



## D3.2 TOOLKIT: TRAINING ACTIVITIES FOR EMERGING CLUSTER, LESSONS LEARNED

### Task 3.2

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## Summary CallmeBLUE Project

*Deliverable: D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned. Task 3.2. Version: Final Version, date: Sep. 30, 2025.*

The role of maritime clusters is increasingly important in the process of connecting public and private entities working in all transversal sectors related to blue economy at both national and Mediterranean level. Maritime clusters are indeed crucial facilitators of networking, technology transfer, internationalisation and innovation between SMEs, large companies, research centers, universities etc., and they act as key actors to promote sustainable investments of the blue economy.

CALLMEBLUE aims to strengthen existing clusters alliances in the Mediterranean area in order to accelerate north-south regional cooperation processes towards the emerging of strategic maritime clusters in North Africa area (south-south cooperation). CALLMEBLUE will aim to create a strategic vision and transferable models of interregional cooperation.

In particular, CALLMEBLUE will aim to implement concrete actions at both local and regional level in order to raise awareness on the relevance of Maritime clusters as key actors for a sustainable blue economy policy.

The project shall promote exchange of best practices and knowledge transfer between north and southern area, including piloting learning activities aimed at offering a transferable training “Toolkit”, addressed to future maritime clusters in the southern area in order to be prepared on the legal, structural, administrative and management aspects for a concrete creation of future maritime clusters.

CALLMEBLUE ambition is to set-up and strengthen maritime clusters alliances (North-South cooperation) – particularly targeting southern Mediterranean countries (South-South cooperation) but also allowing to enhance regional dialogue and more advanced services offered to Cluster Mediterranean ecosystem. At this aim, CALLMEBLUE offers its role as an accelerator for the policy goals set by relevant regional initiatives such as the UfM Ministerial Declaration for sustainable blue economy and the WestMED Initiative.



## Table of Contents

<b>Summary CallmeBLUE Project</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>viii</b>
Key Highlights.....	viii
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Methodology</b> .....	<b>13</b>
Task 3.2 Links to other Tasks & Work Packages of CMB (CallmeBLUE) .....	13
The Objectives and Outcomes of Task 3.2 .....	14
<b>List of KPIs</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>Design &amp; Planning of the Learning Labs</b> .....	<b>15</b>
The Curriculum of the “Learning Labs” .....	15
Announcement of the “Learning Labs” program .....	19
The cohort of participants in the Pilot Online “LEARNING LABS” .....	20
Online Piloting Learning activities.....	26
<b>LEARNING LABS FOR EMERGING MARITIME CLUSTERS</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>SESSION #01: Role of Clusters in the Blue Economy</b> .....	<b>27</b>
Industrial Clusters – Theoretical Foundations.....	28
Networks of Innovation .....	29
The Services Clusters Offer to their Members & the Regional Ecosystem .....	30
Blue Economy Clusters (Emerging Sectors).....	31
Cluster Support Mechanisms & Tools .....	33
Key Insights – Session 1.....	35
<b>SESSION #02: Establishment &amp; Organization of Emerging Clusters</b> .....	<b>36</b>
Cluster Establishment in the Southern Countries .....	36
Regional Cluster Policies & Regulations .....	37
Stakeholder Analysis (Competitive Sectors) .....	38
Steps to Establishing a National Cluster.....	38
The Challenges of Operating a Cluster in the Maghreb Region .....	39
A Strategy for Growth & Sustainability of Clusters in the MENA Region .....	40
Key Insights – Session 2.....	41
<b>SESSION #03: Cluster Cooperation in the Southern Countries</b> .....	<b>42</b>
The Need for Regional Cluster Cooperation .....	43

*D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned*

The Model for Regional Cluster Cooperation – The Role of a Super-Cluster ..... 43

Situation Analysis (Pre-requisites) ..... 44

Strategic Plan for the Establishment of a Maghreb Super-Cluster ..... 46

Key Insights – Session 3..... 49

**SESSION #04: On Cluster Management & Leadership ..... 50**

    Policies, Goals & Objectives ..... 50

    Strategic Plan ..... 52

    Stakeholder Engagement ..... 52

    On Principles of Project Management ..... 53

    Key Insights – Session 4..... 55

**SESSION #05: Running a Cluster – Case Studies ..... 56**

    Cluster #1: Forum Oceano (Portugal)..... 56

    Cluster #2: Pôle Mer Méditerranée (France) ..... 57

    Cluster #3: Blue Italian Growth (BIG) ..... 58

    Cluster #4: Clúster Marítimo Marino de Andalucía (Spain) ..... 59

    Cluster #5: Maghreb Platform for Small-Scale Fisheries (Tunisia) ..... 60

    Key Insights – Session 5..... 62

**SESSION #06: Networks of Clusters – Synergies & Cooperation ..... 62**

    Harmonisation of Policies: Clusters as Cooperation Mechanisms ..... 63

    Support Mechanisms for North–South Cooperation ..... 64

    Key Insights – Session 6..... 66

**Post-training Learning Labs Activities ..... 67**

**Satisfaction Survey ..... 67**

        Insights and results of Survey ..... 69

**Certificate of Attendance..... 72**

**TOOLKIT: Training Activities for Emerging Clusters..... 73**

    Objectives of the Toolkit ..... 73

    Components of the Toolkit ..... 73

    Transferability and Future Use..... 74

    Key Insights – Toolkit ..... 75

**CONCLUSION & LESSONS LEARNED ..... 76**

    Sources of Lessons Learned ..... 76

    Main Lessons..... 77



D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned

Final Reflection..... 78

Key Insights – Lessons Learned ..... 79

**Key Messages – Conclusions & Lessons Learned ..... 79**

**References ..... 80**

**List of Figures..... 83**

**List of Tables..... 85**

**Disclaimer..... 86**



## Executive Summary

This deliverable D3.2 documents the design and delivery of Task T3.2 – Organizing Learning Labs for Emerging Maritime Clusters. It builds on outcomes from WP2 and Task 3.1 – Awareness and Matchmaking Local Workshops (Piloting) and aims to provide a transferable “Learning Labs” Toolkit for future maritime cluster actors across the Mediterranean and other sea basins.

The Learning Labs were piloted online between May and July 2025, engaging 42 selected participants, mainly from the Maghreb region. The program included six structured sessions covering foundational concepts, legal frameworks, cooperation models, leadership, case studies, and networks of clusters.

Key outcomes of the Learning Labs sessions:

- Practical roadmaps for cluster establishment in the Maghreb (Session 2).
- Regional cluster-alliance concept and phased plan for the Maghreb (Session 3).
- Leadership, strategy and project management tools for cluster managers (Session 4).
- Operational case studies from leading EU maritime clusters (Session 5).
- EU mechanisms enabling North–South cooperation (WestMED, UfM, EMFAF) (Session 6).

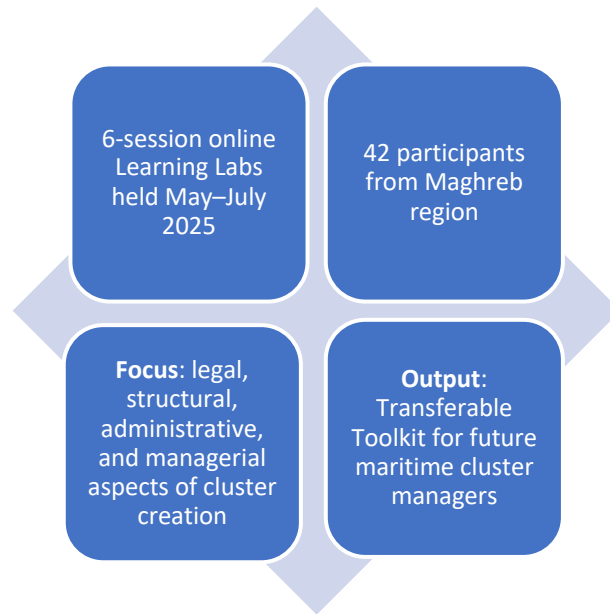
The sessions aimed to strengthen regional cooperation and accelerate the emergence of strategic maritime clusters in North Africa, thus supporting sustainable growth of the Blue Economy.

### Key Highlights

- Forty-two (42) participants from southern Mediterranean countries engaged in six tailored sessions.
- Learning Labs provided a structured pathway: from theory and legal structures to management and international cooperation.
- Sessions designed to foster both North-South and South-South cooperation.
- Toolkit components prepared for transferability to other sea basins.
- Outputs aligned with [CallMeBLUE \(Cluster Alliance MED Blue\)](#) objectives under EMFAF-2023-PIA-FLAGSHIP.



D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned



## Introduction

The role of maritime clusters is increasingly important in the process of connecting public and private entities working in all transversal sectors related to blue economy at both national and Mediterranean level. Maritime clusters are indeed crucial facilitators of networking, technology transfer, internationalisation and innovation between SMEs, large companies, research centres, universities etc., and they act as key actors to promote sustainable investments of the blue economy.

[CallMeBLUE \(Cluster Alliance MED Blue\)](#), an EMFAF-2023-PIA-FLAGSHIP project co-funded by the European Union aims to strengthen existing cluster alliances in the Mediterranean area and to accelerate north-south regional cooperation towards the emerging of strategic maritime clusters in North Africa area (south-south cooperation).

CALLMEBLUE aims to create a strategic vision and transferable models of interregional cooperation. In particular, the project implements concrete actions at both local and regional level to raise awareness on the relevance of Maritime clusters as key actors for formulating and implementing policies for a sustainable blue economy.

The project also promotes exchange of best practices and knowledge transfer between north and southern areas, including piloting learning activities aimed at offering a transferable training “*Toolkit*”, addressed to future maritime cluster managers and actors in the southern area. To this end, the project carries out tasks 3.1 and 3.2.

Task 3.1 “**Awareness and Matchmaking Local Workshops (Piloting)**” was carried out with the aim to raise awareness on the relevance of Maritime clusters as key actors for a sustainable blue economy as well as to enhance cooperation between actors from the south and north. The results of three tailor-made workshops organized in Algeria, Tunisia and Mauritania, are summarized in the deliverables D3.1, D3.1.1, and D3.1.2, respectively. Moreover, a Feasibility Study on embryonic maritime local clusters in Morocco and Egypt was conducted as part of Task 3.1, with its results presented in deliverable D3.1.3

Building upon outcomes of Task 3.1, task T3.2 “**Organizing Learning Labs for Emerging Maritime Clusters**” represents a follow up activity dedicated to tailor made learning labs with the aim to offer a transferable “**Toolkit**” addressed to future maritime cluster actors to be prepared on the legal, structural, administrative and management aspects for a concrete creation of future maritime clusters.

These **FREE Learning Labs’** workshops are addressed to maritime cluster actors to be prepared on the legal, structural, administrative and management aspects for a



*D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned*

concrete creation of future maritime clusters. It aims to educate a group of professionals who could lead the establishment and management of maritime clusters in the Mediterranean region.

- One of the main benefits of participating in these “Learning Labs” is the introduction to the Mediterranean maritime cluster ecosystem. Maritime Cluster Alliances have proven that working as a sea basin community can significantly enhance the development of complex networking processes and promote clusters empowerment.
- To this end, it is important to encourage those interested in animating their regions, from a social and economic point of view, to analyze the economic strengths of their regions and to bring together through the maritime cluster all the factors capable of playing a role in this ecosystem, its cross-sectoral dynamics, the dialogue with local and national institutions, emphasizing the specific dimension/purpose of the region.

The “**Learning Labs for Emerging Maritime Clusters**” workshop includes six sessions, each lasting two hours. An outline of the Learning Workshops is:

**Session-01:** What is a Cluster – The role that clusters can play in the Blue Economy

**Session-02:** How is a Cluster structured, administratively and legally: Legal and economic aspects for creating a cluster in the Maghreb region

**Session-03:** Cluster cooperation in the Maghreb region

**Session-04:** Leadership and management skills for Blue Cluster managers

**Session-05:** The practical aspects of cluster management – presentation of specific Cluster organizations

**Session-06:** Exchange of experiences between North-South cluster cooperation.

The online program of the "Learning Workshops for Emerging Maritime Clusters" consisting of the above six sessions was held from 29 May to 9 July 2025 with the participation of a group of 42 selected participants, mainly from the Maghreb region.



Deliverable D3.2 summarizes the outcomes of Task 3.2, presenting the design and delivery of the tailor-made pilot **“Learning Labs for Emerging Maritime Clusters”** delivered online to a group of professionals, mainly from the southern shore of the Mediterranean; and, the composition of the transferable “Toolkit” addressed to professionals who could lead the establishment and management of maritime clusters in the region (a transferable training model applicable also in other sea basin areas).

The structure of the report is as follows: following this introduction, the *Methodology* section describes the approach towards the design and delivery of the “Learning Labs for Emerging Maritime Clusters” pilot training program and the target KPI’s for task T3.2; the next session focuses on the *design & planning of the Learning Labs*, the process of developing the curriculum, the selection process of the participants, the planning of the content development, validation and delivery; following this are six sections presenting the content of the *six online sessions of the “Learning Labs”*; followed by the *“Port-training program Learning Labs activities”*, covering the conduct of a Satisfaction Survey among the participants as part of the quality management of the program, and the issuance of a Certificate of Attendance; the next section describes the main outcome of task T3.2, the *transferable training TOOLKIT*; and the *“Conclusion & Lessons Learned”* section completes the core part of the report, while in the Annex there are references to supporting material such as the questionnaire used in the Satisfaction Survey.



## Methodology

### Task 3.2 Links to other Tasks & Work Packages of CMB (CallmeBLUE)

Task 3.2 is part of one of the core work packages of the CallmeBLUE project, WP3 on **“Empowerment towards setting up and strengthening emerging maritime clusters ecosystem”** comprised of three tasks:

- **T3.1** “Awareness & Matchmaking Local Workshops”
- **T3.2** “Organizing Learning Labs for Emerging Maritime Clusters”
- **T3.3** “Advanced Online Learning Labs on Business Activities for Advanced Maritime Clusters”

The objectives of WP3 are:

- **Objective 1:** Raise awareness and promote the role of clusters and their impact on a territory, based on experience exchanged
- **Objective 2:** Prepare the legal, structural, administrative and management aspects for the creation of future maritime clusters
- **Objective 3:** Strengthen the robustness of clusters and promote a sustainable blue economy strategy to obtain impact at territorial level
- **Objective 4:** Enable the sharing of best practices and strategies for better management and development of emerging maritime clusters (North-South cooperation).

WP3 contributes toward the fulfillment of CallMeBlue **SO2**: “Promote empowerment of embryonic & emerging maritime clusters ecosystem (internationalisation, sustainable blue economy sector specialisation, cluster management)”.

**Task 3.1** “AWARENESS AND MATCHMAKING LOCAL WORKSHOPS (PILOTING)”, which focuses on objectives #1 and #2 of WP3, was carried out during months M06-M14 of the project with the aim to raise awareness on the relevance of maritime clusters as key actors for a sustainable blue economy as well as to enhance cooperation between actors from the south and north.

In the framework of Task 3.1, the two main activities are:

- **Piloting activities:** Three tailor-made face-to-face workshops were organized in *Algeria, Tunisia and Mauritania* respectively by Leanovator, CMT, CMMA, to



*D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned*

raise awareness about the role of Maritime Clusters for a sustainable blue economy. These workshops aimed at sharing experience between clusters (North-South cooperation): e.g., on how clusters have achieved results; What are the benefits of a cluster in a region, social - economic - employment - sector positioning; How can the participation and integration of women and young in the blue economy and opportunities for the younger generation in this sector, be enhanced. Deliverables D3.1, D3.1.1, D3.1.2 summarize the outcome of the “awareness and matchmaking local workshops (piloting)” organized in Algeria, Tunisia and Mauritania, respectively.

- **A Feasibility Study** on embryonic local clusters. CMMA is responsible to investigate on embryonic emerging clusters in *Morocco*, and *Egypt*. Dedicated actions will be performed to mobilize key stakeholders of local territories identified under WP2. A strategic plan will be acted thanks to the crucial role of Advisory Board and Associated partners to engage local territories and give a clear picture of economic and social impact for a maritime cluster’s activation. Deliverable D3.1.3, presents the results of the Feasibility Study.

### The Objectives and Outcomes of Task 3.2

**Task T3.2** “ORGANIZING LEARNING LABS FOR EMERGING MARITIME CLUSTERS”, focuses primarily on the Objectives #2, #3, and #4 of WP3, complementing the raising of awareness actions performed in the context of Task 3.1.

Building upon outcomes of WP2 and Task 3.1, this activity represents a follow up dedicated **to tailor made learning labs** with the aim to offering a transferable “**Toolkit**” addressed to future maritime cluster actors to be prepared on the *legal, structural, administrative and management* aspects for a concrete creation of future maritime clusters, and educating a group of professionals who could lead the establishment and management of maritime clusters in the region (a transferable training model applicable also in other sea basin area).

This task is led by Strategis with the support of CMT and all partners.

**Piloting learning** activities (involving the main actors and dynamics emerged from the needs assessment WP2 and Task 3.1) were performed online with tailored made learning program and dedicated working groups.

The target of the piloting learning activities was to design and deliver an online workshop consisting of **6 sessions of 2-hour** duration each to be offered to a group of at **least 10** professionals from Southern countries. Each training session, featuring content from sector experts presented in detailed PPTs, was accurately recorded. The recordings facilitate internal tracking and quality monitoring, supporting the final

*D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned*

high-level validation. PPTs and recordings have been shared internally among Consortium’s members after each session’s delivery. The slides alone were also uploaded to the Participants’ shared folder.

Deliverable D3.2, “**TOOLKIT: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned**” summarizes the outcomes of Task 3.2, presenting the design and development of the tailor-made pilot **“Learning Labs for Emerging Maritime Clusters”** and delivered online to a group of professionals, mainly from the southern shore of the Mediterranean; and, the composition of the transferable “Toolkit” addressed to professionals who could lead the establishment and management of maritime clusters in the region (a transferable training model applicable also in other sea basin areas).

## List of KPIs

Below is an overview of the KPI expected from Task 3.2 and their respective actual results. In all cases the expected KPIs have been reached and in some cases results significantly exceeded expectations.

**Table 1 - List of KPIs**

Task	KPI	Country / Region	Expected results	Results reached
Task 3.2	Identification, assessment and acceptance of at least 10 professionals, mainly from the southern coasts of the Mediterranean and related to the Blue Economy sector, for participation in the pilot program "Learning Labs for Emerging Clusters", which was held online from May to July 2025.	Maghreb & MENA	10	42
	Design, develop and deliver a pilot, tailor-made "Learning Labs for Emerging Maritime Clusters" online workshop consisting of 6 sessions of 2-hour duration each to be offered to a group of at least 10 professionals from Southern countries.	Maghreb & MENA	1	1
	Offering a transferable “Toolkit” addressed to future maritime cluster actors to be prepared on the legal, structural, administrative and management aspects for a concrete creation of future maritime clusters and educating a group of professionals who could lead the establishment and management of maritime clusters in the Mediterranean region (a transferable training model applicable also in other sea basin areas). [DELIVERABLE 3.2]	Mediterranean basin	1	1

## Design & Planning of the Learning Labs

### The Curriculum of the “Learning Labs”

Based on the needs-gap analysis of the Blue Economy sector in the Southern countries conducted in the framework of WP2, and presented in the deliverable D2.1



*D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned*

“MARITIME CLUSTERS BLUE ECONOMY REPORTING” and building upon the outcomes of Task 3.1, a tailored made curriculum was developed for the “Learning Labs” addressed to future maritime cluster actors aiming at educating a group of professionals who could lead the establishment and management of maritime clusters in the region (a transferable training model applicable also in other sea basin area).

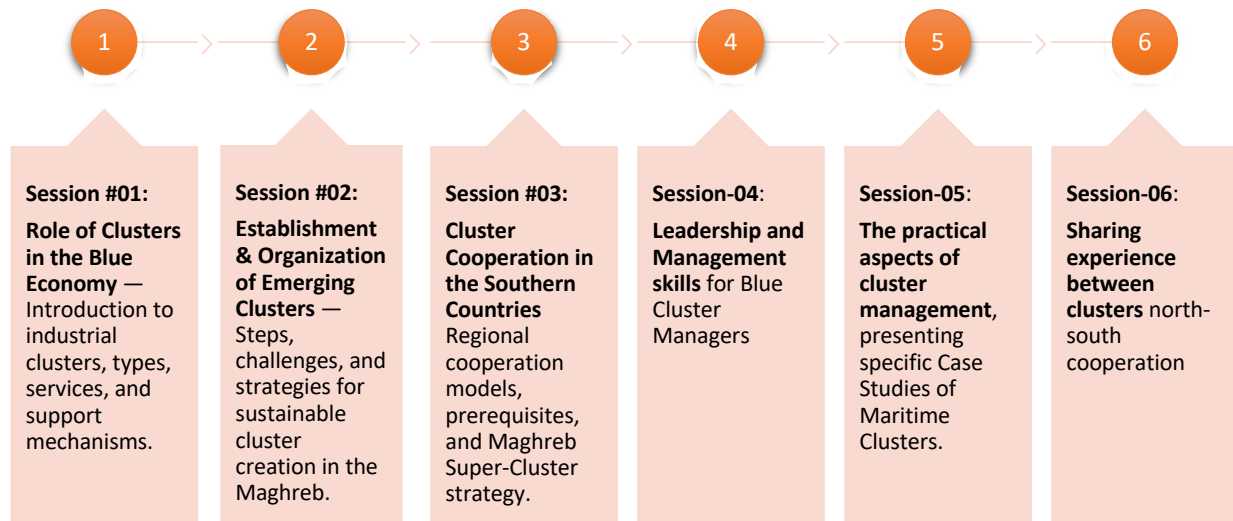
The curriculum was designed taking into consideration the required skills and capabilities for the profile of the future maritime cluster actors as outlined in the work of WP2 and the piloting activities of Task 3.1, but also by analysing similar programs offered by other European research projects like the **MarMED** “Maritime Cluster Management Education Development” < <https://marmedeuproject.eu/> >.

The Learning Objectives that this program addresses are:

- What is a Cluster - The role clusters can play in the Blue Economy
- How is a Cluster structurally, administratively and legally set up: Legal and financial aspects to establish a cluster.
- Leadership and management skills for Cluster Managers
- Sharing best practices & experience between clusters [north-south cooperation]

The objectives of the six sessions comprising the online “Learning Labs” workshop are shown below in Figure 1.

D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned



**Figure 1 The objectives of the six sessions of the Learning Labs**

The final curriculum of the “Learning Labs”, which was developed through the collaboration of CALLMEBLUE partners contributing to WP3 under the leadership of CMMA, STRATEGIS and CMT, is presented in Table 2.

This curriculum provided the basis upon which the content for the six sessions comprising the pilot Learning Labs training was developed.

Table 2: Piloting "Learning Labs for Emerging Maritime Cluster" [May - July 2025]

Learning Labs	Topics
<b>Session #1:</b> Introduction to Blue Economy Clusters	Industrial Clusters – Theoretical Foundation (M.Porter); What is a Cluster; Why we need a cluster; The Mission of a Blue Economy Cluster
	Types of Clusters & Networks of Innovation (EDIH, CoE, KIC, Competence Centers, ...)
	Cluster Services to its Members & the Regional Ecosystems
	Blue Economy Clusters (Emerging Sectors): The challenge of running a BE Cluster
	Cluster support mechanisms & tools (ECCP, Euroclusters, ...)
<b>Session #2:</b> Cluster Establishment in the Southern Countries	Regional Cluster Policies & Regulations
	Stakeholder Analysis (Competitive Sectors)
	Steps to Establishing a National Cluster [The case of the Tunisian National Maritime Cluster - CMT]
	A Strategy for Growth & Sustainability
<b>Session #3:</b> Cluster Cooperation in the Southern Countries	The Need for a Regional Cluster Cooperation (WHY)
	The Model for Regional Cluster Cooperation. The role of a Super-Cluster (WHAT)
	Situation Analysis (Pre-requisites)
	Strategic Plan for the Establishment of a Maghreb Super-Cluster (HOW)
<b>Session #4:</b> On Cluster Management & Leadership	Policies, Goals & Objectives
	Strategic Plan - Design, implementing and revising an action plan to promote the Cluster interests and activities
	Program & Project Management
	Stakeholder Engagement
<b>Session #5:</b> Cluster Management Cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster #1 FORUM OCEANO</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster #2 Pôle Mer Méditerranée</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster #3 Cluster BIG [Blue Italian Growth]</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster #4 Maghreb Platform for Small-Scale Fishery / Clúster Marítimo Marino de Andalucía</li> </ul>
<b>Session #6:</b> North-South Cooperation	Harmonization of national, regional, EU and global policies: Cluster as a mechanism of cooperation, synergies and joint actions.
	Support Mechanisms for North-South Cooperation [WestMED, UfM, EMFAF, ...]

D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned

Once the curriculum for the “Learning Labs” was formalized, the WP3 partners proceeded with the development of an assignment rubric and the schedule for the content creation, review & validation, and delivery of the six online sessions of the Learning Labs.

The specific timetable for the content creation, validation, and delivery along with the assignment of tasks to partners under the roles of “content creator”, “reviewer” and “presenter”, which were confirmed by the CallMeBlue consortium on May 6, 2025 are shown in Figure 2.

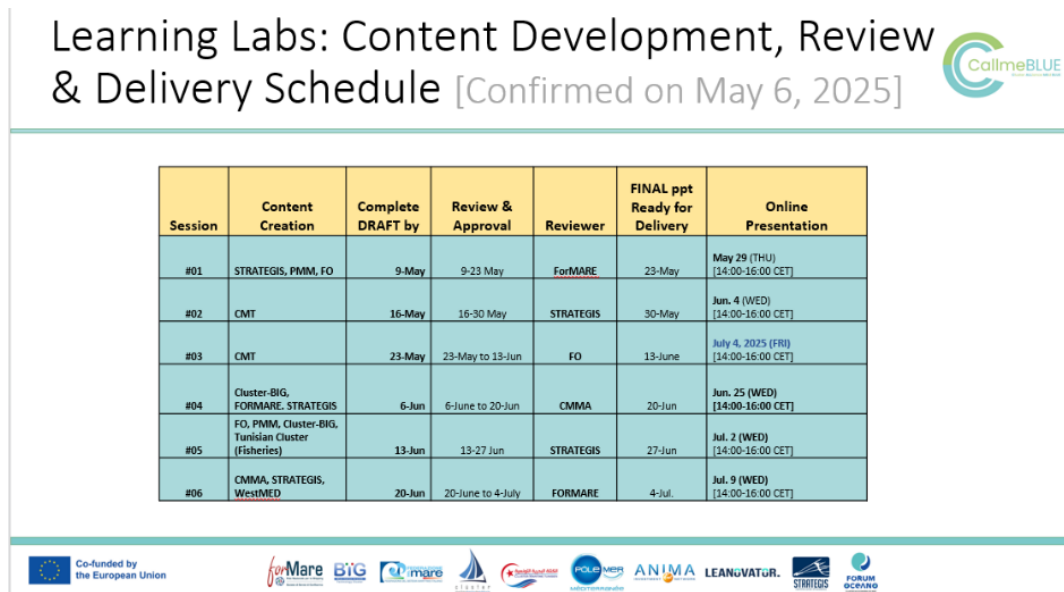


Figure 2 Learning Labs: Content creation, review & delivery plan (Internal Documentation)

### Announcement of the “Learning Labs” program

The announcement of the “Learning Labs” workshop and a “Call for Participants” was posted on the CallmeBLUE [website](#) and distributed via multiple channels of communication of the project itself, its partners’ networks, its members of the advisory board, and through the Union for the Mediterranean and the WestMED Initiative channels to facilitate the engagement.

Moreover, Leancubator & Strategis announced the Online Learning Activities during the Matchmaking event in the framework of the Algerian Blue Economy Conference [ABEC2024, Algiers] on October 15, 2024.

## The cohort of participants in the Pilot Online “LEARNING LABS”

This **FREE “Learning Labs Workshop”** is addressed to future maritime cluster actors to be prepared on the legal, structural, administrative and management aspects for a concrete creation of future maritime clusters. It aims to educate a group of professionals who could lead the establishment and management of maritime clusters in the Mediterranean region.

### Candidate profile for participation in the Pilot Online “Learning Labs”

The aim was to select a group of **at least 10 people** from Southern countries to participate in the online learning workshops scheduled to be held from May to July 2025.

Potential participants were required to:

- be over 18 years of age;
  - have a good command of the English language; and,
  - have previous/current experience in any sector of the blue economy or are currently pursuing a higher education-related program.
- Due to the limited number of attendees to be selected, qualified candidates from the Maghreb region were preferred.

Through the application form, a total of **43 applications** were received by May 1, 2025 (38 before the first deadline which was postponed allowing for the extensive promotion of the “Call for Participation”, to reach a larger set of maritime ecosystem stakeholders as candidates for the Learning Labs).

An excel file with the Applicant details and their short BIOs was shared among the consortium members who participated in the assessment process of the candidates.

The country of origin of these applicants is presented in Figure 3

Country of Origin of the “Learning Labs” Candidates	
Greece	1
Algeria	16
Egypt	3
France	1
Israel	1
Italy	2
Lebanon	7
Libya	1
Morocco	7
Tunisia	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>

**Figure 3 Country of origin of the Learning Labs candidates.**

### *Applicant Eligibility Check & Admission Decision*

Most of the applications came from Southern Mediterranean countries. The eligibility of these countries was checked.

According to art. 6 of the call for proposal Regional flagships projects supporting sustainable blue economy in EU sea basins (EMFAF-2023-PIA-FLAGSHIP), the eligible non-EU countries that are part of the sea basin strategies and/or regional cooperation frameworks targeted in this call for proposals are for Topic 4<sup>1</sup>: Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Turkey, Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Based on this article and on the compliance of CallMeBlue relevant geographical area, applicants were declared eligible for evaluation. After further evaluation of the candidates' qualifications, we compiled the final list of accepted participants in the

<sup>1</sup> The official call fiche for Topic 4 of the EMFAF-2023-PIA-FLAGSHIP, focused on maritime clusters in the Mediterranean, which includes the eligibility details for participating countries, is available as a PDF from the European Commission: [EMFAF-2023-PIA-FLAGSHIP Call Fiche, 13 October 2022 (PDF)]([https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/emfaf/wp-call/2023/call-fiche\\_emfaf-2023-pia-flagship\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/emfaf/wp-call/2023/call-fiche_emfaf-2023-pia-flagship_en.pdf))

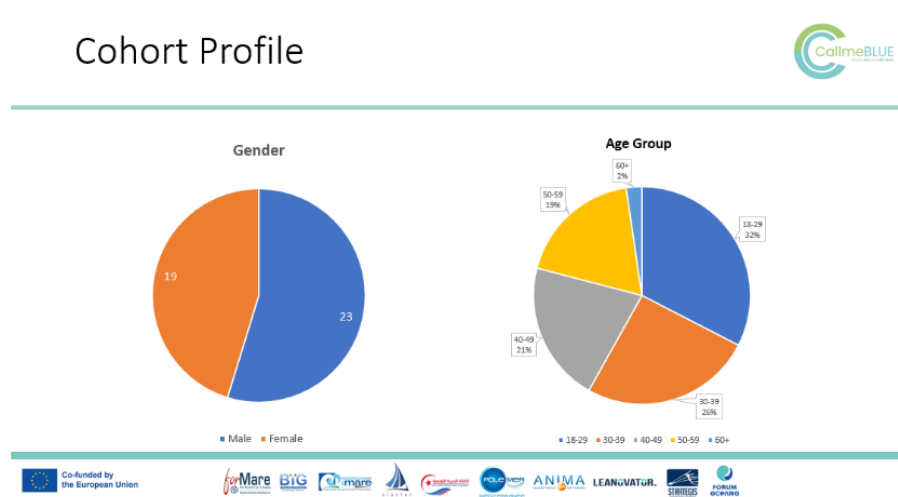
D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned

Learning Labs. A written record of the selection process is available in the internal shared folder of the project.

The final lists of the accepted and rejected applicants were validated by the consortium during the monthly meeting of May 6, 2025.

- A group of **42 applicants** was finally Accepted and Confirmed their participation in the ‘Learning Labs’.

The age and gender profile of the Learning Labs cohort is presented in Figure 4.



**Figure 4 Age & Gender profile of the Learning Labs cohort (Internal Documentation)**

Moreover, the profile of the Learning Labs cohort with respect to the Blue Economy sector that they are most familiar with, is shown in Figure 5

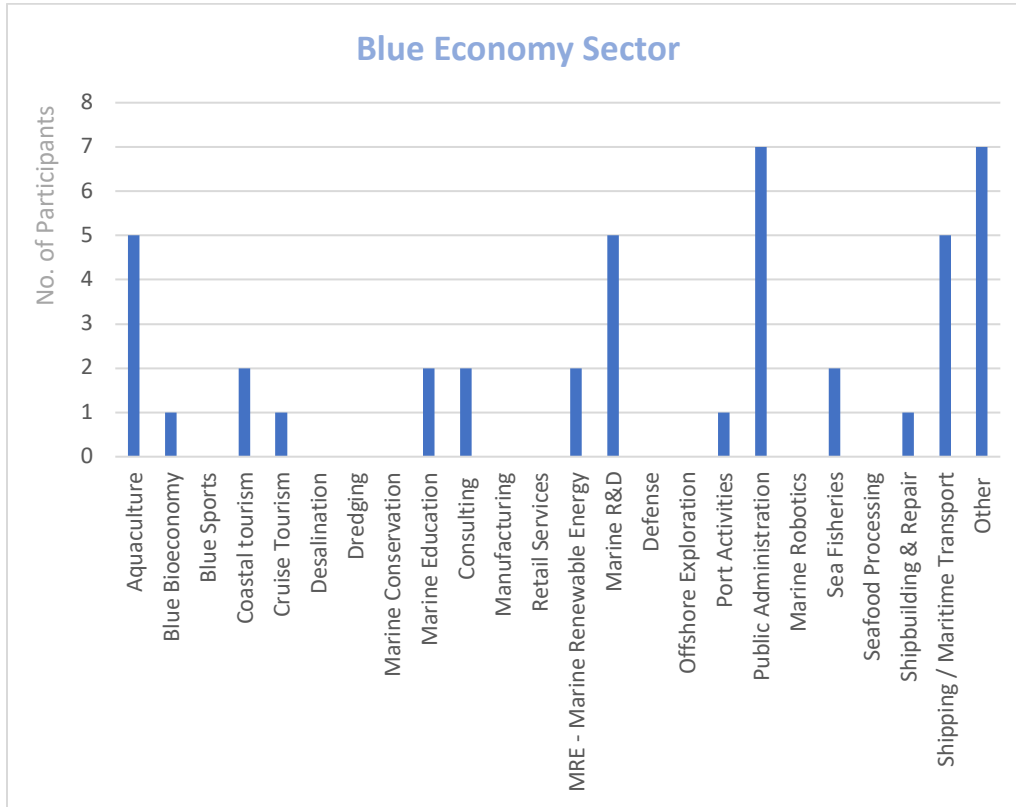


Figure 5 Blue Economy sector that participants are affiliated with. (Internal Documentation)

The complete list of the nationality of the accepted applicants along with their profession and the self-declared affiliation with a particular sector of the Blue Economy is shown in the following Table 3.

Table 3 Participant profession and affiliation with the Blue Economy

NATIONALITY	Profession	Which sector of the Blue Economy do you operate in?* (Select one option)
Greece	Researcher, Maritime Cluster Marketing Strategist, Senior EU Project Manager	Shipping / Maritime Transport
Italy	Student	Other (Please State)
Algeria	Docteur	Marine Environmental Consulting Services (Ecological assessments, monitoring, management, etc.)
Italian	technologist	Marine Research and Development
Algerian	Professeur d'Université	Marine Research and Development
Algerian	Student	Marine Education/Training/Research (Third level)
Algérienne	chargé de gestion	Other (Please State)
Libyan	Maritime Industry	Public Administration related to the marine
Tunisian	General engineer	Port Activities
Algerian	Project coordinator	Other (Please State)
Algerian	Leancubator Cofounder & Programs Director	Other (Please State)
Moroccan	Engineer	Public Administration related to the marine
Moroccan	Directeur Institut National de Recherche Halieutique, Tanger, Pôle Méditerranée	Marine Research and Development
Morocco	Gestion des projets	Blue Bioeconomy / Biotechnology
Algerian	Managing Director	Other (Please State)
Algerian	Cluster manager	Marine Research and Development
Algerian	Architecte Navale , Inspectrice DPA	Shipbuilding & Repair
Algerian	Owner of an aquaculture design office and manager of a marine and continental aquaculture production company Martece	Aquaculture (includes farmed finfish, algae, microalgae, seagrass, and shellfish)
Algerian	Aquaculture Engineering	Aquaculture (includes farmed finfish, algae, microalgae, seagrass, and shellfish)
Algerian	Business owner	Aquaculture (includes farmed finfish, algae, microalgae, seagrass, and shellfish)
French	Director of Marketing & Strategic Intelligence	Cruise Tourism
Moroccan	Head of climate unit	Other (Please State)
Algerian	Manager	Aquaculture (includes farmed finfish, algae, microalgae, seagrass, and shellfish)
Israeli	urban planner	Public Administration related to the marine
Egypt	International Cooperation Director	Public Administration related to the marine
Algerian	Researcher and innovator in sustainable economy in renewable energies	Marine Renewable Energy
Lebanese	Proposal writer	Other (Please State)
Lebanese	Lawyer	Shipping / Maritime Transport

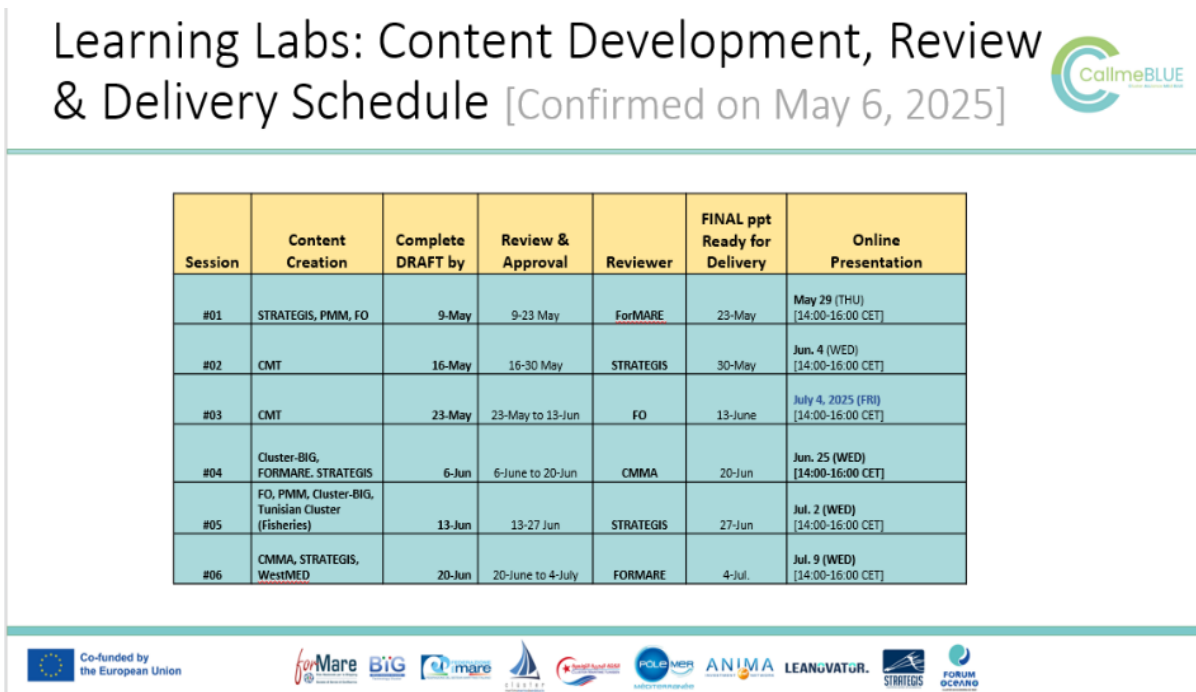
## D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned

Lebanese	Biodiversity Conservation	Marine Environmental Consulting Services (Ecological assessments, monitoring, management, etc.)
Lebanese	Policy Advocacy Specialist	Coastal tourism (including coastal tourist attractions, accommodation, restaurants, etc.)
Lebanese/Spanish	Operations Manager	Marine Education/Training/Research (Third level)
Lebanese	Environmental expert	Marine Research and Development
Algerian	Fisheries observer	Sea Fisheries
Egypt	Vice President of Maritime Transport and Logistics Sector for port affairs	Public Administration related to the marine
Moroccan	Investor Support Officer in Aquaculture	Aquaculture (includes farmed finfish, algae, microalgae, seagrass, and shellfish)
Lebanese	Program manager, Civil Engineering	Coastal tourism (including coastal tourist attractions, accommodation, restaurants, etc.)
Morocco	Head of the Division of Land Planning and Environment of the Rabat-Salé-Kénitra Region	Other (Please State)
Moroccan	Head of Multilateral Cooperation Service/ Secretariat of State for Maritime Fisheries	Public Administration related to the marine
Tunisian	HSE marine officer	Public Administration related to the marine
Tunisian	Sale person in a store	Shipping / Maritime Transport
Tunisian	STUDENT	Shipping / Maritime Transport
Algeria		Fisheries
Egypt	Head of Strategic Central Administration in maritime transport sector	Shipping / Maritime Transport

**Online Piloting Learning activities**

Following the formalization of the *Learning Labs* curriculum, the partners in Work Package 3 (WP3) established the execution plan. This involved two primary steps: defining the assignment rubric and creating a detailed schedule. This schedule covered the entire lifecycle of the six online Learning Labs sessions: content creation, review and validation, and final delivery.

The specific timetable, along with the allocation of tasks—including the designation of "content creator," "reviewer," and "presenter" roles—was formally confirmed by the CallMeBlue consortium on May 6, 2025, and is presented for reference in Figure 6.



**Figure 6 Learning Labs: Content creation, review & delivery plan (Internal Documentation)**

The **Piloting learning** activities involving the main actors and dynamics emerged from the needs assessment WP2 and Task 3.1, and those who were identified and admitted to the “Learning Labs” program through the “Call for participation” process, were performed online with dedicated learning program/working groups according to the delivery plan shown above.

## LEARNING LABS FOR EMERGING MARITIME CLUSTERS

The Piloting Learning Labs workshop brought together aspiring maritime cluster leaders from across the Mediterranean to explore the foundations of cluster creation, from legal frameworks and governance models to innovation ecosystems and blue economy trends.

It was held online from May 29 until July 9, 2025.

The Piloting Learning Labs contribute primarily towards the fulfilment of objectives #2, #3, and #4 of the overall objectives of WP3 which are outlined in Figure 7.



Figure 7 Objectives of the online piloting Learning Labs

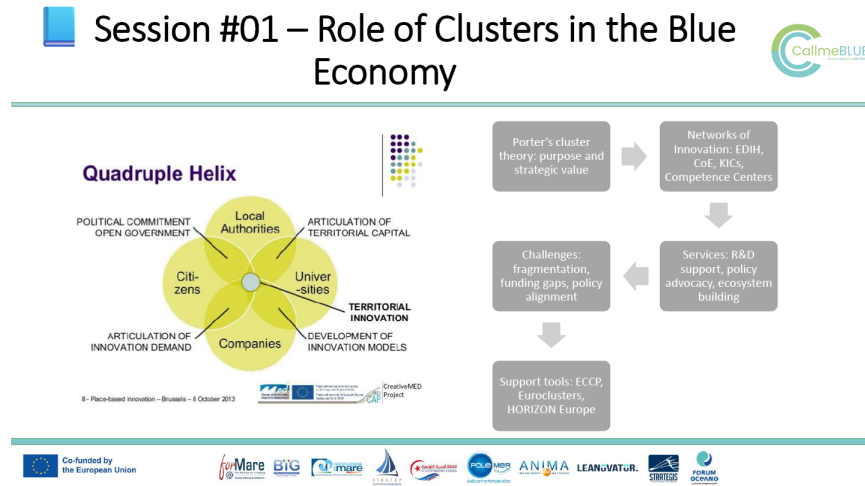
### SESSION #01: Role of Clusters in the Blue Economy

On May 29, the first session of the Learning Labs under the [CALLMEBLUE - Cluster Alliance Med Blue](#) project was held online.

Through interactive discussions and expert-led presentations, the session explored the structural, administrative, and strategic dimensions shaping the next generation of maritime clusters.

**Session Objectives:** to clarify the cluster concept; position Blue Economy clusters within EU innovation architectures; outline the services and value proposition of clusters; surface operational challenges; and outline core European innovation support mechanisms (ECCP, Horizon/Euroclusters, Interreg programme).

The outline of Session #01 reflecting on the role of clusters in regional development as a mechanism for bringing together stakeholders of the Quadruple Helix ecosystem, is shown in Figure 8.



**Figure 8 The role of clusters in the Blue Economy (Internal Documentation)**

Session #01 introduced participants to the **concept of industrial clusters**, their role in supporting economic growth, and the specific relevance of **blue economy clusters** in the Mediterranean context.

It highlighted the theoretical underpinnings of cluster development, the different types of clusters and networks, and the services they can provide to members.

The session also explored emerging sectors within the blue economy, the challenges of managing maritime clusters, and support mechanisms available at EU and regional levels.

### Industrial Clusters – Theoretical Foundations

The foundation of cluster theory was laid by Michael Porter in *The Competitive Advantage of Nations* (Porter, 1990), which described clusters as *geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, suppliers, service providers, and associated institutions in a particular field*. According to Porter, clusters enhance productivity, foster innovation, and stimulate the formation of new businesses (Porter,

## D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned

1998). Porter's definition of a cluster has been adopted by other institutions such as the European Cluster Policy Group (2010)<sup>2</sup>, and the OECD, Science, Technology and Industry Outlook, 2005<sup>3</sup>.

Why we need a cluster:

- To foster *collective competitiveness* by pooling resources and expertise.
- To strengthen *innovation ecosystems* that are otherwise weak in individual countries.
- To reduce duplication of effort and provide *critical mass* in international markets.
- To create an institutional framework for dialogue between *industry, research, policy, and society (Quadruple Helix)*.

Clusters increase productivity via proximity-based efficiencies; stimulate innovation through knowledge spillovers, co-opetition, and dense networks; and enable new business formation by lowering transaction costs and improving access to skills, finance, and infrastructure.

Clusters exist in various forms depending on their scale, sectoral composition, and governance model.

### Networks of Innovation

Beyond industrial clusters, the European Union has developed multiple mechanisms to *support innovation ecosystems*:

- **European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs):** Help companies improve processes and products through digital technologies.
- **Centres of Excellence (CoE):** Recognised entities that specialise in advanced research and development.
- **Knowledge & Innovation Communities (KICs):** Thematic groupings supported by the European Institute of Innovation & Technology.
- **Competence Centers:** Applied research hubs bridging the gap between fundamental science and business needs.

An example of the services offered by one of the European support mechanisms for innovation, the Knowledge & Innovation Communities (KICs), is depicted in Figure 9.

<sup>2</sup> European Cluster Policy Group, 2010. "Clusters are groups of interconnected, geographically close companies and institutions working in a particular field, which are connected by common technologies and skills. They play a crucial role in structuring innovation and competitiveness of regions».

<sup>3</sup> OECD, Science, Technology and Industry Outlook, 2005. "A cluster is a geographical concentration of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, firms from related sectors and associated institutions (universities, training centers, government agencies, etc.) in a particular field, which contribute to competitiveness and innovation."

## Knowledge Innovation Community (KIC)



A KIC is a long-term partnership that brings together key players in the "knowledge triangle":

- Business (including SMEs)
- Higher education institutions
- Research centres

These communities aim to tackle major societal challenges through innovation and are built to integrate education, research, and business.

KICs offer:

- Innovation projects: Funding and support for innovation consortia and ventures.
- Education and training: EIT-labeled master and doctoral programs, summer schools, and entrepreneurial education.
- Business creation and acceleration: Incubation, mentoring, funding, and networking for start-ups and scale-ups.
- Access to a strong network: Collaboration with top universities, industries, and research bodies across Europe.

Existing KIC	Focus Area
EIT Climate-KIC	Climate change and sustainability
EIT Digital	Digital transformation
EIT InnoEnergy	Sustainable energy
EIT Health	Healthcare and healthy living
EIT RawMaterials	Sustainable raw materials
EIT Food	Sustainable and healthy food systems
EIT Manufacturing	Innovation in manufacturing
EIT Urban Mobility	Sustainable urban transport
EIT Culture & Creativity	Cultural and creative industries

A new KIC dedicated to “Water, Marine and Maritime Sectors and Ecosystem” is currently under selection to start in 2026



Figure 9 Knowledge & Innovation Communities (KIC) (Source: Session 1, slide 45)

Globally, **networks of blue economy clusters** provide opportunities for international collaboration, showcasing how regional clusters can scale up to global influence.

### The Services Clusters Offer to their Members & the Regional Ecosystem

Clusters are not merely symbolic organisations but *service providers* to their members. A well-structured service portfolio turns strategy into value for members.

The services clusters offer to their member organizations and the regional ecosystem of innovation aim at reducing transaction costs for SMEs, shorten innovation cycles, and align stakeholders around shared priorities.

Common services include:

- **Business Development & Internationalisation:** supporting members in participating in trade fairs, missions, and export consortia.
- **Collaborative R&I and Technology Transfer:** partner brokerage, Intellectual Property
- **Access to Finance:** proposal design, Pitch days.
- **Information and intelligence:** market trends, regulatory updates, funding opportunities.
- **Networking:** connecting SMEs, large firms, universities, and public authorities.
- **Innovation brokerage:** matchmaking between technology developers and adopters.



D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned

- **Training and capacity building:** skill development tailored to sectoral needs.
- **Policy advocacy & regulatory intelligence**
- **Ecosystem orchestration:** B2B matchmaking events, demo days, living labs, etc.

A representative portfolio of services offered by blue economy clusters is shown in Figure 10.

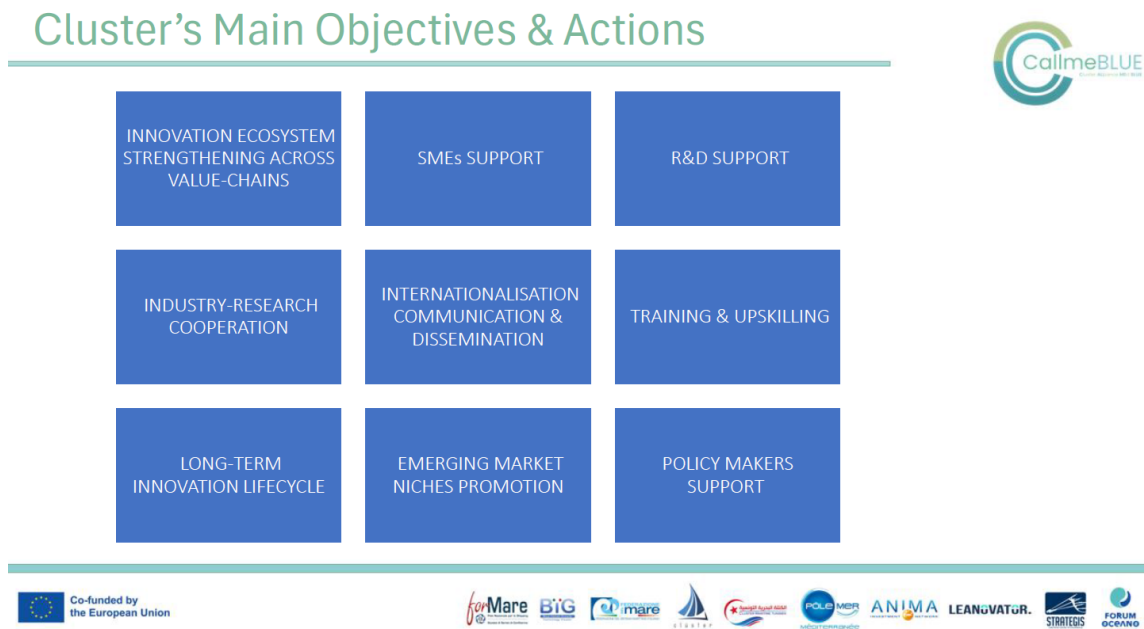


Figure 10 Services offered by maritime clusters (Source: Session 1, Slide 28)

The *regional ecosystem benefits* as clusters act as intermediaries between private and public actors, facilitating dialogue and promoting the region as innovation hub and an investment destination.

### Blue Economy Clusters (Emerging Sectors)

Blue economy clusters play a key role in promoting sustainable growth in the blue economy. Introducing the specificities of blue economy clusters is the key objective of Session #01 (see, Figure 11).



Figure 11 Blue Economy clusters: foundations and value (Source: Session 1, Side 18)

The Mission of a Blue Economy Cluster:

- Promote *sustainable growth* of maritime industries.
- Facilitate *technology transfer* between academia and businesses.
- Support *SMEs and start-ups* in accessing financing, markets, and networks.
- Act as a *policy interlocutor* to ensure that regulations and funding mechanisms reflect the needs of maritime stakeholders.

In the Blue Economy, the cluster dynamics are amplified by the *capital intensity* of maritime infrastructure and the *transversal nature* of blue value chains (ports and logistics, fisheries and aquaculture, shipbuilding, marine renewables, coastal tourism).

Blue economy clusters serve as platforms for uniting fragmented actors across maritime sectors such as fisheries, aquaculture, shipping, coastal tourism, marine renewable energy, and biotechnology. By bringing these stakeholders together, clusters encourage collaborative innovation, skills transfer, and the creation of new value chains that go beyond national boundaries.

Blue economy clusters are still developing in many Mediterranean countries, especially on the southern shore. They face challenges and areas of improvement:

- **Limited institutional recognition** in national policy frameworks.
- **Fragmentation of maritime sectors**, with limited cooperation between industry, academia, and government.
- **Funding constraints**, as SMEs often encounter difficulties accessing venture capital or blue economy-specific funds.

- **Need to strengthen skills and competences** in cluster management and leadership.
- **Challenges in fostering trust and confidence** between stakeholders from different countries or sectors.

Despite these obstacles, blue economy clusters hold **transformative potential** to drive sustainable growth if properly supported and strategically managed.

### Cluster Support Mechanisms & Tools

A range of European and regional mechanisms can provide support to emerging clusters:

- **ECCP (European Cluster Collaboration Platform):** a portal connecting clusters across Europe and beyond.
- **HORIZON Europe programmes:** including *Euroclusters* that fund cross-sectoral collaboration.
- **Regional Growth Policies, Strategies & Funds:** such as EU cohesion funding and Mediterranean transnational cooperation programmes.
- **WestMED and UfM frameworks:** encouraging structured dialogue and project implementation.

By leveraging the support of such mechanisms, it contributes to the implementation of Strategic Objective SO2 of the CallmeBLUE project with the aim of "SO2 - Promoting the strengthening of the ecosystem of embryonic and emerging maritime clusters (internationalization, sustainable sectoral specialization of the blue economy, cluster management)".

A range of actions can be taken to facilitate North-South cooperation in the Mediterranean region for the sustainable growth of the Blue Economy in a variety of domains: Strengthening Regional Cooperation, Skills Development, Technology advancement, and Policy alignment, as outlined in Figure 12.

## Contributing to Blue Economy Growth through Cluster Collaboration in the Mediterranean



- 
**Strengthening Regional Cooperation:** Collaboration Across Regional Blue Economy Ecosystems in Southern Europe, North Africa & the Maghreb. Building trust and partnerships.
- 
**Investing in Education and Training:** Developing a skilled workforce.
- 
**Leveraging Technology:** Digitalization and smart solutions.
- 
**Enhancing Policy Frameworks:** Aligning national and regional policies.



Figure 12 Cooperation for Sustainable Blue Economy in the Med (Session 1, slide 72)

The presentation of Session #01 that was delivered on May 29, 2025.

After the end of Session 1, a LinkedIn [post](#) on the CallmeBLUE page announced the completion of the session (Figure 13).

## LinkedIn Post [June 4, 2025]



Figure 13 LinkedIn post about Session #01 [June 4, 2025]



## Key Insights – Session 1

- ◆ Clusters provide **collective strength** by linking fragmented actors in the blue economy.
- ◆ The **Porter model**<sup>4</sup> remains a relevant theoretical foundation for understanding the economic impact of clusters.
- ◆ Effective clusters must function as **service providers** delivering tangible value to members.
- ◆ The EU has developed **multiple innovation instruments** (EDIHs, KICs, CoEs) that can be leveraged by blue economy clusters.
- ◆ Emerging clusters in the Maghreb face **structural, financial, and skills-related challenges**, but have strong potential if linked to EU support mechanisms.

**Transition to Session 2:** The theoretical and strategic grounding provided in this session clarifies why maritime clusters matter and how they function within the Blue Economy. The following session builds on this conceptual basis, turning to the practical steps and challenges of establishing clusters in the Southern Mediterranean countries. detailing legal forms, governance, stakeholder analysis, and stepwise implementation.

<sup>4</sup> Porter's seminal paper of 1990 explains how clusters foster high levels of productivity and innovation and lays out the implications for competitive strategy and economic policy. The industrial clusters theory, conceived by Michael Porter, posits the spatial and strategic proliferation of interlinked organizations, firms, and associated industries to generate a cobwebbed system capable of producing productivity and innovation.

## SESSION #02: Establishment & Organization of Emerging Clusters

Session #02 focuses on the **practical aspects of establishing and organising maritime clusters**, especially in the Southern Mediterranean countries. It examines existing initiatives, cluster policies, and regulations, while analysing key stakeholders and competitive sectors.

A case study of the Tunisian National Maritime Cluster (CMT) provides a concrete reference point. With insights from representatives of CMT, the Tunisian case is presented reflecting on:

- ◆ Legal frameworks and governance models
- ◆ "Bottom-up" vs. "Top-down" cluster dynamics
- ◆ Strategic planning, inclusion, and long-term sustainability
- ◆ The importance of clusters in strengthening the Blue Economy and regional collaboration

The session concludes with a review of challenges specific to the Maghreb region and strategies for achieving long-term growth and sustainability of blue economy clusters.

### Cluster Establishment in the Southern Countries

Countries in the **Southern Mediterranean (Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia and Libya)** are at **different stages of cluster development**.

- **Algeria:** Blue economy still largely in an early stage of policy development; initial steps in fisheries and aquaculture cooperation.
- **Egypt:** Maritime transport, shipbuilding, and the Suez Canal logistics hub serve as the main competitive strengths.
- **Libya:** Progress on developing cluster initiatives is currently challenging, though fisheries and ports remain potential areas for clustering.
- **Mauritania:** Fisheries and maritime resources provide a natural focus, with interest in cross-border cooperation.
- **Morocco:** The Tanger-Med hub is a flagship logistics cluster, with growing interest in offshore renewables.
- **Tunisia:** Shows advanced efforts with the CMT, demonstrating early organisation of stakeholders.

The varying levels of maturity mean that **regional cooperation** is essential, allowing more advanced countries to support those in earlier stages.



### Regional Cluster Policies & Regulations

Policy frameworks are **uneven across the Maghreb region**. While the EU offers comprehensive support through cluster strategies, the southern countries often face certain gaps related to:

- A **legal definition** of clusters in national law.
- Dedicated **funding instruments** for cluster activities.
- Clear policies integrating clusters into broader **industrial or maritime strategies**.

However, several countries are aligning their national strategies with EU initiatives, especially under the **WestMED Initiative** and **Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)**. Alignment with EU standards provides a **pathway to attract investment** and international partnerships.

### Legal Framework for Cluster Organizations



Country	Main structure for clusters	Other possible structures	Main legal reference	Tax aspects
France	Association under the 1901 law	GIE, GIP, SCIC, SAS	Law 1901, Commercial Code, ESS Law	IS exemption if non-profit; VAT according to activity; SCIC/SAS imposed
Italy	Association, Consortium	Cooperative, EIG, company	Civil Code, D.lgs. 112/2017	Exemptions for associations; reduced rate for cooperatives
Tunisia	Association (DL 88/2011)	GIE, SARL, SA	Decree-Law 88/2011, Commercial Companies Code	Non-taxable associations except for lucrative activity; GIE: ordinary regime
Greece	Non-profit association	Company (EPE), GIE	Law 4072/2012, Greek Civil Code	Exempt associations; companies subject to Greek corporate tax (22%)
Portugal	Association law 76/2015	Cooperative, company (Lda)	Portuguese Civil Code, Law 76/2015	Partially exempt associations; cooperatives: reduced rate; Lda imposed
Algeria	Association law 12-06	SARL, SPA, GIE	Law 12-06/2012, Ord. 75-59 Commercial Code	Exempt associations; companies and economic interest groups subject to the IBS
Morocco	Association (Dahir 1958 amended)	GIE, SARL	Dahir 1958, Law 13-97 on EIGs	Exempt associations; EIG subject to IS (31%)
Libya	Association (NGO)	SARL, informal structure	Law 19/2001	NGOs: little clear tax framework; companies subject to Libyan corporate tax (20%)
Egypt	NGO (Law 149/2019)	Company (LLC, SAE), public or university cluster	Law 149/2019 on NGOs, Investment Law No. 72/2017	NGOs: tax exemptions; companies: IS at 22.5%, sectoral incentives
Mauritania	Association (Order 2007-048)	GIE, SARL	Order 2007-048, Companies Code	Associations: exempt; SARL: IS at 25%; GIE: ordinary regime



Figure 14 Legal regime for clusters in the MED [source: Session 2, Slide 21]

CMT has conducted a comprehensive mapping of the legal regime covering the establishment and tax framework applicable to cluster organizations in various Mediterranean countries (Figure 14).

### Stakeholder Analysis (Competitive Sectors)

Clusters thrive when **key stakeholders are actively involved**. In the southern countries, competitive sectors include:

- **Fisheries & Aquaculture** (Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia).
- **Port logistics & shipping** (Egypt, Morocco, Algeria).
- **Coastal tourism** (Tunisia, Egypt).
- **Marine renewable energy** (Morocco as frontrunner).
- **Research and academia** (universities with maritime specialisations).
- **Policy makers and regional authorities** (essential for regulatory support).

Stakeholder engagement is critical, as cluster initiatives with difficulties to engage industry leaders and dialogue with key stakeholders (e.g. governmental bodies, policy-makers, etc.).

### Steps to Establishing a National Cluster

*Case: Tunisian Maritime Cluster (CMT)*

The **CMT in Tunisia** is a strong example of cluster establishment in the Maghreb. The process included:

1. **Mapping stakeholders** across industry, research, and government.
2. **Defining governance structures** (board, working groups, general assembly).
3. **Identifying strategic priorities** (e.g., aquaculture, logistics, maritime training).
4. **Creating operational mechanisms** (working plans, funding models, partnerships).
5. **Linking to international frameworks** such as WestMED for visibility and support.

The Tunisian case illustrates that **clear leadership and structured organisation** are indispensable for sustaining cluster initiatives. The objectives of the Tunisian National Maritime Cluster (CMT) are outlined in Figure 15.

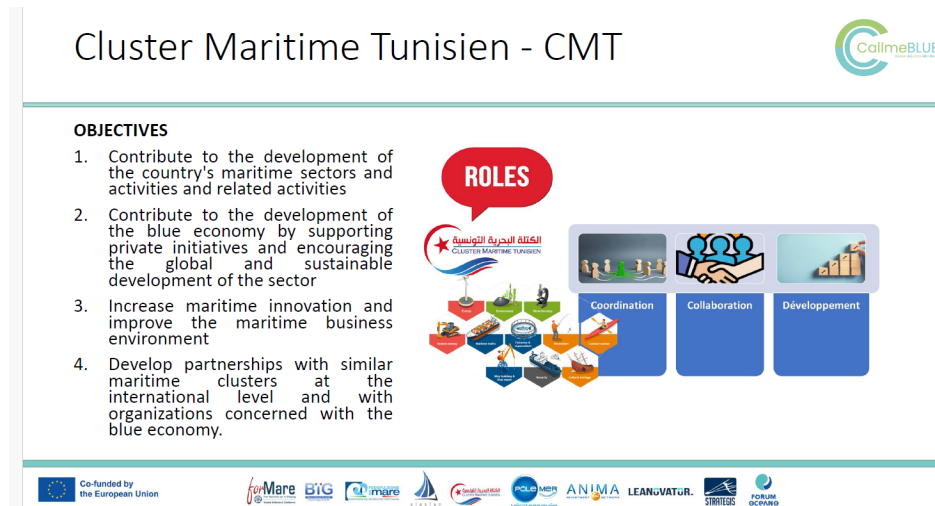


Figure 15 Objectives of the Tunisian Maritime Cluster [Source: Session 2, Slide 44]

## The Challenges of Operating a Cluster in the Maghreb Region

Operating clusters in the Maghreb faces specific challenges:

- **Fragmentation** of maritime stakeholders and limited tradition in cluster cooperation.
- **Resource scarcity** (funding, skills, institutional support).
- **Geopolitical instability** in parts of the region complicating trust and cooperation.
- **Outflow of skilled professionals** seeking opportunities abroad, particularly in Europe
- **Reliance on EU support**, which may limit the development of local ownership.

In spite of these challenges, clusters can still deliver results when **small-scale, pragmatic goals** are pursued, and when success stories are communicated to build trust.

## A Strategy for Growth & Sustainability of Clusters in the MENA Region

To ensure sustainability, clusters must:

- Build **trust among stakeholders** and maintain inclusive governance.
- Develop **public-private partnerships (PPP)** to share risks and responsibilities.
- Focus on **capacity building** in cluster management and leadership.
- Secure **long-term funding models**, combining membership fees, project revenues, and public grants.
- Position themselves within **regional frameworks** (WestMED, UfM) for visibility.
- Adopt **internationalisation strategies**, linking to EU and global cluster networks.

A **regional Maghreb vision** for clusters could build on national initiatives while coordinating efforts for **greater competitiveness on the Mediterranean scale**.

The presentation of Session #02 which was held on June 4, 2025.

After the end of Session 2 a LinkedIn post on the CallmeBLUE page announced the completion of the session (Figure 16).

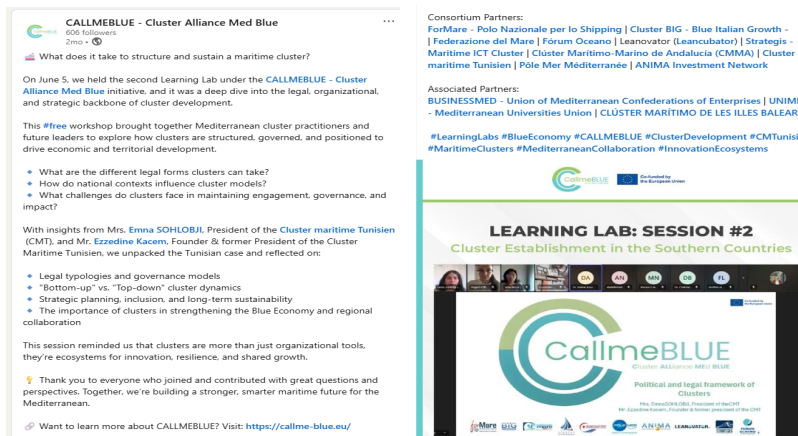


Figure 16 LinkedIn post about Session 2 [June 6, 2025]

## Key Insights – Session 2

- ◆ Cluster maturity levels differ significantly across Southern Mediterranean countries.
- ◆ The **absence of clear policies and regulations** is a major barrier to cluster development.
- ◆ The **Tunisian CMT** provides a replicable example of structured cluster organisation.
- ◆ **Stakeholder engagement** is the critical success factor in emerging clusters.
- ◆ Long-term sustainability requires **capacity building, PPPs, and regional cooperation frameworks**.

**Transition to Session 3:** The discussion on the establishment and organisation of emerging clusters provided the groundwork for understanding the institutional, regulatory, and operational challenges faced by Southern countries. Building upon this foundation, the next session turns to the question of how these clusters can cooperate across borders to strengthen their collective impact.



## SESSION #03: Cluster Cooperation in the Southern Countries

On July 4th, the 3rd session of the [CALLMEBLUE - Cluster Alliance Med Blue](#) Learning Lab was held, focused on strengthening cluster cooperation across Southern Mediterranean countries.

Led by Cluster Maritime Tunisien (CMT) the session explored the vision of a **Maghreb Maritime Cluster Alliance**, a collaborative framework uniting Tunisia, Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco, and Egypt.

This session examined **why** regional cooperation among Southern Mediterranean maritime clusters is necessary, **what** a cooperation model (including a *super-cluster*) could look like, **which** pre-requisites must be in place, and **how** to implement a phased *Strategic Plan* for a **Maghreb Maritime Alliance (Super-Cluster)**.

The discussion covered the strategic context, economic contribution, and the need for a shared roadmap to address challenges, align with global strategies, and unlock investment and partnership opportunities.

The focus is on building trust, aligning policies, creating interoperable systems, and organising joint projects that deliver visible regional value (Figure 17).

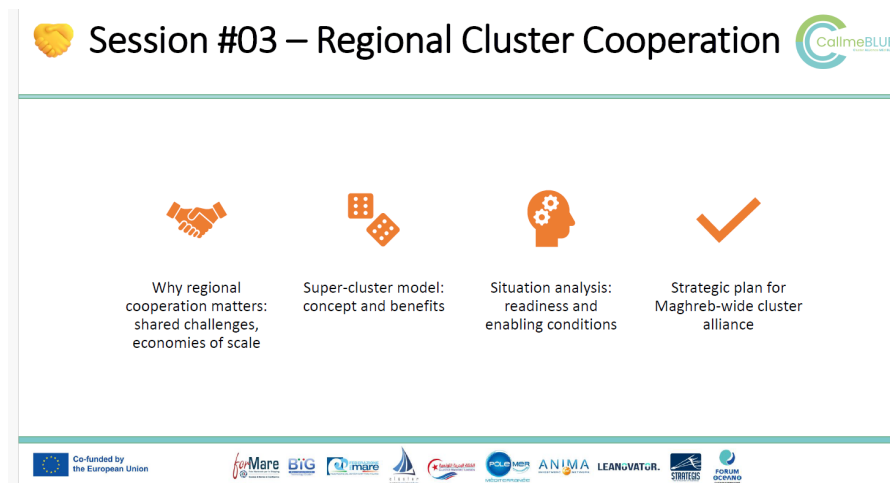


Figure 17 Strategic approach for regional cluster cooperation. (Internal Documentation)

## The Need for Regional Cluster Cooperation

Maritime challenges—**sustainable fisheries, decarbonisation, coastal resilience, digital logistics, and skills shortages**—cut across borders. Single national cluster would not be able to tackle them alone at the necessary **scale and speed**. Rather, regional cooperation enables:

- **Economies of scale** in R&I, skills development, and shared infrastructure (labs, testbeds, living labs).
- **Greater competitiveness** and visibility to attract **FDI** and anchor firms.
- **Policy alignment** (e.g., maritime spatial planning, certification, port standards) that reduces friction in cross-border value chains.
- **Trust-based learning** and diffusion of best practices between more and less mature ecosystems.
- **Risk pooling** and diversified funding (EU, national, private) for pilot and demonstration projects.

## The Model for Regional Cluster Cooperation – The Role of a Super-Cluster

A **Maghreb Super-Cluster** is not a replacement for national clusters; it is a **coordination layer** that:

- Aligns a **shared vision** and **roadmap** while respecting national priorities.
- Hosts **joint working groups** (e.g., port digitalisation, fisheries sustainability, marine renewables, maritime skills).
- Manages **common platforms** (partner search, project pipeline, investor/market access interface).
- Curates a **shared deal-flow** (calls, tenders, investors), increasing success rates and lowering transaction costs.
- Provides **representation** in EU and international fora, ensuring Southern Mediterranean interests are visible and coherent.

Governance principles should include a **rotating chair, balanced representation** (public–private–research), **transparent decision rules**, and **lightweight administration** to keep costs low and responsiveness high.

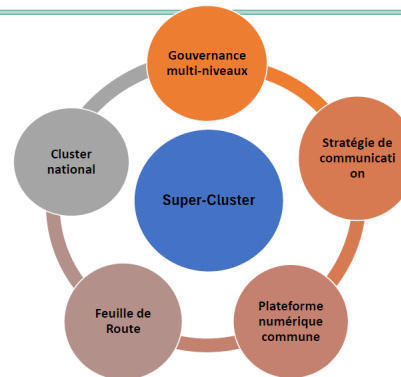
The proposed model for the governance of the Maghreb Maritime Cluster Alliance (Super-Cluster) is shown in (Figure 18).



## Model chosen for the Maghreb Alliance of Maritime Clusters



- Composition of National Clusters
  - Multi-level governance
  - National and regional
- Alliance Roadmap
- Communication strategy
  - Shared digital platform
  - Data/document management
  - Exchange of best practices



**Figure 18 Governance model for the Maghreb Cluster Alliance**  
[Source: Session 3.23]

### Situation Analysis (Pre-requisites)

For cooperation to be **credible and durable**, several enablers must be in place:

- **Policy and legal alignment:** minimal common standards on governance, membership types, and project eligibility; green/digital reporting norms.
- **Interoperable digital infrastructure:** shared data schemas for port/ship/traceability systems; secure collaboration spaces for clusters.
- **Trust & neutrality:** a code of conduct, conflict-of-interest rules, and neutral facilitation for cross-border groups.
- **Capacity building:** training modules for cluster managers (project design, IP, financial management, KPI tracking).
- **Financing pathways:** a blended model (EMFAF, Interreg/ENI-CBC, Horizon/Euroclusters, national/regional funds, private co-investment).
- **Measurement & transparency:** common KPIs (e.g., projects launched, SMEs supported, investment mobilised, jobs/skills outcomes).

D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned

The following figure highlights the difference between the economic contribution of maritime activities and maturity differentials in the Maghreb (Figure 19).

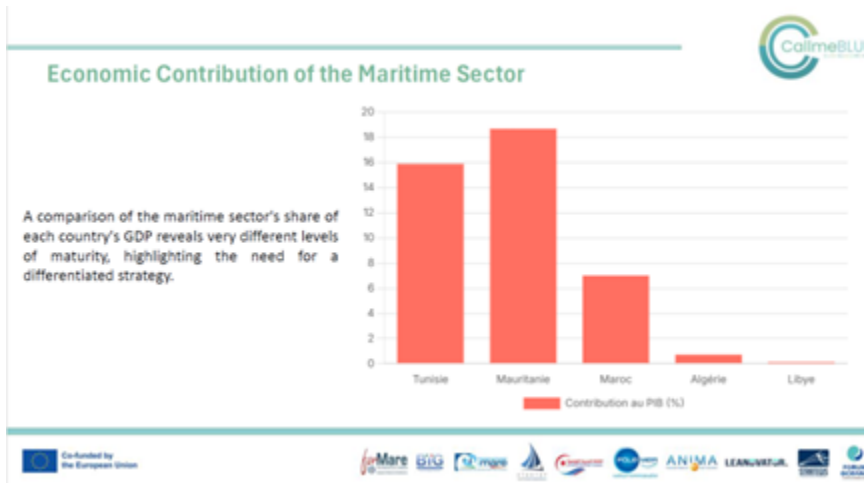
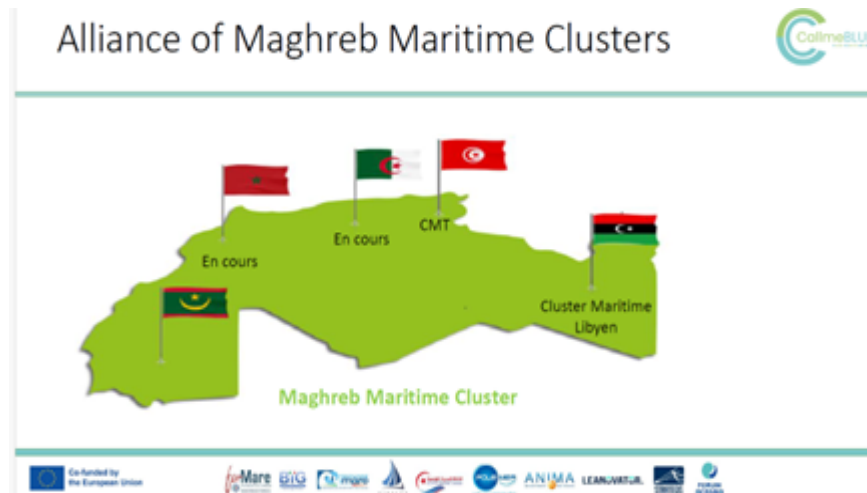


Figure 19 Contribution of Maritime to the Economies in Maghreb [Source: Session 3.9]

## Strategic Plan for the Establishment of a Maghreb Super-Cluster

The status of the maritime cluster activities in Maghreb is depicted in (Figure 20).



**Figure 20 Status of Maritime clustering across the Maghreb [Source: Session 3.29]**

A **phased, low-risk roadmap** for the establishment of a Maghreb Super-Cluster (Maritime Cluster Alliance) helps build momentum while managing complexity:

### Phase 1 – Convene & Diagnose (0–6 months)

- Establish a **Provisional Steering Group (PSG)** with focal points per country and stakeholder category.
- Conduct a **rapid diagnostic**: cluster maturity, policy gaps, infrastructure, skills, and funding baselines.
- Agree on a **common charter** (mission, principles, participation rules).

### Phase 2 – Pilot Cooperation (6–12 months)

- Launch **2–3 joint pilots** with quick wins (e.g., port call optimisation data pilot; SME innovation vouchers; fisheries traceability demonstrator).

*D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned*

- Stand up **joint working groups** and a **light PMO** (project management office) to coordinate calls and reporting.
- Start a **shared visibility platform** (partner search, events, investor interface).

**Phase 3 – Formalise the Super-Cluster (12–24 months)**

- Approve the **governance model**, rotate chair, define membership tiers and dues, and adopt financial controls.
- Create an **IP & data-sharing framework** for joint projects.
- Set a **three-year strategic plan** with KPIs, portfolio themes, and funding pipelines.

**Phase 4 – Scale & Institutionalise (24+ months)**

- Expand pilots to **multi-country flagships** (e.g., hydrogen-ready green corridors, regional maritime academy modules, blue biotech testbeds).
- Deepen **EU partnerships** (ECCP, KICs, Euroclusters) and investor relations.
- Publish **annual impact reports**; refine KPIs, governance, and services.

*Implementation note:* Start **small and specific**, choose pilots with measurable outcomes, and iterate governance based on evidence from Phase 2.

Under the leadership of CMT several cooperation initiatives between regional stakeholders have been launched aiming at strengthening South-South cooperation (Figure 21) and the creation of the Maghreb Maritime Cluster Alliance (Figure 22).

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Figure 21 The WestMED supports South-South collaboration [Source: Session 3.33]



Figure 22 Regional cooperation toward the Maghreb Super-Cluster [Source: Session 3.30]

The presentation of Session #03 was held on July 4, 2025.

After the end of Session 3, a LinkedIn [post](#) on the CallmeBLUE page announced the completion of the session (Figure 23).

D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned

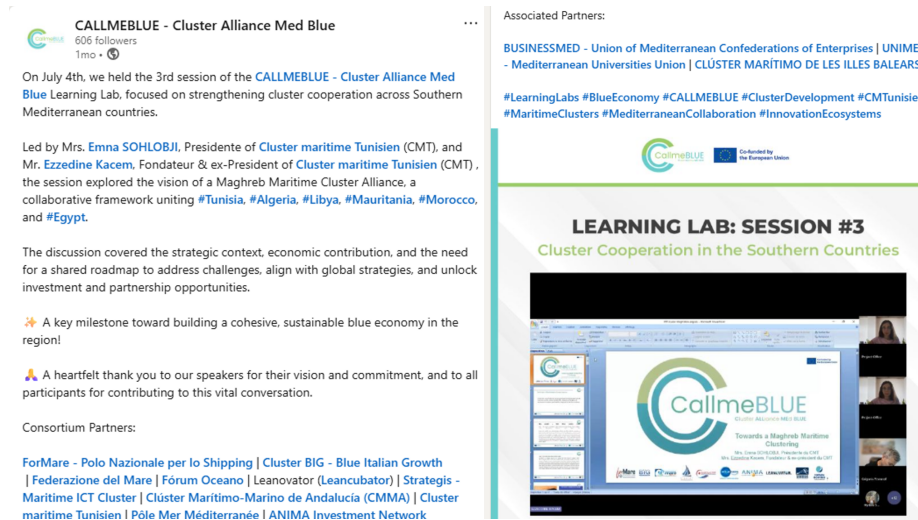


Figure 23 LinkedIn post about Session 3 [July 9, 2025]

Key Insights – Session 3

- **Cooperation is a competitiveness strategy:** scale, visibility, and bargaining power grow regionally, not just nationally.
- A **super-cluster** should be a **lean coordination layer**, rather than becoming a further source of operational complexity.
- **Pre-requisites** (policy alignment, digital interoperability, trust rules, blended finance) must be addressed early.
- A **phased roadmap** with quick wins builds momentum and political support.
- Shared **KPIs and transparency** secure long-term legitimacy and funding.

**Transition to Session 4:** Having explored the rationale, models, and strategic pathways for regional cooperation, attention now shifts to the internal dynamics of cluster management. The next session focuses on leadership, governance, and stakeholder engagement as the engines that drive cluster performance.

## SESSION #04: On Cluster Management & Leadership

Session 4 of the Learning Labs series focuses on the **internal governance, strategy, and leadership of maritime clusters**. While Sessions 1–3 emphasized establishment and cooperation, this session drilled into the **practicalities of running a cluster**, from setting policies and goals to stakeholder engagement and project management principles.

Blue economy clusters operate under conditions that intensify management complexity: long investment horizons (ports, shipyards, offshore energy), fragmented regulatory frameworks, environmental constraints, and the need for cross-disciplinary collaboration (engineering, digital, environmental sciences).

These factors require professional cluster management, robust governance, and multi-source financing (membership, public support, and project-based revenues).

With insights from three experienced speakers, Session 4 explores the topic of Cluster Management & Leadership from a complementary perspective:

- ◆ [Cluster BIG - Blue Italian Growth](#) provided an in-depth analysis of the Blue Economy cluster model, covering policy design, strategic planning, and resource mobilization to sustain the cluster's objectives.
- ◆ [ForMare – National Shipping Hub](#) introduced a practical 5-step framework for stakeholder engagement, from mapping and identification to strategy and communication planning.
- ◆ [Strategis - Maritime ICT Cluster](#), concluded with a focus on Project Management in a cluster context; including tools, team coordination, monitoring, and navigating EU funding.

### Policies, Goals & Objectives

Effective clusters operate based on **clear policies and shared goals**. These policies articulate the **vision and mission**, set **eligibility and membership rules**, and ensure **alignment with national and regional strategies** (Figure 24).

- **Vision statements** guide the cluster's long-term orientation (e.g., "Position Tunisia as a hub for sustainable blue economy innovation").
- **Goals** translate vision into measurable targets (e.g., number of SMEs supported, jobs created, R&D collaborations launched).
- **Policies** define internal governance (membership tiers, voting rights, financial contributions) and ensure transparency in decision-making.



D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned

- **Objectives** must balance **short-term deliverables** (projects, events, pilots) with **long-term capacity building** (skills, internationalisation, brand recognition).

Clusters’ strategies and objectives definition



Figure 24 Policy & objectives for cluster governance [Source: Session 4, Slide7]

The importance of leadership to achieve success: Cluster managers and leaders are strategic enablers of cross-Mediterranean cooperation, innovation, and sustainable

The importance of leadership to achieve success



Figure 25 Leadership skills are essential for success. [Source: Session 4, Slide 7]

blue economy development. This role is essential to achieving convergence and coordination across national and regional clusters in the Mediterranean (Figure 25).

### Strategic Plan

A **Strategic Plan** is the backbone of cluster management. It defines:

- **Priority sectors** (e.g., ports, shipbuilding, aquaculture, marine renewables).
- **Flagship projects** (cross-sectoral pilots that attract attention and mobilise resources).
- **Resource allocation** (staffing, budgets, external consultants).
- **Monitoring and evaluation** (KPIs, mid-term reviews, course corrections).

Best practice includes **rolling 3-year plans**, revised annually to adapt to changing policies and funding opportunities.

### Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is critical for cluster resilience. Success depends on involving:

- **SMEs**, the backbone of maritime economies.
- **Large firms** (anchor tenants) that drive investment and supply chains.
- **Universities & RTOs** providing innovation and skills.
- **Public authorities** offering legitimacy and funding.
- **Civil society and NGOs** ensuring social license and sustainability.

Mechanisms include (see also, Figure 26):

- **Advisory boards** with diverse stakeholder representation.
- **Regular networking events** and working groups.
- **Digital collaboration platforms** for continuous interaction.

- **Feedback loops** via surveys and annual cluster assemblies.

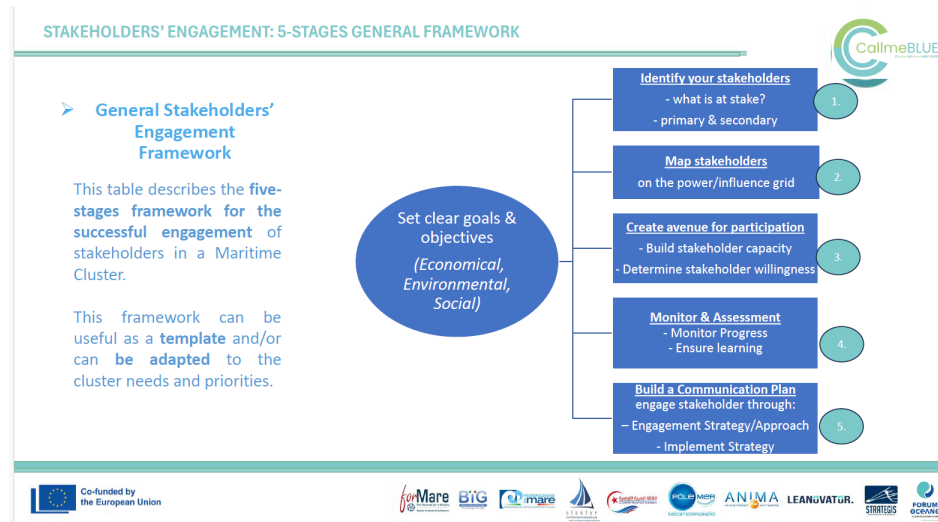


Figure 26 Stakeholder's engagement framework [Source: Session 4, Slide 40]

### On Principles of Project Management


Clusters succeed or fail based on their ability to **design, execute, and deliver projects**. Principles include:

- **Project selection:** choose initiatives that advance cluster strategy, deliver visible impact, and match funding opportunities.
- **Governance structures:** steering committees, clear roles, escalation channels.
- **Risk management:** anticipating legal, financial, and reputational risks.
- **Resource mobilisation:** combining public, private, and in-kind contributions.
- **Performance monitoring:** KPIs, dashboards, impact assessments.

D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned

European-funded projects (e.g., Horizon Europe, Interreg, EMFAF) demand strict compliance — clusters must **train managers** in EU project rules (eligibility, procurement, audit) (Figure 27).

## 5. EU Funding Programs



**REMEMBER: QUALITY OVER QUANTITY!**

➤ **Steps to get into EU Networks & Projects**

**Where do you start?**

First and foremost, you have to know where to get information on Funding Programs & EU Projects.

This is a list of valuable links:

- ❖ [FUNDING&TENDERS PORTAL – Grants & Tenders](#)
- ❖ NATIONAL CONTACT POINTS
  - ❖ [HORIZON EUROPE NATIONAL CONTACT POINTS](#)
  - ❖ Check also [HORIZON DASHBOARD](#) for an overview on evaluated proposals.
  - ❖ [ERASMUS+ NATIONAL AGENCIES](#)

**How can I build new networks?**


- Participate in networking events
- Use your existing network and propose them to join your project idea
- Be active on social media (e.g. networking groups sharing same interests)


**Useful links to expand your networks**

- [INFO-DAYS](#)
- [NCP PORTAL](#)
- [CORDIS](#) to access information about EU Research & Development projects.

**Build your own Consortium!**

1. Find new partners and start to build up your Consortium well in advance!
2. For General Info on EU Partnership click [HERE](#)
3. Find your partners step by step by clicking [HERE](#)





**Figure 27 Project Management for EU co-funded programs [Source: Session 4, Slide 71]**

The presentation of Session #04 was held on June 25, 2025.

After the end of Session 4, a LinkedIn [post](#) on the CallmeBLUE page announced the completion of the session (Figure 28).

D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned

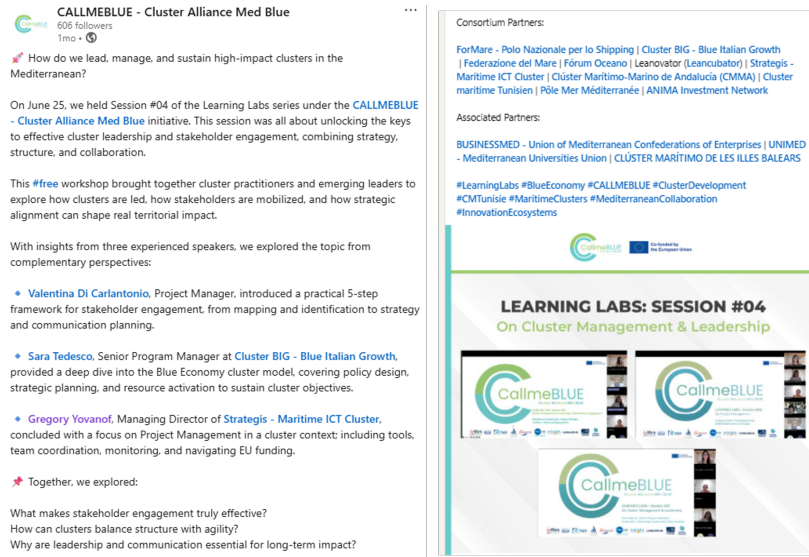


Figure 28 LinkedIn post about Session 4 [June 27, 2025]

Key Insights – Session 4

Key Insights

- **Strong governance** and clear goals give clusters direction and credibility.
- A rolling **strategic plan** ensures adaptability and alignment with evolving policy frameworks.
- **Stakeholder engagement** is continuous, not episodic — clusters must cultivate communities of trust.
- **Project management** discipline is a survival skill; without it, clusters cannot access or deliver funded initiatives.
- The **cluster manager’s role** blends leadership, facilitation, and administration — requiring dedicated training and support.

**Transition to Session 5:** The principles of governance and management acquire tangible meaning when viewed through practical examples. The following session illustrates these concepts by examining case studies of established European maritime clusters.



## SESSION #05: Running a Cluster – Case Studies

This session provided **concrete examples of established maritime clusters**, offering inspiration and practical lessons for emerging initiatives in the Southern Mediterranean.

Five case studies were reviewed, highlighting differences in governance, scope, and internationalisation.

- ◆ [Pôle Mer Méditerranée](#)
- ◆ [Fórum Oceano](#)
- ◆ [Cluster BIG - Blue Italian Growth \(BIG\)](#)
- ◆ [Clúster Marítimo Marino de Andalucía](#)
- ◆ [Maghreb and North African Platform for Artisanal Fishery and Aquaculture](#)

The session ended with an engaging Q&A, turning insights into action. A powerful example of grassroots, cross-border collaboration.

### Cluster #1: Forum Oceano (Portugal)

[Forum Oceano](#) is recognised as a **Blue Economy Cluster of National Interest** in Portugal, catalyzing Portugal's Blue Economy through innovation ecosystems and ESG-driven business models.

Fórum Oceano has more than 160 associates, from the most diverse sectors of the economy of the Sea, including public and private companies, business associations, R&D centers, educational institutions, local authorities and other associative organizations.

It focuses on:

- Digitalisation of ports and logistics.
- Marine renewable energies (wave, offshore wind).
- Sustainable fisheries and aquaculture.
- Nautical tourism.

Key features:

- Accredited as a **competitiveness cluster** by the Portuguese government.
- Strong **university–industry collaboration**.
- Deep involvement in **international cluster networks** (ENMC, WestMED, etc.).



D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned

Key initiatives launched by Forum Oceano include the EU Blue Invest Platform, the Portugal Blue Digital Hub, and Hub Azul Network, connecting entrepreneurs, investors, and seven Blue Hubs.

The portfolio of services that Forum Oceano offers to its members are shown in Figure 29.

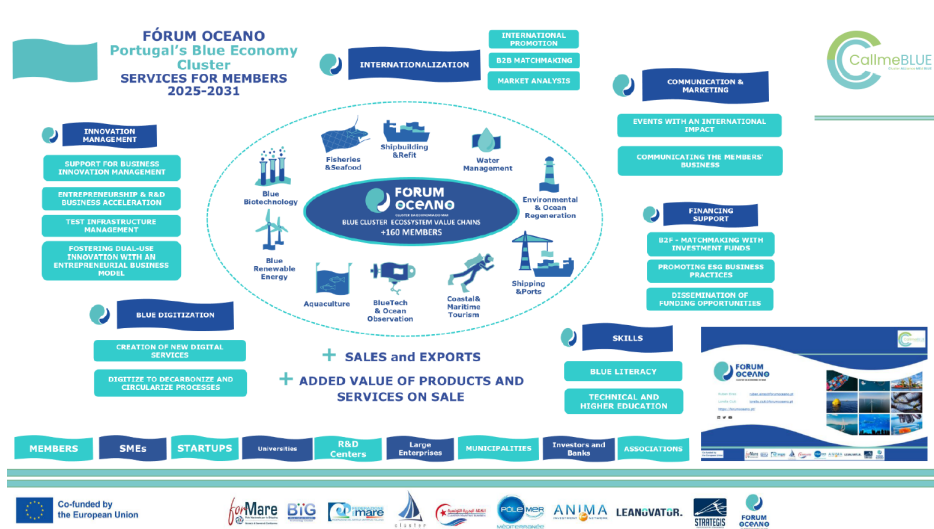


Figure 29 Forum Oceano's portfolio of services (Internal Documentation).

Cluster #2: Pôle Mer Méditerranée (France)

A flagship of the French competitiveness cluster policy, [Pôle Mer Méditerranée](#) brings together companies, researchers, and public actors to fuel collaborative R&D.

Certified by the French administration in July 2005 as a competitiveness cluster with a global vocation, Pôle Mer Méditerranée brings together in the Sud Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur, Occitanie and Corsica region nearly 500 scientific and economic players in the maritime sector around a theme municipality: *maritime innovation*.

Pôle Mer acts as a springboard for collaborative innovation and a facilitator for the development of projects linked to the maritime and coastal economy. Identifying the most ambitious, viable and rewarding projects for blue growth, it promotes cooperation between SMEs, large groups, research and training organisations and economic development structures.

- **Specialisation areas:** naval & yachting, marine energy, environment & biodiversity, defence maritime safety & security, ports & logistics.



D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned

- Strong **public-private partnerships**, with R&D consortia co-funded by the French government.
- Highly structured **project evaluation and labelling system**.
- Large membership base, including **SMEs, research centres, and multinationals**. [Figure 30]

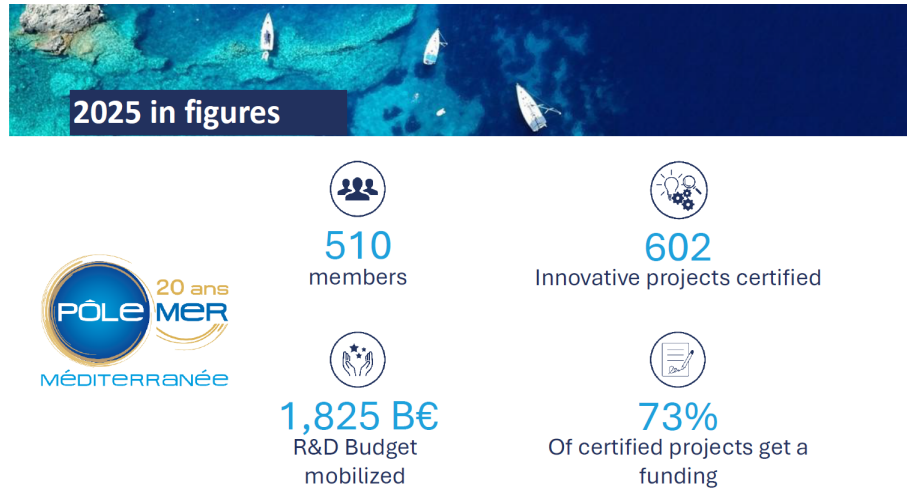


Figure 30 Pôle Mer Méditerranée: French Competitiveness cluster

Cluster #3: Blue Italian Growth (BIG)

The [Cluster BIG - Blue Italian Growth](#) (BIG) is a national network focused on driving innovation and sustainable development. A key actor in Italy’s shift toward a greener, smarter maritime future.

The BIG Cluster brings together a network of excellence composed of universities, research institutions, companies, and public bodies operating in the blue economy sector.

It supports tech transfer, international collaboration, and skills building across the blue economy.

Highlights:

- Serves as a **national platform**, linking regional initiatives [Figure 31].

D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned

- Prioritises **marine biotechnology and advanced manufacturing**.
- Strong emphasis on **training and capacity-building**.
- Connects Italy’s **industrial strengths** with EU research frameworks.

Contribution of Cluster BIG to the Italian Blue Economy



Promotes the growth of the blue economy in Italy.

Encourages innovation, research, and sustainable development.

Focused on internationalization and Mediterranean cooperation.

Facilitates technology transfer and skills development in the blue economy sector.



Figure 31 Blue Italian Growth: national coordination of marine innovation (Internal Documentation)

Cluster #4: Clúster Marítimo Marino de Andalucía (Spain)

This Andalusian cluster brings together **companies, universities, and authorities** around the sustainable development of the maritime sector.

- **Regional focus** on Andalusia, but with strong EU project participation.
- Specialisations include **ship repair, coastal tourism, aquaculture, and port services**.
- Emphasis on **SME competitiveness** and **regional job creation**.



D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned

- Highly active in **Interreg and cross-border collaborations** with Morocco and Portugal.



Figure 32 Clúster Marítimo Marino de Andalucía: regional cooperation model (Internal Documentation)

Cluster #5: Maghreb Platform for Small-Scale Fisheries (Tunisia)

The Maghreb and North African Platform for Artisanal Fishery and Aquaculture is a regional initiative involving national small-scale fisheries organizations from the Maghreb region (and increasingly including Egypt) to foster regional collaboration, improve fisher livelihoods, and promote sustainable fishing practices.

Backed by **FAO** and the Arab Maghreb Union, it was established in 2013 and revitalized in 2024 to strengthen small-scale fisheries and local innovation [Figure 33].

D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned

The platform facilitates knowledge sharing, strengthens organizational capacities, and advocates for the interests of artisanal fishers at national and international levels.

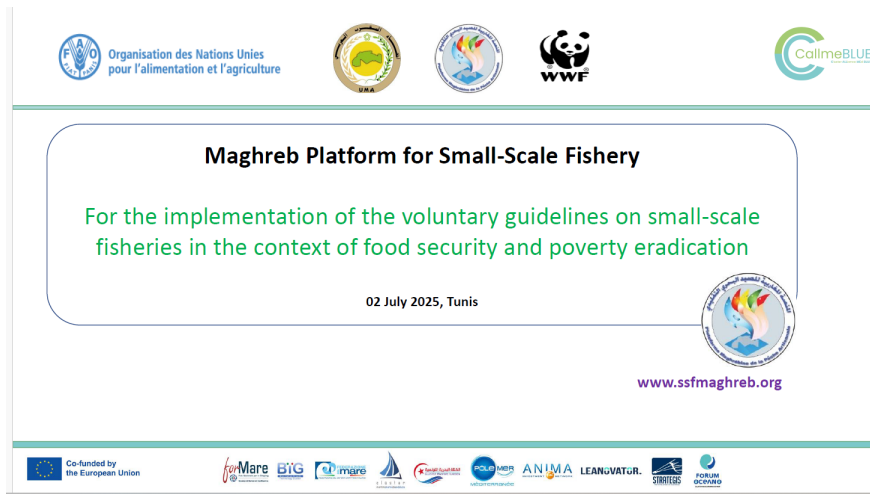


Figure 33 Maghreb Platform for Small-Scale Fisheries (Internal Documentation)

This 5th session of the Learning Labs explored successful cluster management models from across the Mediterranean, each offering a unique strategy for collaboration, sustainability, and innovation.

The presentation of Session #05 was held on July 2, 2025.

After the end of Session 5, a LinkedIn [post](#) on the CallmeBLUE page announced the completion of the session(Figure 34).

D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned

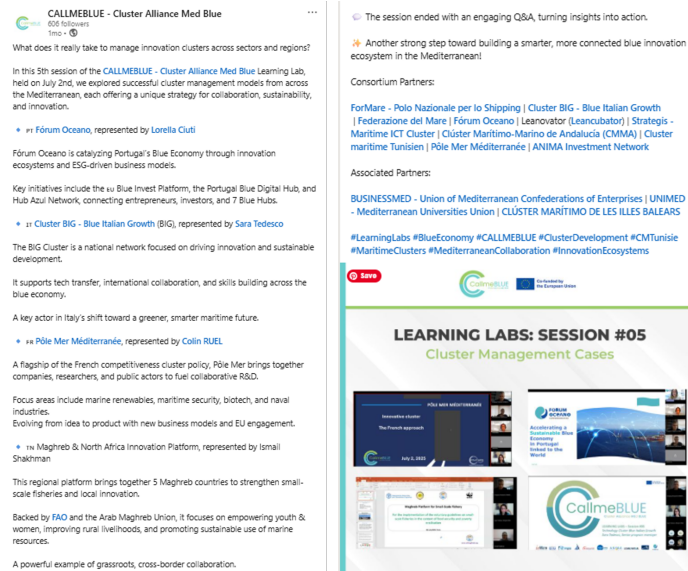


Figure 34 LinkedIn post about Session 5 [July 4, 2025]

Key Insights – Session 5

- Case studies show that **clusters can scale from regional to national prominence** when backed by government recognition.
- **International networking** (alliances, EU-funded projects) is a critical success factor.
- A **diversified portfolio of activities** (energy, ports, tourism, biotech) builds resilience.
- **SMEs thrive in clusters** that offer services, visibility, and integration into global value chains.
- Each cluster adapts its model to local strengths but converges on **innovation + cooperation** as guiding principles.

**Transition to Session 6:** The examination of successful cluster case studies highlights the role of networks and cross-sectoral cooperation in delivering results. The next session builds on this insight by analysing how clusters can generate synergies and connect within broader regional, European, and international frameworks.

SESSION #06: Networks of Clusters – Synergies & Cooperation

This session highlighted the role of **networks of clusters** in harmonizing national, regional and EU/global policies.



*D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned*

It explored cooperation mechanisms, funding programmes and frameworks supporting **North-South maritime collaboration**.

It demonstrated how cooperation at regional, national and international levels can shape more **impactful Blue Economy clusters**.

### Harmonisation of Policies: Clusters as Cooperation Mechanisms

Clusters provide a **bottom-up instrument** for aligning diverse policy levels:

- **National strategies** (industrial policy, marine spatial planning).
- **Regional cooperation frameworks** (Maghreb, Mediterranean initiatives).
- **European Union programmes** (Blue Economy strategies, Horizon Europe).
- **Global policies** (SDGs, IMO frameworks).

By acting as **policy brokers**, clusters can reduce fragmentation and create synergies across initiatives.

[Clúster Marítimo-Marino de Andalucía \(CMMA\)](#) highlighted the importance of aligning cluster goals with broader policy frameworks. Through examples like Spain's Recovery and Resilience Plan and Andalusia's **RIS3 strategy**, she showed how clusters can embed their work within national and EU priorities to ensure long-term relevance and support.

[Strategis - Maritime ICT Cluster](#) emphasized the role of clusters **as platforms for synergy and ecosystem leadership**. He illustrated how clusters align with international agendas (UN, EU, WWF), support innovation in the freshwater sector, and play a leadership role in initiatives like MedBAN – Mediterranean Blue Acceleration Network to **create systemic change**.





**Figure 35 Harmonization of Policies: Clusters as Cooperation Mechanisms (Internal Documentation)**

### Support Mechanisms for North–South Cooperation

A range of programmes provide financial and institutional support for North–South cooperation in the Mediterranean:

- **WestMED Initiative** – a collaborative platform for advancing sustainable blue economy.
- **Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)** – a space for fostering regional dialogue and project endorsement.
- **European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)** – funding instrument supporting cross-border initiatives.
- **ENI CBC Med Programme** – promotes collaboration between EU and Southern Neighbourhood countries.

These instruments emphasise **joint projects, shared infrastructures, and common training initiatives**.

WestMED representatives from the [WestMED Initiative](#) demonstrated how regional cooperation is already taking shape in the Western Mediterranean. [Figure 36]

They presented key initiatives such as Green Marine Med and POWER4MED, which promote sustainable shipping, stakeholder engagement, and support for national Blue Economy strategies.

D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned

Their intervention showed how clusters act as innovation brokers by connecting SMEs, institutions, and public actors across borders.

**Priorities CALLMEBLUE**

- Support the creation and empowerment of maritime clusters
- Strengthening cooperation between clusters across the South-South and South-North Mediterranean

In line with the main priority of the UfM Roadmap, the implementation of the UfM Ministerial Declaration.

CALLMEBLUE is the result of a new action in favor of the priorities of the WestMED Cluster Alliance

Logos at the bottom: forMare, BiG, federazione imare, cluster, المكتب البحرى التونسية, POLE MER, ANIMA, LEANGVATOR, STRATEGIS, FORUM OCEANO.

**Figure 36 North-South cooperation support mechanisms [Source: Session 6, Slide 123]**

This final session, held on July 9 as part of the [CALLMEBLUE - Cluster Alliance Med Blue](#) Learning Labs program, explored how collaboration across regional, national, and supranational levels can shape more impactful Blue Economy clusters.

And the session closed the Learning Labs with a strong message: **real impact comes from alignment, leadership, and cooperation across all shores.**

After the end of Session 6, a LinkedIn [post](#) on the CallmeBLUE page announced the completion of the session (Figure 37).

D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned

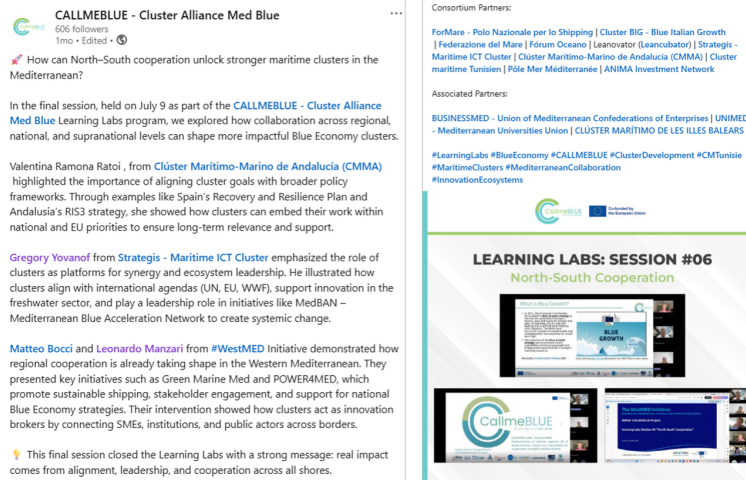


Figure 37 LinkedIn post about Session 6 [July 11, 2025]

Key Insights – Session 6

- Clusters act as **connectors between policy levels**, translating EU priorities into local action.
- Regional frameworks like **WestMED** and **UfM** provide guidance, structure and legitimacy for North-South cooperation.
- Funding instruments (EMFAF, ENI CBC Med) are essential enablers but require clusters to build **strong project management capacity**.
- Long-term success depends on **trust, reciprocity, and joint ownership** of projects by both Northern and Southern partners.

**Transition to Toolkit:** With the discussions on cluster theory, establishment, cooperation, management, and case studies complete, the Learning Labs shift to their practical outcome: a Toolkit for Emerging Clusters. This Toolkit is not a standalone product. Rather, it is a cumulative result of the entire Learning Labs process. It captures the knowledge, practices, and lessons drawn from the six sessions, the training materials, the methodology, and even the selection process, consolidating them into a structured resource for future use. Every single component of the Learning Labs contributed to the existence and content of this practical guide. But, before that a couple of activities following the end of the online sessions, completed the delivery of the Learning Labs training: a Satisfaction Survey, and the issuance of a “Certificate of Attendance”.

## Post-training Learning Labs Activities

### Satisfaction Survey

A satisfaction survey addressing the **Learning Labs Pilot Training** program, was conducted by Strategis using Google Forms after the completion of the program of the six online sessions.

Participants in the pilot program were invited to participate in the Satisfaction Survey via an email message [see, Figure 38].

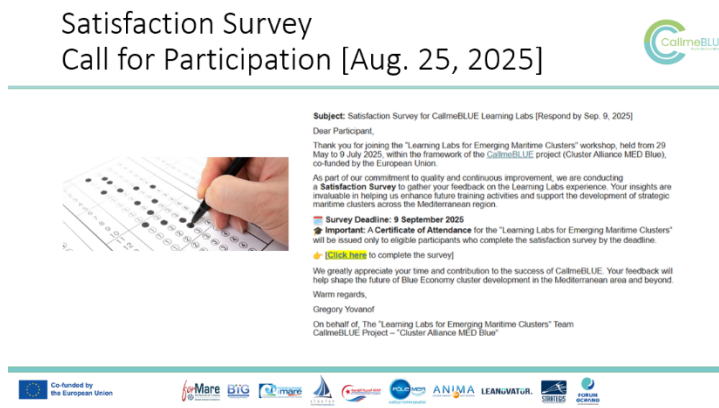


Figure 38 Call for participation in Satisfaction Survey (Internal Documentation)

The online Satisfaction Survey can be accessed at the [LINK](#).

The questionnaire comprised of 10 questions which are shown in the Table 4.

Table 4 Questionnaire for the Learning Labs Satisfaction Survey

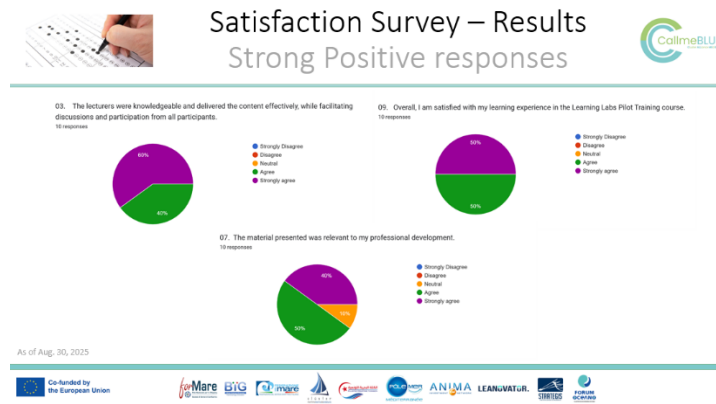
Index	Question	Answer Choices
1	The learning objectives were clearly stated at the beginning of the Learning Labs.	1 (Very Poor) 2 (Poor) 3 (Fair) 4 (Good) 5 (Excellent)
2	The online-live sessions were well scheduled, starting and ending punctually.	1 (Strongly disagree) 2 (Disagree) 3 (Neutral) 4 (Agree) 5 (Strongly agree)
3	The trainers and facilitators were knowledgeable and delivered the content effectively, while facilitating discussions and participation from all participants.	1 (Not Relevant) 2 (Slightly Relevant) 3 (Moderately Relevant) 4 (Relevant) 5 (Highly Relevant)
4	The program provided a good balance between theory and practical application.	1 (Strongly disagree) 2 (Disagree) 3 (Neutral) 4 (Agree) 5 (Strongly agree)
5	The interaction with other participants was beneficial to my learning.	1 (Very Ineffective) 2 (Ineffective) 3 (Neutral) 4 (Effective) 5 (Very Effective)
6	Feedback from the trainers and moderators during the sessions was constructive and timely.	1 (Very Ineffective) 2 (Ineffective) 3 (Neutral) 4 (Effective) 5 (Very Effective)
7	The material presented was relevant to my professional development.	1 (Strongly disagree) 2 (Disagree) 3 (Neutral) 4 (Agree) 5 (Strongly agree)
8	Accessing course materials for the Learning Labs on the online platform was clearly explained and easy to find.	1 (Very Poor) 2 (Poor) 3 (Fair) 4 (Good) 5 (Excellent)
9	Overall, I am satisfied with my learning experience in this Learning Labs Pilot Training course.	1 (Strongly disagree) 2 (Disagree) 3 (Neutral) 4 (Agree) 5 (Strongly agree)
10	Other Comments and suggestions for Improvements.	<i>open-ended question</i>

### Insights and results of Survey

The Satisfaction Survey and informal feedback sessions provided encouraging evidence of impact [see, Figure 39].

- **100%** of participants rated the lecturers as being knowledgeable and delivered the content effectively while facilitating discussion from all participants
- **90%** of participants found the material being relevant to their professional development
- **100%** of participants were overall satisfied with the learning experience in the Learning Labs pilot training course

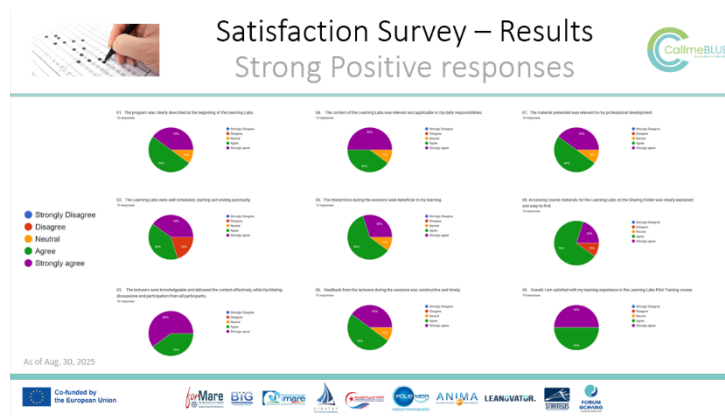
This indicates strong demand for further iterations of the programme and validates the Learning Labs as a replicable model for future capacity-building.



**Figure 39 Learning Labs rated highly relevant to professional development (Internal Documentation)**

In general, the response was strongly positive across the entire range of questions as shown in Figure 40.

D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned



**Figure 40 Strong positive feedback across the entire Satisfaction Survey (Internal Documentation)**

Converting the range of responses from the initial set of choices: Strongly Disagree/Disagree/Neutral/Agree/Strongly Agree into a linear scale of numerals between 0.2 and 1.0 according to the *lookup* Table 5, we get the average response range in the set of nine questions to range between 78% and 91 % as presented in Figure 41.

**Table 5 Lookup table to convert the Questionnaire answers to numeric values**

V LOOKUP Table	
Response	Score
Strongly Disagree	0.2
Disagree	0.4
Neutral	0.6
Agree	0.8
Strongly agree	1

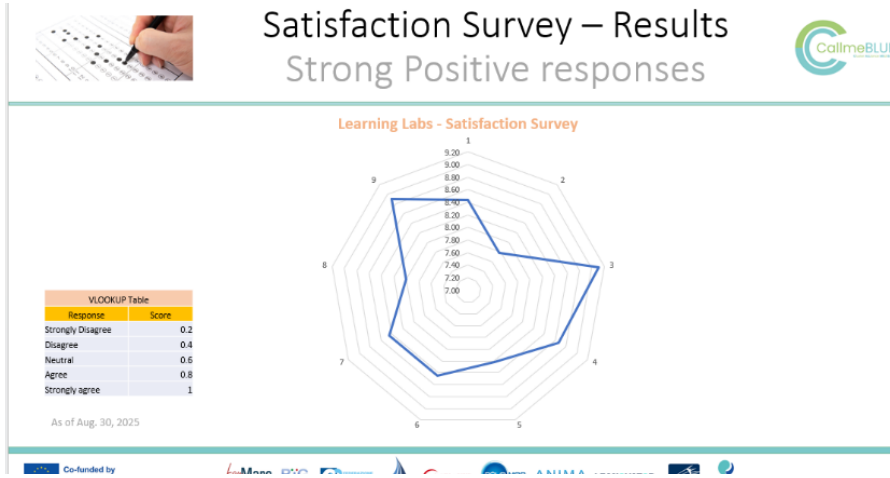


Figure 41 Average response score per question in the Satisfaction Survey (Internal Documentation)

## Certificate of Attendance

A "Certificate of Attendance" was issued to all active participants in the online pilot training program.

The template for the Certificate of Attendance, prepared and signed by the legal representative of FORMARE as the Lead Partner of the CALLMEBLUE project, includes a general statement on the main topics covered (see, Figure 42).



Figure 42: Certificate of Attendance

## TOOLKIT: Training Activities for Emerging Clusters

The main output of Task 3.2 is the **“D3.2 TOOLKIT: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned. Task 3.2”**

This Toolkit consolidates the resources, methods, and outputs of the piloting Learning Labs into a **transferable training package**.

It is designed for **future maritime cluster managers and actors in the Southern Mediterranean**, to be prepared on the legal, structural, administrative and management aspects for a concrete creation of future maritime clusters, but it can also be adapted for other sea-basin contexts.

### Objectives of the Toolkit

The Toolkit was designed with the following aims:

- To provide a **replicable model** of maritime cluster training.
- To empower professionals in **legal, administrative, and management aspects** of cluster creation.
- To encourage **North-South and South-South knowledge transfer**.
- To serve as a **practical resource library** for future initiatives in the Maghreb and beyond.

### Components of the Toolkit

The Training Toolkit is structured around several essential components. These include the core content of the PPT presentations, relevant resources, and a clear articulation of the training model's potential for broader application in other Sea Basins and geographical contexts. This Toolkit also features detailed lessons learned and effective approaches, alongside the methodology used to develop this training format. Finally, it also includes the various session delivery methods, such as interactive discussions, expert contributions, which collectively shape the overall training experience.



### Transferability and Future Use

- The Toolkit's modular design allows **customisation by local institutions**.
- It supports **policy formulation, cluster incubation, and capacity building**.

It can be applied in other **EU co-funded projects** or regional cooperation frameworks (e.g., WestMED, UfM).



## Key Insights – Toolkit

The TOOLKIT “Training Activities for Emerging Cluster”

- ⚙ Provides a **practical, modular training model** for cluster establishment.
- ⚙ Consolidates **knowledge, tools, and networking resources** in a reusable package.
- ⚙ Facilitates capacity building and long-term sustainability of maritime clusters.



## CONCLUSION & LESSONS LEARNED

The CallMeBlue “Learning Labs for Emerging Maritime Clusters” provided a unique pilot experience in structured capacity-building for future cluster managers and stakeholders in the Southern Mediterranean.

By combining theoretical foundations, practical case studies, regional cooperation models, and governance tools, the programme created a holistic learning pathway that reflected the complexity of cluster development in the blue economy.

This concluding section consolidates the key lessons derived from the six sessions, the whole Toolkit, and the feedback received from participants and partners.

### Sources of Lessons Learned

The conclusions presented here are drawn from multiple inputs:

- Feedback gathered during the **Task 3.1 local awareness workshops** in Algeria, Tunisia, and Mauritania, which served as precursors to the Learning Labs.
- Internal reflections by CallMeBlue partners on the **design and delivery** of the Learning Labs.
- Prior project deliverables, including the **Feasibility Study on Emerging Maritime Clusters (D3.1.3)**, the **Maritime Clusters Blue Economy Reporting (D2.1)**, and the **Technical Report on the Tunisia Workshop (D3.1.1)**.
- Comparative analysis with similar initiatives, such as the **MarMED project (Maritime Cluster Management Education Development)**, which provided valuable benchmarks.
- Direct feedback from participants collected during and after the sessions, as well as the **Satisfaction Survey** administered at the conclusion of the programme.



## Main Lessons

A number of overarching lessons emerge from this piloting exercise:

1. **Awareness is a prerequisite for engagement**  
Initial knowledge gaps regarding cluster concepts were significant among participants. The Learning Labs demonstrated that targeted awareness-building and exposure to international examples are critical first steps in motivating stakeholders to consider cluster-based cooperation as a viable development pathway.
2. **North-South and South-South exchange is indispensable**  
The value of peer-to-peer learning between established EU clusters and emerging Maghreb actors cannot be overstated. Participants reported that concrete exchanges with Forum Oceano, Pôle Mer Méditerranée, Cluster BIG, and the Andalusian Maritime Cluster provided not only inspiration but also actionable ideas for replication. Equally, South-South collaboration was highlighted as a way to pool scarce resources and build trust across borders.
3. **Legal and structural clarity remains a critical bottleneck**  
Emerging clusters in the Maghreb face uncertainty regarding the legal recognition of cluster entities, their tax regimes, and eligibility for public support. Without formal frameworks and transparent governance models, clusters risk being perceived as temporary projects rather than sustainable institutions.
4. **Practical case studies inspire action**  
Exposure to operational clusters with diverse governance and business models proved particularly impactful. Participants emphasized that learning from both successes and failures of established clusters was more instructive than abstract theory alone.
5. **Sustainability hinges on governance and funding**  
A recurring theme was that clusters can only endure if they establish **transparent decision-making**, secure diversified revenue streams (membership fees, services, and project grants), and cultivate strong stakeholder ownership. Dependency on grant funding alone cannot ensure sustainability.
6. **Capacity building in management and leadership is the cornerstone**  
Running a cluster requires specialised skills at the intersection of **strategy, facilitation, and project management**. The Learning Labs revealed that these

*D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned*

skills are currently in a state of development across the Southern Mediterranean. Enhancing the professional standards for cluster management is therefore crucial, as other initiatives may only achieve a limited impact.

### Final Reflection

The CallMeBlue Learning Labs represent a pioneering step in **systematically training the next generation of maritime cluster leaders in the Maghreb**. They demonstrated that when theory, practical examples, and collaborative exchanges are combined into a coherent curriculum, the result is greater confidence, knowledge, and ambition among emerging cluster actors.

Beyond their immediate outcomes, the Learning Labs underline three broader strategic conclusions:

- **Capacity-building must be institutionalised:** Ad hoc workshops are not enough. Southern Mediterranean countries require ongoing programmes and dedicated institutions to nurture cluster management skills.
- **Regional cooperation is a multiplier:** By working together in a Maghreb Cluster Alliance or Super-Cluster, national clusters can amplify their bargaining power, visibility, and access to funding.
- **The Toolkit is a transferable innovation:** CallMeBlue has created a resource that can be adapted not only within the Maghreb but also in other sea-basin areas.

In conclusion, the Learning Labs delivered under Task 3.2 achieved their dual purpose: raising awareness and providing practical tools for cluster creation and management in the Maghreb. They also confirmed that the **success of emerging maritime clusters will depend on governance, leadership, and regional cooperation**. These lessons provide a strong foundation for future actions under CallMeBlue and other EU-supported initiatives aiming to foster sustainable blue economy growth in the Mediterranean and beyond.



## Key Insights – Lessons Learned

- **Capacity building** remains the most urgent need for emerging clusters.
- **Governance and funding models** are the linchpins of long-term sustainability.
- **Regional cooperation** strengthens scale, visibility, and collective bargaining power.
- **Case studies and peer learning** provide the most effective inspiration for action.
- The **Toolkit model** offers a replicable, transferable resource for future training programmes also in other Sea Basins.

## Key Messages – Conclusions & Lessons Learned

The CallMeBlue Learning Labs confirmed that **awareness, governance, and cooperation** are the critical enablers of maritime cluster development in the Southern Mediterranean.

Emerging clusters will only achieve sustainability through **professionalised management, transparent structures, and diversified funding**, while **regional alliances** can multiply their impact at the Mediterranean scale.

The **Toolkit model** represents a practical innovation, ensuring that knowledge gained through this pilot can be replicated and adapted in other sea-basin contexts.



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## List of Figures

Figure 1 The objectives of the six sessions of the Learning Labs .....	17
Figure 2 Learning Labs: Content creation, review & delivery plan (Internal Documentation) .....	19
Figure 3 Country of origin of the Learning Labs candidates.....	21
Figure 4 Age & Gender profile of the Learning Labs cohort (Internal Documentation) .....	22
Figure 5 Blue Economy sector that participants are affiliated with. (Internal Documentation) .....	23
Figure 6 Learning Labs: Content creation, review & delivery plan (Internal Documentation) .....	26
Figure 7 Objectives of the online piloting Learning Labs.....	27
Figure 8 The role of clusters in the Blue Economy (Internal Documentation).....	28
Figure 9 Knowledge & Innovation Communities (KIC) (Source: Session 1, slide 45).....	30
Figure 10 Services offered by maritime clusters (Source: Session 1, Slide 28) .....	31
Figure 11 Blue Economy clusters: foundations and value (Source: Session 1, Side 18) ..	32
Figure 12 Cooperation for Sustainable Blue Economy in the Med (Session 1, slide 72) .....	34
Figure 13 LinkedIn post about Session #01 [June 4, 2025].....	34
Figure 14 Legal regime for clusters in the MED [source: Session 2, Slide 21] .....	37
Figure 15 Objectives of the Tunisian Maritime Cluster [Source: Session 2, Slide 44]....	39
Figure 16 LinkedIn post about Session 2 [June 6, 2025] .....	40
Figure 17 Strategic approach for regional cluster cooperation. (Internal Documentation) .....	42
Figure 18 Governance model for the Maghreb Cluster Alliance [Source: Session 3.23] .....	44
Figure 19 Contribution of Maritime to the Economies in Maghreb [Source: Session 3.9] .....	45
Figure 20 Status of Maritime clustering across the Maghreb [Source: Session 3.29] ..	46
Figure 21 The WestMED supports South-South collaboration [Source: Session 3.33].	48
Figure 22 Regional cooperation toward the Maghreb Super-Cluster [Source: Session 3.30].....	48

*D3.2 Toolkit: Training Activities for Emerging Cluster, Lessons Learned*

Figure 23 LinkedIn post about Session 3 [July 9, 2025]..... 49

Figure 24 Policy & objectives for cluster governance [Source: Session 4, Slide7] ..... 51

Figure 25 Leadership skills are essential for success. [Source: Session 4, Slide 7] ..... 51

Figure 26 Stakeholder's engagement framework [Source: Session 4, Slide 40].....53

Figure 27 Project Management for EU co-funded programs [Source: Session 4, Slide 71]..... 54

Figure 28 LinkedIn post about Session 4 [June 27, 2025] .....55

Figure 29 Forum Oceano's portfolio of services (Internal Documentation). ..... 57

Figure 30 Pôle Mer Méditerranée: French Competitiveness cluster ..... 58

Figure 31 Blue Italian Growth: national coordination of marine innovation (Internal Documentation) ..... 59

Figure 32 Clúster Marítimo Marino de Andalucía: regional cooperation model (Internal Documentation) ..... 60

Figure 33 Maghreb Platform for Small-Scale Fisheries (Internal Documentation) ..... 61

Figure 34 LinkedIn post about Session 5 [July 4, 2025] ..... 62

Figure 35 Harmonization of Policies: Clusters as Cooperation Mechanisms (Internal Documentation) ..... 64

Figure 36 North-South cooperation support mechanisms [Source: Session 6, Slide 123] ..... 65

Figure 37 LinkedIn post about Session 6 [July 11, 2025] ..... 66

Figure 38 Call for participation in Satisfaction Survey (Internal Documentation)..... 67

Figure 39 Learning Labs rated highly relevant to professional development (Internal Documentation) ..... 69

Figure 40 Strong positive feedback across the entire Satisfaction Survey (Internal Documentation)..... 70

Figure 41 Average response score per question in the Satisfaction Survey (Internal Documentation)..... 71

Figure 42: Certificate of Attendance..... 72



## List of Tables

Table 1 - List of KPIs.....	15
Table 2: Piloting "Learning Labs for Emerging Maritime Cluster" [May - July 2025] .....	18
Table 3 Participant profession and affiliation with the Blue Economy .....	24
Table 4 Questionnaire for the Learning Labs Satisfaction Survey.....	68
Table 5 Lookup table to convert the Questionnaire answers to numeric values.....	70



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