The Macaronesia Demo Site published BLUE CONNECT's very **first local newsletter** in three languages! **Check it out [here](#)**. Great work everyone!

[D2.1](#), [D4.1](#), [D5.1](#) and [M4](#), [M5](#), [M10](#) have been submitted successfully and are now under review. Congrats to all partners involved!



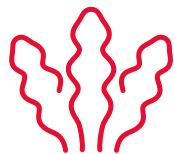


HAPPY ANNIVERSARY, BLUE CONNECT!

In September 2025, we celebrated one year of project implementation!

Partners can look back on a year full of significant milestones and achievements. This first year has laid a crucial foundation for the next phase of BLUE CONNECT, and we sincerely thank all partners for their incredible efforts and contributions that brought us to where we are today. The progress keeps us excited on what's to come!





WP UPDATES

WP1

The [2nd General Assembly in Arendal](#), Norway from 17-18 June 2025 turned out to be a stepping stone paving the way for the successful implementation of the next phase of the project. Workshops and presentations led to insightful bilateral discussions and gave partners valuable feedback for the further development of tools. Additionally, thanks to input from PP, we now have an up to date picture of the project's [financial status](#), including a detailed breakdown of partner-specific costs.

For a better overview of required and implemented actions in Demo Sites, SALT created the [Demo Site Implementation Tracker](#). Demo Sites are to insert all ongoing processes in the tracker by the 10 October. Additionally, a **Demo Site Board meeting** was scheduled for the 15 October for WP2 to present and discuss the elements of the initial BLUE CONNECT Framework.

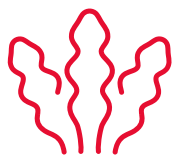
WP2



D2.1 & Milestone 4 submitted

Partners established the **operational framework** for advancing effective, ecologically based management of MPAs. By combining a structured, iterative methodology with a focus on ecological prioritisation, the framework ensures that conservation and restoration goals and targets are both context-specific and scientifically robust.

Since the GA, partners were in active contact with the Demo Sites for the implementation of the BLUE CONNECT Framework. Plans on Framework applications [can be found here](#). T2.4 was officially kicked off and is in the process of developing a work plan for structured action in the Demo Sites.



WP UPDATES

WP3



Milestone 5 submitted

Task 3.1: Meetings with DS for data collection are completed with some DS data all gathered and some still in progress. Analyses are planned in the next few months.

Task 3.2 & 3.3.2: Scoping interviews with DSs are completed. The official stakeholder interviews with DS Leads or other relevant LSWG members are scheduled for October and November 2025.

Task 3.3.1: Literature Review almost completed with a survey on barriers to incorporate ocean literacy principles in DSs planned to be circulated mid October. Meetings with Demo Sites will be held soon with a final DS selection planned for November.

Task 3.4: First brainstorming session on the integration and coordination of different outputs of the WP under a common toolbox to take place this week.

WP4



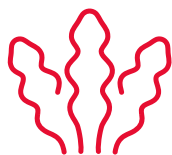
D4.1 submitted

Task 4.2: Development of the common methodology for the co-management scheme application is in progress (M9 - to be consulted with LSWGs at M8 validation workshop). [Templates](#) for reporting on stakeholder engagement have been circulated to Demo Sites in preparation for Milestone 8.



Task 4.3: Screening of financial models is in progress.

Task 4.4: Kick-off meeting conducted, and organisation of work started. Key points are: adjustment and application of the methodology by DS teams and LSWGs, providing the basis for elaboration of co-management DS-specific solutions (D4.3).



WP UPDATES

WP5



D5.1 and Milestone 10 submitted

Bilateral meetings with task leaders are scheduled to keep smooth workflow. Work on T5.2 and T5.3 is ongoing.

WP6

The Draft blueprint is planned to be operational in January 2026 and is to be presented in the M8 validation workshop to LSWGs. Check out the [Mock up visuals](#). In cooperation with CMCC (Blue4All), the [database](#) has been updated and is ready for the second round of feedback, starting now. WWF Med is looking for volunteers from DSs to test the alpha version of the blueprint (October to January) to help refine categories/wording and decision-tree aspects.



WP7

To increase communication efforts in DSs, we created a [template](#) for targeted local Newsletters. Check them out and get started!

The next edition of the **Blue Horizons Newsletter** will be published next week! Stay tuned!

Check out our newest **blogposts**:

- D4.1: [Enablers, barriers, and insights from demonstration sites](#)
- D5.1: [Advancing towards effective protection](#)
- D2.1: [Building the ecological foundations of the Blue Connect Integrated Framework](#)





NEWS & UPDATES FROM OUR DEMO SITES

MACARONESIA DEMO SITE

From 21 to 28 September 2025, the Macaronesia project team conducted a [field campaign in São Miguel, Azores](#), alongside CIBIO-UAc and Futurismo Azores Adventures, to advance research on marine connectivity in Macaronesia. Through physico-chemical water sampling, zooplankton collection, and drifter deployments, the team gathered high-resolution environmental and biological data to inform biophysical models and conservation planning. More information in the blogpost on the BLUE CONNECT Website.

The Macaronesia Demo Site is further advancing their efforts with the establishment of Thematic WGs (Connectivity, MPAs, Co-Management) with meetings scheduled every three months, multiple LSWG online meetings held, the definition of the Action Plans for WGs Connectivity and MPAs and the reinforcement of the LSWG networks.





NEWS & UPDATES FROM OUR DEMO SITES

BURGAS BAY

CCMS had a meeting with UTARTU (in mid-August) to define the scoping, method selection and feasibility assessment for connectivity analysis in the Burgas Bay DS. Scoping has been completed and initial available data for implementation were collected for cross-check by Framework developers.

Additionally, CCMS conducted scoring of the sensitivity matrix for human activities in Burgas Bay DS needed for the pressure analysis under T3.1. A first presentation of the Framework to the LSWG in form of an infographic is planned for beginning of October, in particular involving Bulgarian MPA managers.

VLAAMSE BANKEN

The fourth Belgian DS coordination meeting took place on 2 October 2025, gathering all involved Belgian partners together with a government representative (DS manager). The meeting focused on **advancing decisions related to the planned oyster reef installation**, including the exact location, substrate type, installation method, monitoring plan, and timeline, as well as discussions on other DS-related topics such as the DS tracker.





NEWS & UPDATES FROM OUR DEMO SITES

In parallel, the Belgian partners' reef restoration research gained notable visibility at the European Aquaculture Symposium (EAS2025) held in Valencia at the end of September. Molly Hughes, PhD researcher at UGent ARC, presented her work on remote oyster settlement on substrates, showcasing both the **active restoration efforts at Vlaamse Banken** and **research conducted within Reefcovery**, an industry-driven project in which UGent ARC is a partner. Reefcovery explores the use of flat-oyster-settled substrates as scour protection layers at the base of offshore wind turbine monopiles.

The presentation attracted attention from an IUCN expert and consultant, who selected **the case as an example of the restorative blue economy to be featured in an upcoming presentation at the European Parliament** .

Additionally, a **pre-trial on oyster settlement was conducted** under the Reefcovery framework, and a video highlighting the remote oyster settlement process was prepared for Blueconnect.

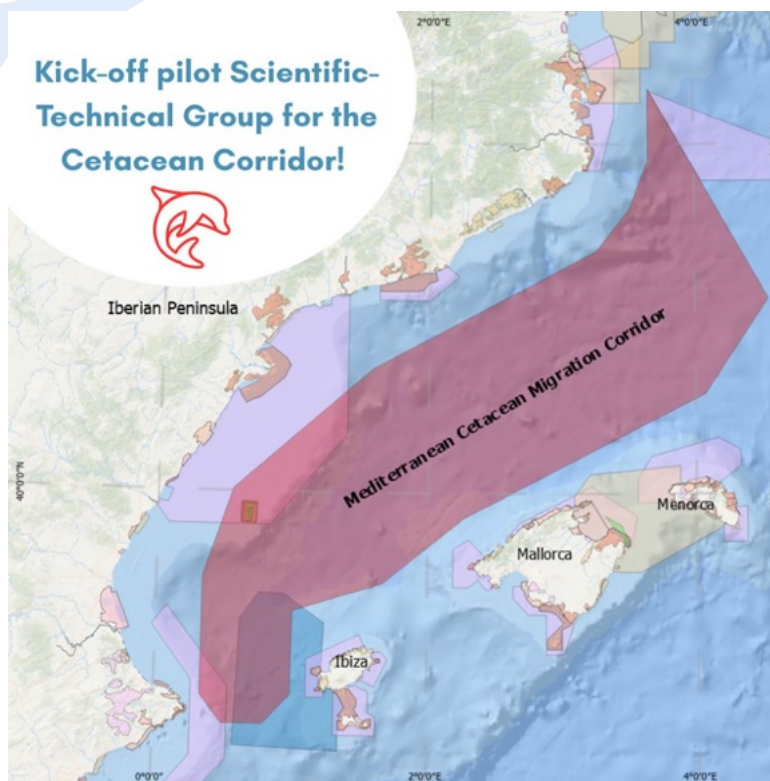




NEWS & UPDATES FROM OUR DEMO SITES

SPANISH CETACEAN MIGRATION CORRIDOR

UMA organised the first meeting of a pilot scientific-technical working group for the Spanish Cetacean Migration Corridor on 09 September 2025. The first meeting was about getting to know each other and discuss potential paths to progress. Check out their [Social Media Post!](#)





PAST EVENTS

BLUE CONNECT 2ND GENERAL ASSEMBLY, ARENDAL (NORWAY)

The Second General Assembly of the BLUE CONNECT project was held in Arendal, Norway, on 17-18 June 2025, bringing together over 45 participants to inform about progress, align work across Demo Sites and Work Packages, and plan the next phase of implementation. The assembly focused on interactive sessions with project partners, bilateral meetings to plan next steps, discussion on cross-project collaboration, and input from the External Advisory Board. Key outcomes included strengthened communication between Demo Sites and tool developers, refined stakeholder engagement strategies, and first discussions on the layout of the BLUE CONNECT draft Blueprint.





PAST EVENTS

UN OCEAN CONFERENCE, NICE, FRANCE

On 11 June 2025, the MPA Community Network hosted the interactive MPA Network Design Game aboard the German research vessel METEOR in Port Lympia, as part of the UNOC 2025 side events. Participants worked in teams to design MPA corridors using real-world ecological and stakeholder data, supported by facilitators from across EU-funded projects.



MSP4BIO FINAL EVENT IN VENICE, ITALY

From 2 to 4 July 2025, MSP4BIO held its Final Conference in Venice, Italy. Project partners discussed potential exploitation strategies, presented their work to diverse participants and conducted their final validation workshop. BLUE CONNECT partners from UAc, CCMS, UTARTU, WWF Med and SUBMARINER were present due to their involvement in MSP4BIO exploring options to ensure impact and uptake of project outcomes.





PAST EVENTS

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF MPAS IN MSP IN BODO, NORWAY

From July 9 to 12, 2025 the MPAs in MSP Conference brought together a diverse audience of experts, policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders passionate about marine conservation and sustainable ocean management. Débora Gutierrez from UAc, represented the project and the Macaronesia Demo Site through an oral presentation titled "Stakeholder engagement in the Blue Connect project: Bridging gaps in Marine conservation," emphasising the importance of collaborative approaches in MPAs. Check out our blogpost [here](#).



SEA OF OPPORTUNITIES CONFERENCE STRALSUND, GERMANY

from 22 to 24 September 2025, a diverse organisations from the Baltic Sea came together in the Ozeaneum in Stralsund to explore possibilities on aligning efforts and striving for an effective protection of the Baltic Sea. SUBMARINER was on the ground presenting the Blue Connect project with the project poster.

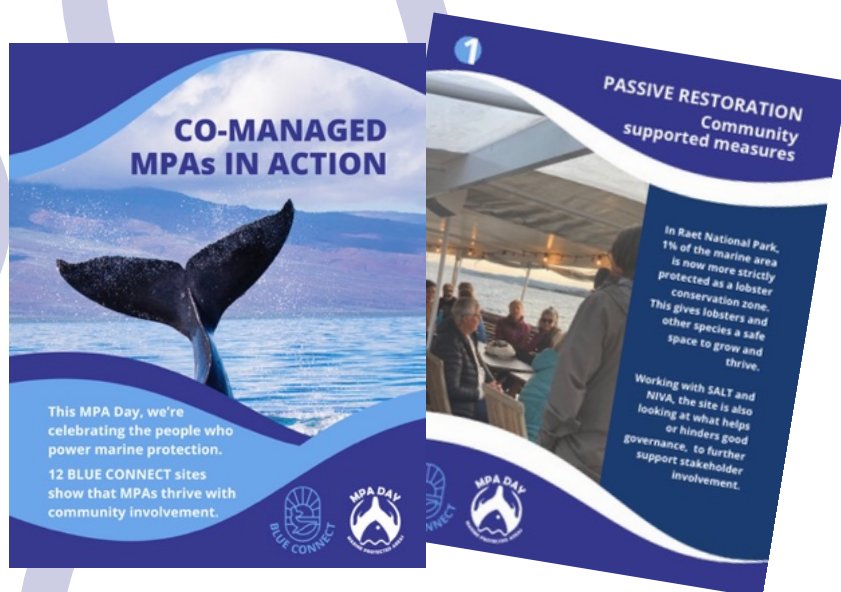




PAST EVENTS

MPA DAY 2025

This year HELCOM, through the PROTECT BALTIC project, coordinated MPA Day's global communications, weaving together countless local actions into one shared story. More than 100 events took place in over 30 countries, with engagement from over 120 partners and coverage on every continent, even Antarctica. Participants from a range of backgrounds took part in activities including ie. workshops, social media communication and beach clean-ups. Blue Connect contributed to this year's MPA Day through social media engagement. HELCOM is commencing initial planning for the coordination of next year's MPA Day activities, and collecting contact details towards a stakeholder list. Interested participants and organisations may contact protect-baltic@helcom.fi. [Check out Blue Connects post here.](#)





PAST EVENTS

ALL ATLANTIC FORUM IN BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

RBINS attended this year's All-Atlantic Forum in Brussels on 25 to 26 September 2025 and explored the session on Ocean Literacy and broadening engagement, where diverse perspectives highlighted how ocean literacy varies across cultures, backgrounds, and expertise levels. The session emphasized its global relevance and many forms. During the Forum the Blue Intergenerational Programme was launched, aimed at uniting ocean experts across generations and regions to restore coastal and Atlantic Ocean health.



MARINE PLAN FINAL EVENT

On 29 to 30 September 2025, CCMS attended the Marine Plan Final Event, Online. The first part of the event explored the elements of marine conservation planning that are necessary for an ecosystem-based approach, Decision Support System building blocks, and real examples of scenarios and lessons learned from Planning Sites. The second afternoon featured tutorials and training on the use of the tools and programs developed in MarinePlan and examples of their implementation.





PAST EVENTS

4TH EUROPEAN SYMPOSIUM BY NEREUS REGIONS

At the 4th European Symposium by NEREUS (2–3 October 2025), the Blue Connect – Macaronesia Demo Site was presented by UAc during a panel on “Ocean Governance & Safety.” Her talk shared preliminary results on biodiversity indicators and science-based tools for setting conservation objectives in Macaronesia, highlighting the role of the Blue Connect framework and recent fieldwork in São Miguel. The symposium served as a key opportunity to exchange knowledge with European experts focused on sustainable ocean governance.

DANISH EU PRESIDENCY MISSION OCEAN CONFERENCE

The MPA Community took part in **Accelerating the Mission, the Danish EU Presidency Conference** held in Nyborg on 23–24 September 2025, focused on restoring and protecting Europe’s ocean and waters. SUBMARINER contributed to discussions, shared practical insights at our exhibition stand, and moderated a workshop on ecosystem restoration. Find the full read [here](#).





OUTREACH ACTIVITIES BY PARTNERS



CCMS

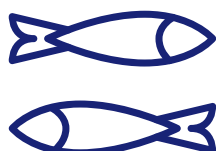
Check out the latest social media and website posts from CCMS: [website post](#) & here on [X](#).

UMA

Check out the latest social media posts from UMA about their [LSWG meeting](#) and [Deliverable 5.1](#)

MACARONESIA DEMO SITE

 The projects [first targeted local newsletter](#) is out in three languages!! Check it out, share it and create your own using the [template](#)!



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WEBINARS

UPCOMING

Distinguishing Marine Spatial Planning and Marine Protected Area planning to advance conservation

📅 22 October 2025 | 🕒 4 PM CET | 💻 Online

🎓 Hosted by the Octo

👉 Register [here](#)

This webinar will explore the key differences between MSP and MPA planning, why these distinctions matter, and how aligning both approaches can strengthen climate-smart ocean conservation. It offers practical insights and lessons for practitioners looking to optimize synergies and avoid common pitfalls in marine planning.

New WCPA practice guidance for protected and conserved area finance

📅 18 November 2025 | 🕒 4PM CET | 💻 Online

🎓 Hosted by Octo

👉 Register [here](#)

The webinar will spotlight how protected and conserved areas (PCAs) generate significant values for society and the economy, why these high economic values are not enough to ensure PCAs are adequately funded and conserved, why financial needs for PCAs are growing, and why investing in PCAs generates significant returns.





INTERESTING NEWS

Over the last months SUBMARINER colleagues creating a [Massive Open Online Course \(MOOC\) on Integrated Ocean Planning: MPAs, Multi-Use and Business Planning](#). This course is free of charge and was developed under the BlueBioTechpreneurs Project on the basis of multiple projects such as MSP4BIO, Blue4All, ULTFARMS and influences of Blue Connect. Check it out and share it with your network!

The Blue Connect Project as a whole and the Macaronesia Demo Site have been submitted for the **Ocean Decade Call endorsement**.

The Macaronesia Demo Site applied for the **Atlantic Project Award 2025** - While it was not selected this year, the efforts and commitment remain highly valued — keep up the great work!

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PUBLICATIONS /RECOMMENDATIONS

[ROVs Provide Continued Efficiency Improvements for Maine DMR Aquaculture Division](#), in Environment Coastal & Offshore Magazine.

[Algae: new Commission study explores their bright future](#), European Commission

Sabine Horn, Bela H. Buck, Rudolf Amann, Ben Boteler, Kira Gee, Nils Goseberg, Maurits Halbach, Anneke Heins, Katja Heubel, Andreas Kannen, Dietmar Kraft, Carsten Lemmen, Kimberley Peters, Alexander Schendel, Torsten Schlurmann, Corinna Schrum, Peter J. Schupp, Vanessa Stelzenmüller, Vera Sidorenko, Ute Wilhelmsen, Karen H. Wiltshire, Towards a strategy for offshore installations to enhance the environmental status of coastal seas: Multi-use concepts for ecosystem restoration, Marine Policy, Volume 182, 2025, 106893, ISSN 0308-597X, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2025.106893>.

Antonova, A. S., Flannery, W., Gómez, S., Gustavsson, M., Hadjimichael, M., Murtagh, B., et al. (2025). Centering Coastal Communities' diverse economic practices in the Blue Economy. Geoforum 166, 104410. [doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2025.104410](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2025.104410).





UPCOMING EVENTS

HELCOM WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

 Date & Time: 07 - 10 October 2025

 Date & Time: 25 - 27 November 2025

Project partners will participate in HELCOM's biannual HELCOM Working Group on Biodiversity, Protection and Restoration informal consultation session, including project updates from Blue Connect. In November, the HELCOM's Expert Group on Marine Mammals session will take place where work taking place under Blue Connect's WP5 will be introduced.

WORKSHOP FOR SEA GUARDIANS

 Date: 30 September to 05 October 2025

FMB will attend the Workshop for the validation of the Code of Conduct and Standard Operating Procedures for Sea Guardians. Stay tuned!

BLACK SEA COMMON MARITIME AGENDA STAKEHOLDER CONFERENCE

 Date: 28 October 2025

 Location: Constanta, Romania

Making waves: Stakeholders united for a Common Maritime Agenda conference 2025! The Conference serves as a key annual gathering for the Black Sea blue economy community, bringing together stakeholders from government, academia, business, and civil society to exchange best practices and foster collaboration. Attendance will be only in-person!





UPCOMING EVENTS

EUROPEAN MSP WEEK

 Date: 14 to 16 October 2025
 Location: Helsinki, Finland

CCMS and HELCOM will attend the European MSP Week in Helsinki this year, also featuring the **ReMap Hands-on Conference** (14 to 15 October) and the

Workshop on digital twins of the ocean in MSP (16 October). The final event of the ReMAP Project will explore how to make MSP more adaptive, inclusive, and ecosystem-based. Further than training and “hands-on” sessions, the event offers a space for dialogue among planners, scientists, decision-makers and stakeholders committed to improving MSP across European seas. The DTOs Workshop aims to explore how DTOs can enhance MSP by addressing data quality and availability gaps, enabling real-time feedback and simulations, exploring what-if scenarios, and fostering innovative solutions to key challenges such as climate change adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable resource management.

MISSION OCEAN EVENT NORWAY

 Date: December 2025
 Location: Trondheim, Norway

SALT will present BLUE CONNECT in the Norwegian Mission Ocean projects events beginning of December in Trondheim. The presentation will focus on the Norwegian context of the project.



UPCOMING EVENTS

5TH BLUE PARKS COMMUNITY WORKSHOP



Date: 19 November 2025



Location: Online

Join the 5th EU Blue Parks Community Workshop on 19 November 2025 (online)! Under the theme “Achieving Mission Ocean and Waters Protection Targets”, the workshop will showcase Horizon Europe and Mission Ocean projects contributing to Europe’s 2030 goals of protecting 30 % and strictly protecting 10 % of marine areas. Discover achievements, lessons learned, and the impact of EU Blue Parks projects. BLUE CONNECT will be presented by SUBMARINER! Register [here](#).



Thank you for reading

