
Opportunities and challenges for blue SMEs and maritime regions

Hosted by MEP **Josianne Cutajar**, SEArICA Vice-Chair for SMEs and Digitalisation

Organised with the support of the [Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions](#)

25 January 2023 – 9:30-11:30 (Brussels Time)

European Parliament, Room SPINELLI 3H1 & online

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Blue SMEs, active in sectors such as marine renewable energy, shipping, fisheries and aquaculture, coastal tourism and marine biotechnology, are vital to the long-term success of the blue economy and the sustainable development of maritime regions.

However, many businesses in these sectors are facing barriers to growth and are currently under great pressure because of the reduced energy supply and price increase caused by the present geopolitical situation. In addition, they are expected to keep pace with the green and digital transition and adapt their business models to new needs and requirements.

While the existence of funding schemes supporting blue SMEs and start-ups at the EU, national and regional levels, is very positive and signals the importance of the SME ecosystem for Europe's economy, the fragmentation and complexity of the funds lead to difficulties in their access.

In this context, it is important to provide concrete answers on how blue SMEs can overcome barriers and make use of digitalisation and greening opportunities.

This event, hosted by **MEP Cutajar**, SEArICA Vice-Chair for SMEs and Digitalisation, will be the occasion to showcase the digitalisation challenges faced by blue SMEs and engage in a discussion on the available opportunities and ways to unlock their potential and fully support their development.

AGENDA

9:30-9:45 | *Opening remarks*

- MEP **Josianne Cutajar**, SEArca Vice-Chair for SMEs and Digitalisation
- **Karmenu Vella**, former European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (*video message*)
- **Maria Muñoz Martinez**, Director, Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism, Spanish SME Envoy

9:45 – 10:30 | *Digitalisation of SMEs: lessons learnt from the sector*

- **Rémi Gruet**, CEO, Ocean Energy Europe
- **Carl Kraijenoord**, Chair of shipbuilding network, industriAll Europe
- **Miguel Fernandes**, General Manager, Flow Technology-FoodInTech, SAFER project partner

MEP reaction

MEP **Petros Kokkalis**, SEArca Vice-Chair for Blue Economy, Maritime Industries and Ports

Debate round

10:30 – 11:25 | *Financing opportunities for Blue SMEs*

- **Almotaz Abadi**, Deputy Secretary General for Water, Environment and Blue Economy, UfM – *Boosting blue economy and facilitating access to finance to Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in the Euro-Mediterranean Region*
- **Talvikki Jori**, CPMR Vice-President for Maritime Affairs, Region of Southwest Finland
- **Marcin Sadowski** and **Claus Schultze**, Policy Officers, Maritime innovation, Marine Knowledge and Investment Unit, DG MARE
- **Valentina Pinna**, Project Adviser, EU and place-based Innovation Ecosystems, EISMEA.I.01
- **Sophie Scarvelis**, Head of Project Unit, Interreg Euro-MED Programme & **Alessandro Daraio**, Emilia Romagna Region, Lead partner Dialogue4Innovation project – *Fostering sustainable blue economy in the Mediterranean*

Debate round

11:25 – 11:30: **Concluding remarks** by MEP **Josianne Cutajar**, SEArca Vice-Chair for SMEs and Digitalisation

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