

## EDITORIAL



## Towards a Sustainable Blue Economy in EU and Beyond

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Climate change and environmental degradation are the biggest complex and interlinked challenges of our times. With the Paris Agreement on climate change in force in 2015, the transition to a modern and low-carbon economy has to be accelerated. According to scientists, without urgent action, the global temperature could hit a 2°C increase soon after 2060, turning the earth into a "hot-house". The European Green Deal set the blueprint for transformational change. It is an integral part of European Commission's strategy to implement the United Nation's 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals. Under the European Climate Law, EU countries must cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 (compared to 1990 levels). Their goal is to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent on the planet by 2050.

In 2021, the European Commission unveiled a communication aimed to integrate ocean policy into Europe's new economic policy in order to ensure that the so-called blue economy plays a major role in the implementation of the European Green Deal – a new European growth model for a prosperous, responsible and resilient economy.

The blue economy is a broad, fast-moving segment of our economy. It comprises all sectoral and cross-sectoral economic activities that are linked to the water and play a key role in achieving the ambitions of the European Green Deal. Seas and oceans as a natural capital enable the transition to a sustainable economy and have a great potential in global markets for low-emission breakthrough technologies, sustainable products, services and inclusive growth, improved competitiveness and quality jobs. They provide us with vital resources and ecosystem services. Oceans hold 97% of all our water and 80% of all life forms, provide enough oxygen for every second breath we take, food for almost half of humanity, and

critical resources for human health and well-being. On top of that, ocean changes interact with each of the UN SDGs. Ocean knowledge has to be open-access, enriched and interconnected with different networks, available to citizens, scientists and policymakers around the world.

There are six sectors of the blue economy, namely living and non-living resources, renewable energy, maritime transport, coastal tourism and leisure, and public. Furthermore, blue economy includes marine-based (marine resources, maritime transport and coastal tourism renewable energy, etc.) and marine-related activities (port activities, seafood processing, biotechnology, etc.). These economic activities have a cumulative impact on the marine environment (marine litter, harmful chemical contaminants, excessive nutrients, underwater noise, etc.), the health and well-being of citizens. At the same time, it raises concerns over the present and future health of the ocean.

The main problem we face with regards to water is that it is unevenly distributed, polluted, mismanaged and wasted. All blue economy sectors such as aquaculture, fisheries, port activities and coastal tourism will have to reduce their environmental and climate impact. Healthy seas and oceans are key for a sustainable future for both people and the planet. The shift of blue economy to sustainable blue economy that includes the management, restoration and preservation of marine resources to secure ecosystem services to obtain long-standing values from the oceans and coastal regions for society needs to be done.

A sustainable blue economy offers many solutions to achieve the European Green Deal objectives and transition towards a sustainable future. There just can't be green without blue!

Are you ready to join the effort?