

ROADMAP

Roadmaps aim to inform citizens and stakeholders about the Commission's work in order to allow them to provide feedback and to participate effectively in future consultation activities. Citizens and stakeholders are in particular invited to provide views on the Commission's understanding of the problem and possible solutions and to make available any relevant information that they may have.

TITLE OF THE INITIATIVE	Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU
LEAD DG – RESPONSIBLE UNIT	DG MARE
LIKELY TYPE OF INITIATIVE	Communication of the Commission
INDICATIVE PLANNING	Q1 2021
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	-

This Roadmap is provided for information purposes only and its content might change. It does not prejudice the final decision of the Commission on whether this initiative will be pursued or on its final content. All elements of the initiative described by the Roadmap, including its timing, are subject to change.

A. Context, Problem definition and Subsidiarity Check

Context

The EU's Blue Economy encompasses all the economic activities related to oceans, seas and coasts, whether they take place in the marine environment (e.g. shipping, fisheries, land-based aquaculture), or on land (e.g. marine and coastal tourism, ports, shipyards). It is a wide, fast moving sector with a turnover of €750 million and employing 5 million people in 2018, with growth rates significantly higher over the last decade than in the overall land-based economy.

In the next few years, the imperative of decarbonisation will likely change the face of the maritime economy, and more change is to be expected because of digitalization, climate change and the COVID-19 crisis. This systemic change carries with it threats and opportunities that transcend national borders and that need managing if we are to ensure long-term sustainability. Seas and oceans are a shared resource, whose health is a collective responsibility by international law (UN Convention on the Law of the Sea). For these reasons, public authorities should oversee the transition and make sure that the Blue Economy can recover speedily and fairly from the crisis, contribute to the European Green Deal (with particular regard to greenhouse gas emissions, circular economy, sustainable food systems and biodiversity), and become truly sustainable from an environmental, economic and social perspective.

The mission letter from the Commission President to Mr Sinkevičius asks the Commissioner to ensure that our blue economy forms an integral part of the [European Green Deal](#) and to develop a new approach for a sustainable blue economy. The European Green Deal calls for a transformation of all economic sectors – and the maritime sector is no exception. Both the [Council Conclusions on oceans and seas](#) and the [EP resolution on the European Green Deal](#) call for a coordinated management of the blue economy sector.

Problems the initiative aims to tackle

- Climate change and biodiversity loss have serious impacts on oceans and ultimately on the resilience of the blue economy. Clear examples are the declining fish stocks and coastal erosion. For economic activities at sea to carry on, actors must urgently integrate sustainability principles and reduce pressure on marine ecosystems. Several Sustainable Development Goals under the 2030 Agenda relate to the Blue Economy: SDG 14 as well as SDGs 1, 4, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13.
- Compartmentalisation: the BE covers a multitude of sectors (e.g. renewable energy, fishing, shipping) which, though very diverse, produce cumulative and often synergistic effects on a single environment. These sectors need to adopt a coherent approach if they are to meet sustainability objectives, including those on pollution, biodiversity and climate change. The same coherence must pervade the public policies – at EU, national and regional level - governing Blue Economy aspects such as maritime transport, energy, tourism, environment, social inclusion etc.
- Knowledge gaps: while Europe has made strides on ocean forecasting related to climate to understand part of the oceans' behaviour, we still have uneven scientific knowledge of abundance, distribution and trends of marine life and habitats. There is uncertainty as to how to restore biodiversity and ecosystems. There is still a lack of comparable and accurate socio-economic data, especially for emerging sectors. Filling these gaps is essential for policy-making and requires hefty investment in scientific research and planning as well as improved feedback and take-up from science to policy. Pending better knowledge, the precautionary

principle should apply, using tools such as environmental impact assessments and cumulative impact assessments.

- **Rapid change:** With the advent of space-based information and artificial intelligence, we can expect fast-paced industrial and digital developments in the next few years, which in turn will bring along both opportunities and challenges. In fisheries, new and advanced IT tools will probably optimise fishing operations and allow for better data collection, better monitoring and ultimately better management of marine biological resources. While providing renewable and clean energy, up scaling offshore energy can have impacts on the marine environment and other activities at sea, and requires considerable strategic planning and renewed management of the marine space. We will need innovative Blue Economy technologies and services, but the SMEs and start-ups developing them will need financial assistance for market entry. Qualified staff mastering ever-evolving technologies will be in high demand, and vocational training will need to match that demand in a timely manner through systematic dialogue between business, education and social partners. Both the transition to a sustainable BE and the recovery from the crisis must be socially fair and just.

Basis for EU intervention (legal basis and subsidiarity check)

EU Member States need to join forces to tackle the transformation proposed by the European Green Deal, which requires harmonised policies, mutualisation of research and innovation, massive coordinated public and private investments, etc. Maritime activities and sustainability issues transcend national borders, affecting landlocked countries as well. On many aspects affecting the Blue economy, competences are shared between the EU and the Member States. Since 2007, with its Integrated Maritime Policy and Blue Growth Policy, the EU has been developing a cross-sectorial approach to the blue economy, building notably on the EU policies for fisheries (TFUE art. 43), environment (art. 192), transport (art. 100) and research (art. 182). It has thus accrued experience and gained the trust of stakeholders, while respecting the principles of subsidiarity. Existing texts, however, are now superseded by a new context and new policy objectives. A Commission Communication seems to be the proper instrument to introduce a new approach to a sustainable blue economy and call on all players (public and private), at all levels (EU, national, regional and local) to buy into the vision and put it into practice in their respective remits.

B. What the initiative aims to achieve and how

To meet the European Green Deal objectives at sea, the initiative sets a vision for a transformation of the blue economy under the Deal's axes of decarbonisation, zero pollution, circularity and biodiversity. Complementing other framework initiatives recently adopted or planned by the Commission, it identifies concrete desirable transformations in the different sectors of the Blue economy that could guide public and private initiatives.

Building on the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Maritime Spatial Planning directive, the initiative ensures that environmental considerations are embedded in the planning of Blue Economy activities, and that impacts from such activities are prevented or minimised. Forsaking sectorial perspectives, it explores integrated approaches that facilitate coexistence of activities and create positive externalities, including adaptation to climate change. It strives to strengthen citizen engagement and regional cooperation.

The Communication fosters economic and social recovery in the blue economy and bolsters the blue economy's resilience by encouraging sustainable solutions, innovative products and services and emerging sectors with high employment potential and low environmental impact. This will reinforce the role of European R&D in driving, navigating and accelerating the transformative Green Deal agenda. Building on the BlueInvest initiative, the communication explores ways to scale up support to blue innovative SMEs and attract investment in support to sustainable blue economy.

The initiative contemplates transition mechanisms for workers and coastal communities and sets orientations for skills development.

It multiplies the opportunities offered by new technologies to improve ocean knowledge and ocean observation, which are the foundations of a sustainable, well-monitored and efficiently managed Blue Economy, with minimum environmental impacts and in balance with marine ecosystems conservation.

The new approach to sustainable blue economy is bound to confirm the EU's role as standard setter in environmental technology and leader in the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources, thus underpinning the EU's policy on international ocean governance.

The Communication's priorities will guide the use of EU funds for the period 2021-2027. In certain cases and when appropriate, it may suggest new EU legislative acts (incl. revision of existing legislation).

C. Better Regulation

Consultation of citizens and stakeholders

A targeted consultation of key stakeholders will help identify priorities, test acceptability and collect expert advice through several dedicated channels including: public conferences, Member State Expert Group on Integrated Maritime Policy, EP SEARICA intergroup (Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas), regions (Committee of the Regions, Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions etc.), sea-basin strategy events, Ocean mission, European Economic and Social Committee and so on.

Evidence base and data collection

The initiative stems from the following literature:

- [Blue economy report 2018, 2019 and 2020](#)
- DG MARE [Study to support investment for the sustainable development of the Blue Economy](#) (2018)
- OECD (2019): [Rethinking Innovation for a Sustainable Ocean Economy](#)
- OECD (2016): [The Ocean Economy in 2030](#)
- Commission Staff Working Document [Fitness Check of the EU Nature Legislation](#) (Birds and Habitats Directives) - SWD(2016) 472 final
- Commission Report on the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive – SWD(2020)259 final
- ESPAS. (2019). [Global Trends to 2020: Challenges and Choices for Europe](#)
- [DG ENV Study on Green Jobs in the Blue Economy](#) (2017)
- [IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate](#) (2019)
- IPBES [Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services \(2019\)](#)

No impact assessment has been planned as this communication sets out a general approach. However, follow-up actions may require impact assessment as per Better Regulation guidelines.

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