



Sustainable Blue
Economy Partnership

**Workshop “Ocean (Funding) in the Next Multiannual Financial Framework”
at the European Maritime Day 2026**

KEY MESSAGES

The EU Ocean Pact marks a significant milestone towards knowledge-based, integrated and coherent governance, recognising that blue prosperity underpins competitiveness, sustainability and security. However, delivering the objectives of the Ocean Pact requires adequate investment. As negotiations over the next EU budget progress, the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership (SBEP) engaged the community within its dedicated activity “synergies of funding streams” through a workshop at the European Maritime Day (EMD) 2026 entitled [Ocean \(funding\) under the next MFF](#).

How can the future Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) support the implementation of the Ocean Pact? At the EMD’s conference opening, Costas Kadis, EU Commissioner for Maritime affairs and Fisheries, urged Member States to actively prioritize ocean matters in the National and Regional Partnership’s Plans (NRPPs).



SBEP panelists from left to right: Jacques Delsalle, European Commission; Søren Heinecke, European Regions Research and Innovation Network; MEP Christophe Clergeau, Chair of the Parliamentary Intergroup on Seas, Rivers, Islands, Coastal Areas; Giuseppe Sciacca, Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions; Rémi Cossetti, Seas At Risk; (online) Raluca Petrică, Romanian Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalisation.



Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership

Contributing to the debate, the SBEP workshop delivered the following recommendations:

SETTING BLUE FUNDING SCHEMES WITHIN THE PROPOSED MFF ARCHITECTURE

- The MFF architecture should include dedicated, **ring-fenced ocean-related priorities** to secure funding aligned with policy objectives. Financial evidence already demonstrates significant return on investment in sustainable ocean action.
- Strictly defined principles (e.g. ecosystem-based approach) and better accountability are required to **clarify budget conditionality** and to track effectiveness of public spending with transparent monitoring mechanisms.
- **Embedding the blue economy as a transversal priority** would reflect its role as a strategic lever for European sovereignty by reducing dependencies and securing energy and food security, industrial competitiveness and supply chain resilience. Integrated funding pathways - connecting the NRPPs, the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF), FP10, and the Smart Specialization Strategies in their blue dimensions - would strengthen coherence for strategic autonomy.

ADVANCING RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

- Based on the transformative role of a blue economy driven by increased knowledge, robust innovation ecosystems and technological leadership, **blue innovation should be defined as a horizontal priority in FP10** and in articulation with the ECF.
- FP10 should offer the opportunity to build lasting **partnerships**, which do not dissolve when funding ends but rather structure long-term collaborations where capacities grow over time, in support of the pivotal role of ocean research for coherent governance.
- The **EU Strategy on Ocean Research and Innovation** should promote an integrated approach across freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems. Its implementation through FP10, alongside **OceanEye** for sustained ocean observation providing evidence for coherent policies, will be essential.

PROMOTING A TERRITORIAL APPROACH

- The NRPPs provide the opportunity to leverage the expertise of **maritime regions** in managing EU funds, local implementation of policies, and addressing ocean matters at the forefront (e.g. economic development and climate risks).
- Following the example of the EU Mission's lighthouses, the **sea basin approach** should be strengthened to engage coastal communities and to align priorities at macro-regional level.
- Building on **Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3)** as a successful instrument to increase strategic visibility in funding programmes, all maritime regions should adopt a blue-focused S3.

In conclusion, by designing a “blue MFF”, it is possible to align the future financial architecture with the ambition of the Ocean Pact and Europe’s wider objectives for competitiveness, resilience, security and strategic autonomy. However, given the current uncertainty over ocean funding, **Member States have a key role to play**, whereby the definition of strategic roadmaps can support concrete mobilization.

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