



D5.5 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN

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PRIMARY AUTHOR(S)	Lorella Ciuti – Forum Oceano Nesrine Ziad – Leanovator
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Contributors	
Name	Organisation
Lorella Ciuti	Forum Oceano
Nesrine Ziad	LEANOVATOR

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Summary CallmeBLUE Project

Deliverable: D5.5 Stakeholder Engagement Plan; version: Final; Date: 27/02/2026

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, internationalization 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 policies. The project will indeed 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 WestMED Initiative and UfM Ministerial Declaration for sustainable blue economy.



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Executive Summary

This deliverable presents the **CallmeBLUE Stakeholder Engagement Plan**, defining the strategy, methodology, and tools used to systematically identify, mobilize, and engage external stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle. Beyond a planning function, D5.5 documents how stakeholder engagement was implemented to support project delivery, exploitation perspectives, and the consolidation of a transnational Blue Economy community.

D5.5 operationalizes the stakeholder-related components of the Communication and Exploitation Plan (D3.1) by translating target audiences, key messages, and exploitation pathways into concrete engagement actions. In parallel, it acts as a key implementation instrument of the Legacy Framework (D5.3), demonstrating how stakeholder mobilization has contributed to building the foundations of a structured ecosystem capable of sustaining CallmeBLUE results beyond the project's lifetime.

Throughout the project, CallmeBLUE engaged a broad spectrum of actors, including maritime and Blue Economy clusters, SMEs and start-ups, innovation hubs, research and higher education institutions, public authorities, investors, and civil society organizations. Engagement was implemented through regional and transnational workshops, capacity-building activities, matchmaking events, mapping campaigns, and policy-oriented dialogues. These actions progressively shaped a diverse and active community spanning multiple Mediterranean countries, on both Northern and Southern shores, while also establishing strategic links with multiple actors, reinforcing the project's cross-basin dimension.

The deliverable details the stakeholder mapping approach, engagement modalities, and feedback integration mechanisms applied across the project. Emphasis is placed on the Final Conference, which represented a pivotal moment to consolidate this community, validate CallmeBLUE results, collect structured inputs from external stakeholders, and test the robustness of the proposed exploitation and legacy pathways.

Overall, D5.5 demonstrates how CallmeBLUE not only developed tools and services, but also fostered a living ecosystem characterized by institutional connections, trust-building, and cross-basin cooperation, creating added value for long-term exploitation, future collaborations, and policy dialogue.



Introduction

The objective of Deliverable D5.5 is to define, document, and assess the CallmeBLUE stakeholder engagement strategy, focusing on how external stakeholders were mapped, mobilized, and actively involved to support project implementation activities. The deliverable establishes a structured framework to guide engagement actions, while consolidating evidence on how stakeholder inputs were collected, analyzed, and integrated into the project.

This deliverable is strategically positioned at the intersection of **communication, exploitation, and legacy building**.

Firstly, D5.5 operationalizes the engagement dimensions defined in the Communication and Exploitation Plan (D3.1). The stakeholder categories, engagement channels, and interaction formats presented in this report derive directly from the target audience analysis and exploitation pathways established in D3.1, translating them into structured and measurable engagement actions.

Secondly, D5.5 constitutes a core implementation pillar of the Legacy Framework (D5.3). Stakeholder engagement is framed as a primary mechanism to enable continuity beyond the funded period, by identifying and mobilizing actors capable of acting as adopters, multipliers, institutional anchors, and long-term community members of CallmeBLUE.

From its design phase, CallmeBLUE adopted a strong **multi-stakeholder and cross-basin vision**, recognizing that durable impact in the Blue Economy requires the active involvement of clusters, enterprises, research bodies, public authorities, investors, and civil society.

External stakeholders were therefore positioned to contribute to CallmeBLUE as:

1. Sources of strategic input, informing the design and adjustment of project activities.
2. Validation actors, assessing relevance, feasibility, and usability of project outputs.
3. Multipliers and connectors, supporting outreach across sea basins and value chains.
4. Exploitation enablers, facilitating links to markets, finance, and policy processes.



5. Legacy carriers, capable of supporting continuity, replication, and scale-up.

This vision was progressively translated into concrete engagement actions, including regional and transnational workshops, capacity-building sessions, matchmaking events, mapping campaigns and policy-oriented dialogues. These activities enabled the construction of a diverse community of clusters, enterprises, and institutions actively contributing to and benefiting from the project. Stakeholders were mobilized across multiple Mediterranean countries on both Northern and Southern shores, while strategic links were also developed with multiple actors, reinforcing CallmeBLUE's cross-basin ecosystem logic.

1. Integrated Framework: From Communication to Legacy

The CallmeBLUE Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been designed and implemented as an integrated operational framework, ensuring coherence between the project's communication and exploitation objectives (D3.1) and its long-term sustainability and legacy ambitions (D5.3). D5.5 translates these strategic orientations into concrete engagement actions, tools, and monitoring mechanisms.

Within this framework, stakeholder engagement functions as the connecting layer between visibility and uptake (D5.1) and continuity and ecosystem ownership (D5.3). It provides the practical means through which target audiences are mobilized, exploitation pathways are tested, and legacy structures are progressively built and validated.

The Communication and Exploitation Plan (D5.1) built at the beginning of the project established the strategic framework for outreach, dissemination, ecosystem mobilization, and exploitation of CallmeBLUE results. It defined the target audiences, communication tools, engagement channels, events strategy, and performance indicators required to maximize project impact and uptake. D5.5 translates this framework into a structured and operational stakeholder engagement system, ensuring that communication and exploitation objectives were pursued through continuous interaction with the Blue Economy ecosystem rather than through unidirectional dissemination.



1.1 Target audiences: Stakeholder categories

Stakeholder engagement in CallmeBLUE was built on two complementary and strongly interconnected pillars: the strategic engagement and monitoring framework defined in the Communication and Exploitation Plan, and the operational ecosystem mapping and needs assessment implemented under WP2 (Deliverable 2.2).

Together, these two deliverables ensured that engagement actions carried out throughout the project were at the same time targeted, measurable, and deeply grounded in real ecosystem dynamics, particularly across Southern Mediterranean countries.

D5.1 established the target audiences, geographic priorities, communication channels, and impact indicators, defining stakeholder engagement as a core lever to increase participation of blue economy actors, reinforce maritime clusters, and support policy and cooperation objectives aligned with the WestMED Initiative and the Union for the Mediterranean.

The target groups defined in D5.1 are:

- Maritime and Blue Economy clusters and cluster managers
- SMEs, start-ups, and large companies active in Blue Economy sectors
- Research centers and higher education institutions
- Innovation hubs, accelerators, and technology transfer actors
- Public authorities, policy bodies, and development agencies
- Investors, financial and business support organizations
- Regional and transnational networks and initiatives (e.g. WestMED ecosystem)

WP2 translated this strategic framework into a large-scale, structured engagement process, centered on ecosystem mapping, stakeholder identification, and bottom-up consultation. Through WP2, CallmeBLUE directly engaged stakeholders across Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, combining desk research, interviews, focus groups and consultations to build a validated picture of national blue economy ecosystems, cluster dynamics, and cooperation needs.

It also introduced a phased country engagement logic, distinguishing between countries with emerging cluster dynamics and those with embryonic or active clusters, and highlighting the progressive mobilization of policy, research and business actors.

WP2 engagement covered a broad range of blue economy sectors, including fisheries and aquaculture, ports and maritime transport, marine renewables, coastal and maritime tourism, digital and marine data services, and blue skills development. This wide sectoral scope ensured coherence with the multi-sector target audiences defined in D5.1 and supported the project's cross-sectoral cooperation objectives.

Beyond quantitative reach, WP2 generated a structured body of qualitative evidence on ecosystem gaps, governance challenges, investment barriers, skills need, and cooperation opportunities. These insights fed directly into the design of WP3 and WP4 actions and shaped the engagement priorities implemented throughout the project lifecycle.

1.2 Geographic and sectorial engagement scope

The Communication and Exploitation Plan defined a phased approach to country engagement, aimed at progressively structuring CallmeBLUE's ecosystem intervention across the Mediterranean, with particular attention to Southern shore countries.

Subsequently, WP2 operationalized this phased approach through a structured process that included:

1. Preliminary analysis and country screening, which identified Mediterranean countries with concrete interest in the creation of maritime clusters and/or in strengthening existing initiatives, with a particular focus on Southern Mediterranean ecosystems, covering six Southern Mediterranean countries: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia
2. Multi-level stakeholder identification, mapping local, regional, and national actors capable of facilitating cluster development and engagement processes, including policy makers, research centers, sectoral bodies, and business actors.

3. Needs and gaps analysis, implemented through a bottom-up approach combining desk research, interviews, focus groups, and consultations. This process targeted both countries without formal cluster structures (e.g. Mauritania, Morocco, Egypt) and those with existing but embryonic or developing clusters (e.g. Tunisia, Algeria).
4. Preparation of subsequent project actions, generating evidence to support governance capacity building, facilitation of cooperation among stakeholders, and identification of cross-fertilization opportunities feeding directly into WP3 and WP4.

Stakeholder consultations and mapping exercises carried out by WP2 addressed a broad portfolio of blue economy sectors, reflecting both established and emerging value chains. Across countries, the most frequently prioritized sectors included:

- Fisheries and aquaculture
- Sustainable maritime transport and ports
- Marine renewables and desalination
- Sustainable coastal and maritime tourism
- Digitalisation and marine data systems
- Blue skills and training

This sectorial framing allowed WP2 to engage stakeholders not only vertically (within sectors) but also horizontally, fostering cross-sectoral dialogue around innovation, sustainability and investment opportunities.

1.3 Quantitative Reach

A core output of the project was the structured identification and engagement of stakeholders at multiple governance and operational levels. Overall, the assessment process involved more than 180 identified actors across the six target countries.

Actors involved in the assessment phase (WP2)			
Country	Number expected	Number achieved	Typology (Local, regional national actors)



Algeria	7	75	policy makers, business organizations, sectoral bodies, universities and research centers
Egypt	7	7	policy makers, business organizations, sectoral bodies, universities and research centers
Libya	7	25	policy makers, business organizations, sectoral bodies, universities and research centers
Mauritania	7	10	policy makers, business organizations, sectoral bodies, universities and research centers
Morocco	7	30	policy makers, business organizations, sectoral bodies, universities and research centers
Tunisia	7	37	policy makers, business organizations, sectoral bodies, universities and research centers

Table 1: Actors involved in the assessment phase

This framework functioned as the operational backbone of stakeholder engagement, stakeholder mapping, prioritization, and mobilization were structured according to this phased country logic, ensuring that engagement actions were territorially focused and differentiated, aligned with ecosystem maturity levels, grounded in bottom-up evidence and directly supportive of investment, capacity-building, and cooperation activities.

2. Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and Tools

2.1 Exploitation pathways: Engagement priorities

D5.1 framed exploitation around the strengthening of maritime clusters, the creation of transferable cooperation models, the reinforcement of North–South and South–South cooperation, and the uptake of CallmeBLUE methodologies and services within existing ecosystems and initiatives (notably the WestMED Alliance and the Regional Alliance Platform – Hub Azul Dealroom).



These exploitation orientations were translated into stakeholder engagement priorities actioned in the project lifecycle, namely:

- Prioritization of clusters, cluster managers, and ecosystem facilitators as core engagement targets, reflecting their central role as adopters and multipliers of CallmeBLUE results.
- Targeted mobilization of public authorities and policy-related bodies, with emphasis on increasing the participation of maritime clusters in policy dialogue and blue economy governance.
- Involvement of enterprises, innovators, and investors through matchmaking workshops, business forums, and events, supporting future uptake and collaboration pathways.
- Engagement of regional and transnational initiatives and platforms, ensuring alignment, cross-fertilization, and post-project integration of CallmeBLUE outcomes.

2.2 KPIs: Engagement monitoring

From the beginning of the project, a strong results-oriented approach has been adopted, linking communication and exploitation to measurable impacts, including:

- Increased participation of Blue Economy stakeholders.
- Strengthened networking and governance capacities.
- Enhanced involvement of clusters in policy dialogue.
- Increased awareness of the role of maritime clusters in sustainable Blue Economy development through social media campaigns.

These orientations are reflected in stakeholder-related KPIs detailed on the current section, notably:

- Number and typology of stakeholders reached.
- Participation in workshops, matchmaking events and project activities.
- Geographic and sectoral coverage.

- Attendance and diversity of stakeholders at major milestones, including the Final Conference.

2.2.1 Information and Awareness

Information and awareness-raising constituted an engagement modality within CallmeBLUE. In line with the Communication and Exploitation Plan (D5.1), digital communication channels were used not only to disseminate information, but to continuously connect with stakeholders, onboard new actors, support participation in project activities, and nurture the emerging CallmeBLUE community.

The project relied primarily on newsletters, the project website, and social media channels as transversal engagement instruments. These channels supported the visibility of CallmeBLUE actions, the promotion of events and opportunities, and the dissemination of project results, while also enabling two-way interaction with clusters, enterprises, institutions, and ecosystem facilitators across the Mediterranean and beyond.

From the outset, D5.1 defined a set of quantitative communication KPIs to monitor the reach and effectiveness of these tools. These indicators covered social media growth, website traffic, production of content, and dissemination outputs. Throughout the project, these KPIs were systematically tracked in order to assess performance and to adjust communication efforts where necessary.

The following table presents a comparison between the communication KPIs defined at the beginning of the project and the results achieved, providing a quantitative overview of CallmeBLUE's information and awareness engagement modality.

Communication KPIs		
Means of communication	Objectives: GRANT	TOTAL ACHIEVED
Facebook	100	32
LinkedIn	200	704
Twitter (X)	75	17

Newsletter subscriptions	N/A	64
Website views	1000/year	10484
Number of posts (social media)	1-2/month (total between 48 and 60)	60
Number of newsletters	4	3
Number of PR	4	3
Number of blogs	10	8

Table 2: KPIs Communication and Dissemination

Overall, while the project did not reach the initially targeted follower numbers on Facebook and X, this was largely compensated for by significantly stronger performance on LinkedIn, which emerged as the most effective channel for engaging professional stakeholders from the Blue Economy ecosystem. LinkedIn exceeded its initial objective by a wide margin and became the main digital space for interacting with clusters, institutional actors, and innovation stakeholders. In parallel, website traffic and content production indicators demonstrate a high level of sustained communication activity and visibility.

3. Link to Legacy and Sustainability

Stakeholder engagement actions were designed to go beyond one-off consultations, progressively fostering a structured, cross-basin community of clusters, enterprises, support organizations and institutions. Recurrent engagement formats, transnational interactions, and thematic mobilization supported trust-building, peer learning, and the emergence of a recognizable CallmeBLUE ecosystem.

Specific attention was given to mobilizing clusters, public authorities, private institutions, and established support structures capable of acting as long-term hosts, promoters, or integrators of CallmeBLUE services and methodologies. Engagement activities therefore supported the identification of institutional partners with potential anchor roles.

Additionally external stakeholders were actively involved in validating, testing, and providing feedback on CallmeBLUE outputs, especially after specific engagement activities and events took place. This engagement contributed to



refining the relevance, usability, and transferability of project tools, while also identifying organizations interested in adopting, replicating, or embedding them into their own programmes and service portfolios.

Through dialogues with public bodies, clusters, and ecosystem facilitators, stakeholder engagement supported the alignment of CallmeBLUE results with broader Blue Economy strategies, regional and sea-basin initiatives, and innovation support frameworks. This reinforced the potential for long-term policy relevance and ecosystem integration.

3.1 Co-creation and validation activities

Throughout the project, CallmeBLUE implemented a set of structured co-creation and validation formats designed to actively involve stakeholders in shaping, testing, and consolidating project outputs. These activities moved beyond consultation and dissemination, positioning external actors as contributors to the development and refinement of methodologies, cooperation models, and ecosystem approaches.

Workshops, learning labs, the business forum and Final conference were used as complementary engagement instruments, each serving a specific function within the engagement framework. A further engagement plan for regional actors will be enhanced by the organization of the Regional event in Rome on 24th February 2026. This Meeting has the primary goal of reflecting on future actions to further strengthen North-South and South-South cooperation and follow up actions after CallmeBLUE project's end. Therefore, the Regional Meeting aims to further reflect on a shared vision of the regional Alliance of Maritime Clusters with the representativeness of North-South Clusters of the Mediterranean sea basin by translating its strategic priorities, model of cooperation and mechanisms for communication, into tangible result over the project end in a long-term perspective.

Local workshops supported the collective exploration of needs, gaps, and priorities, and enabled in-depth discussion with clusters, enterprises, public authorities, and support organizations.

Learning labs provided more interactive and practice-oriented environments to test approaches, share experiences, and stimulate peer learning across ecosystems. The business forum created a dedicated space to connect



clusters, companies, innovators, and enabling actors, facilitating validation of market relevance, cooperation opportunities, and exploitation perspectives.

Together, these formats supported the iterative validation of CallmeBLUE activities and results, the identification of improvement areas, and the reinforcement of cross-sectoral and cross-basin collaboration. They also contributed to strengthening stakeholder ownership and to identifying potential adopters and multipliers of CallmeBLUE outcomes.

The table below summarizes the co-creation and validation activities implemented, together with their associated Key Performance Indicators, illustrating the scale, diversity, and impact of stakeholder engagement across these formats.

Co-creation and validation activities				
Name of the event	WP	Place - Date	Expected KPIs	Achieved
Matchmaking Workshop in Algeria Local		Algeria, October 15, 2024	>15 participants	112 participants
Matchmaking Workshop in Tunisia Local		Tunisia on October 14, 2024	>15 participants	34 participants
Matchmaking Workshop in Mauritania Local		Mauritania on January 20–21 2025	>15 participants	78 participants in presence + 27 online
Business Forum in Malta		Malta on April, 2025	>40 participants	32 participants
Final CallmeBLUE joint with the WestMED Stakeholder Conference	WP5	November 27-28, 2025	100 participants (in presence + online)	51 participants in presence +25 participants online + more 200 participants overall taking part at the WestMED Stakeholder Conference.
Learning Labs - Session-01: What is a Cluster – The role that clusters can play in the Blue Economy	WP3	Online - May 29, 2025	10 online participants	43 online participants
Learning Labs - Session-02: How is a Cluster structured, administratively and legally:	WP3	Online – June 4, 2025		

Legal and economic aspects for creating a cluster in the Maghreb region				
Learning Labs - Session-03: Cluster cooperation in the Maghreb region	WP3	Online – July 4, 2025		
Learning Labs -Session-04: Leadership and management skills for Blue Cluster managers	WP3	Online – June 25, 2025		
Learning Labs - Session-05: The practical aspects of cluster management – presentation of specific Cluster organizations	WP3	Online – July 2, 2025		
Learning Labs - Session-06: Exchange of experiences between North-South cluster cooperation.	WP3	Online – July 9, 2025		
Advanced Business Learning Labs - Session-07: Conception of your sector strategy	WP3	Online – October 2, 2025		
Advanced Business Learning Labs - Session-08: Public-private collaboration strategy to serve your cluster strategy	WP3	Online – October 16, 2025		
Advanced Business Learning Labs - Session-09: Develop your business model by developing the business of your members	WP3	Online – October 30, 2025	10 participants	85 online participants
Advanced Business Learning Labs - Session-10: Funding & Financing mechanisms	WP3	Online – November 13, 2025		
Advanced Business Learning Labs - Session-11: Implement your strategy	WP3	Online – December 4, 2025		
Advanced Business Learning Labs - Session-12: Communication/Marketing	WP3	Online – December 11, 2025		

Table 3: Co-creation and validation activities

The online program “Learning Labs for Emerging Maritime Clusters” represented a key co-creation and capacity-building instrument within CallmeBLUE, bringing together a total of 43 participants from different countries, sectors, and institutional backgrounds in a more interactive and practice-oriented setting.

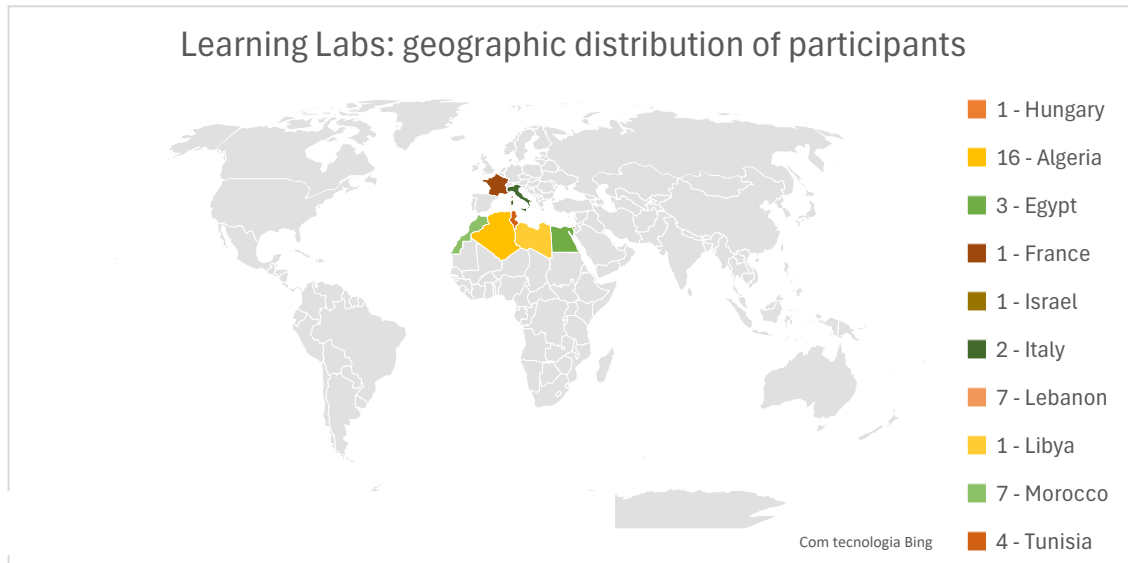


Figure 1: Learning Labs: geographic distribution of participants

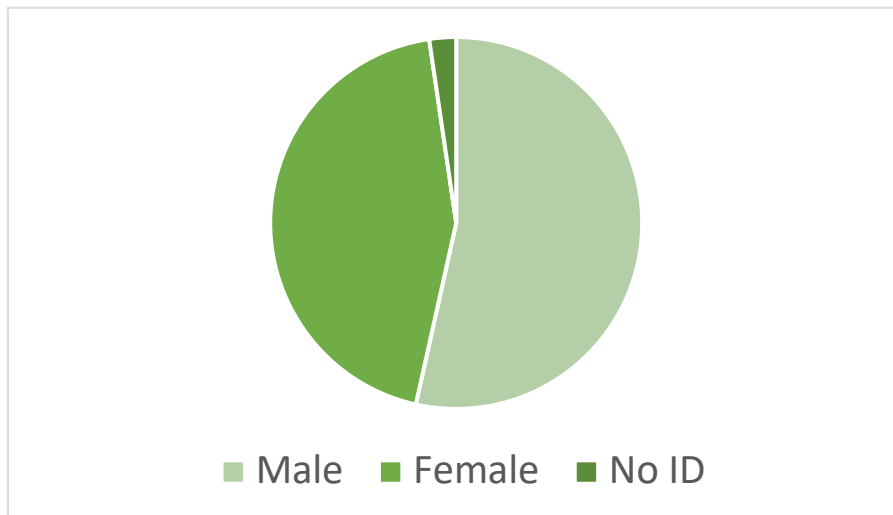


Figure 2: Learning Labs - distribution of participants by gender

The online program of the "Advanced Learning Workshops for Emerging Maritime Clusters" was conceived as a continuation of the previous Learning Labs conducted in the first semester of 2025, composed by six sessions held from 10 October to 11 December 2025 with the participation of a group of 85 selected participants, mainly from the Maghreb region.

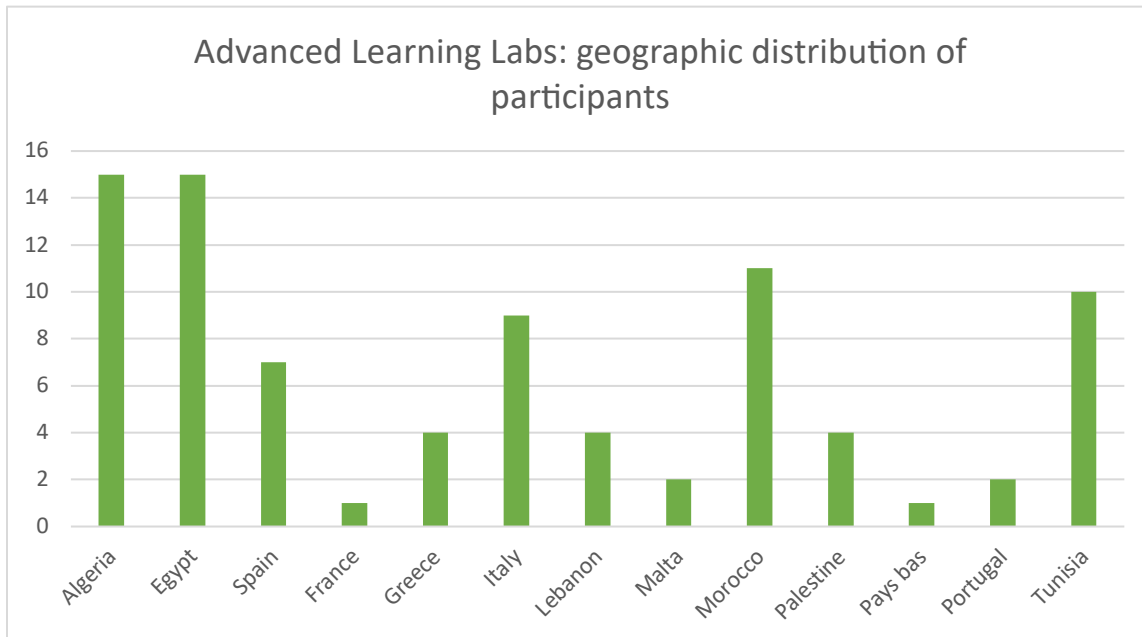


Figure 3: Advanced Labs - geographic distribution of participants

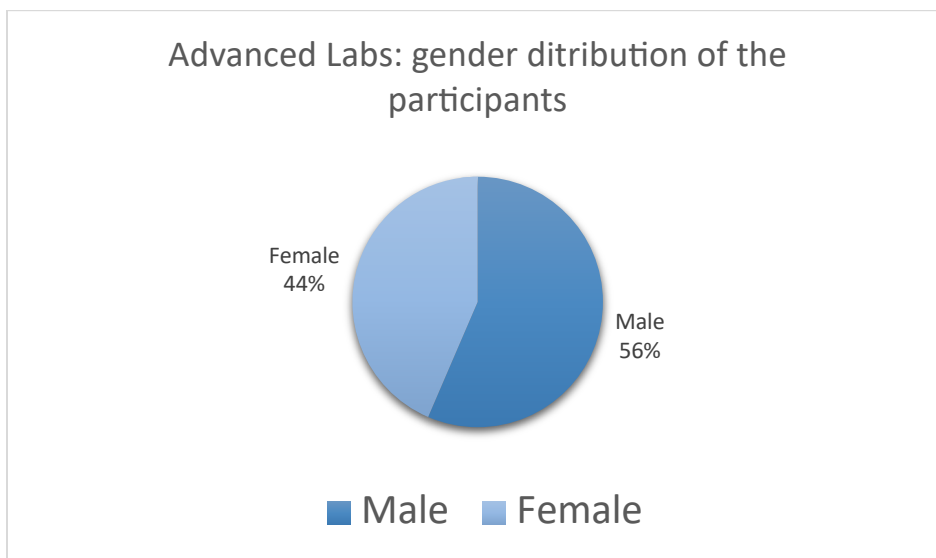


Figure 4: Gender profile of the Advanced Labs cohort

Detailed information and content breakdown about both learning Labs and advances learning Labs is available on deliverables 3.2 and 3.3.

3.2 Identification of Relevant Projects and Initiatives

This chapter presents the identification and mapping of projects and initiatives aligned with CallmeBLUE's objectives to leverage synergies and maximize the project's outreach at regional, national, and European levels.

To support the emergence and strengthening of maritime clusters in Southern Europe, CallmeBLUE conducted a survey among project partners to map existing networks with stakeholders in the blue economy. These connections include past, current, and planned collaborations through MoUs, agreements, or joint initiatives with clusters, businesses, research institutions, and public authorities.

The survey allowed the Consortium to:

- Identify relevant stakeholders and projects.
- Define the typology of activities prioritized by each partner.
- Establish outreach strategies tailored to maximize engagement and impact.
- Set priorities for collaboration and knowledge exchange.

Preliminary mapping identified initiatives and projects that can enhance CallmeBLUE's visibility, foster collaboration, exchange best practices, and support funding and investment opportunities.

3.2.1 Main Initiatives

European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP):

The EU's main hub for cluster stakeholders, connecting over 50,000 entities including companies, policy makers, and innovation actors. ECCP facilitates matchmaking, knowledge exchange, trend analysis, and sector-specific



collaboration, working closely with national cluster associations and the European Clusters Alliance.

Mediterranean Sea-basin WestMED:

European Union-backed sea-basin cooperation framework for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the Western Mediterranean, involving 10 countries from both the EU and Southern shores of the Mediterranean (France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Malta, Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia). It builds on the Union for the Mediterranean's Blue Economy Ministerial Declaration and the 5+5 Dialogue process, and aims to promote maritime safety and security, a smart and resilient blue economy, and improved maritime governance. The initiative defines joint strategic priorities — including maritime clusters development, skills, sustainable consumption and production, biodiversity conservation, and coastal community development — and operates through a WestMED Assistance Mechanism and National Hubs that support stakeholder matchmaking, project development and access to funding.

Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)

Is a multilateral intergovernmental organisation bringing together 42 countries from Europe and the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, together with the European Union, to enhance regional cooperation and dialogue. Through initiatives such as **Youth 4 Climate**, the UfM fosters climate action, youth engagement, sustainable development and policy alignment across the Mediterranean, providing a platform for multi-stakeholder collaboration, capacity building, and integration of youth voices into environmental and blue economy governance.

BlueInvest

The European Commission's investment platform supporting sustainable blue economy ventures. Services include investment readiness coaching, matchmaking, investor networking, and access to a pipeline of over 600 early-stage projects. Since its launch, BlueInvest has supported 330+ start-ups and raised over €300 million in investments. Now part of InvestEU, it targets €1.5 billion in blue economy funding by 2026.



3.2.2 Other Maritime Clusters and Networks

Cluster Maritime Français:

Is a French maritime cluster and association, founded in 2006, uniting around 500 members from companies, research, training, authorities, and the Navy. It promotes sustainable development of the maritime sector, acting as coordinator, network facilitator, and advocate nationally and internationally. Its work spans traditional industries (transport, shipbuilding, offshore) and emerging areas (marine renewables, biotechnologies, maritime digital services), supporting innovation and growth in the blue economy.

BlueTech Cluster Alliance:

Global network of maritime and blue economy clusters from around the world that collaborates to strengthen connections, share best practices, and support sustainable innovation across blue-tech sectors. It serves as a platform for cluster cooperation, international partnerships, and collective action to advance healthy and resilient marine industries.

3.2.3 Key Projects

MARMED:

Erasmus+ project bridging skill gaps in Maritime Cluster Management, and upskilling managers to enhance innovation and competitiveness in the Mediterranean Blue Economy.

MedBan – Mediterranean Blue Acceleration Network:

Eurocluster initiative supporting SMEs to adopt greener, digital, and more resilient practices. It has directly supported 49 European blue economy SMEs with tailored services for innovation and internationalization.

WIN-BIG:

CINEA/DG MARE co-funded project promoting the role of women in the blue economy. It addresses gender imbalances through data collection, skills gap analysis, learning labs, acceleration programs, and networking events, fostering women's participation and leadership across EU sea basins.



Collectively, these initiatives provide CallmeBLUE with a rich ecosystem of opportunities for collaboration, knowledge exchange, funding, and the creation of sustainable, inclusive, and resilient maritime clusters.

3.3 Participation in Events Organized by External Stakeholders

The project has actively engaged in conferences, workshops, and networking events organized by external stakeholders, enhancing visibility, fostering collaboration, and promoting knowledge exchange within the blue economy sector. These activities have been instrumental in connecting CallmeBLUE with key actors across the Mediterranean region and beyond. Examples of participation on external events are listed below out lighting type of participation, relevance and main outcomes:

WestMED Hackathon, Portugal – October 3, 2024

The third edition of the WestMED Hackathon brought together 87 participants from 15 countries to develop project ideas across five maritime themes. CallmeBLUE, presented by Lidia Rossi (ForMare – Project Coordinator), served as a case study for project development and funding opportunities. During the Project Labs Session, facilitated by Matteo Bocci (WestMED) and Lorella Ciuti (Forum Oceano), CallmeBLUE was highlighted as a contributor to scaling maritime clusters and fostering an interconnected WestMED Alliance+. Key stakeholders included representatives from Cinea, the UfM, and WestMED National Hubs. Discussions focused on potential partnerships, future funding, and the integration of eastern Mediterranean clusters into a sustainable blue economy framework.

Ecomondo Expo, Rimini, Italy – November 7, 2024

CallmeBLUE consortium members, including ForMare, Leanovator, Federazione del Mare, and Cluster Maritime Tunisien, participated in this high-profile Mediterranean event organized by Cluster BIG. The conference emphasized interregional cooperation, cluster resilience, digital transformation, and European funding strategies. CallmeBLUE's role in strengthening North-South collaboration and fostering sustainable maritime clusters was presented, with key discussions on transferable collaboration models and the strategic development of Mediterranean maritime ecosystems.



MARMED Project Final Conference, 2024

At the final MARMED Project meeting, CallmeBLUE was presented by Anouchka Le Roux (PMM) as an initiative complementing MARMED's objectives. The session focused on creating synergies between the two projects to support sustainable maritime development and knowledge exchange. Discussions highlighted joint benefits, including scaling up training activities, promoting professional mobility, and developing shared standards such as a Blue Cluster Management Certificate. This collaboration reinforced the long-term sustainability and impact of both initiatives on Mediterranean cluster networks.

MedBAN Final conference – March 18th, 2025

The MedBAN Final Conference presented the project's main results and discussed the future of the Mediterranean Blue Acceleration Network (Eurocluster), highlighting the support provided to 49 SMEs across 8 countries through its Financial Support to Third Parties mechanism.

A key outcome of the conference was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between MedBAN and CallmeBLUE, formalising strategic collaboration between the two initiatives. The MoU established a framework for enhanced cooperation among clusters, SMEs, research organisations and policymakers, promoting knowledge exchange, SME support, internationalisation and alignment with regional frameworks such as the WestMED Cluster Alliance, thereby strengthening CallmeBLUE's long-term legacy and ecosystem impact.

WINBIG Conference, Rome – March 26, 2025

In this event, CallmeBLUE partners highlighted the importance of inclusive cluster development, focusing on increasing participation of women and youth in the blue economy. The conference explored measures to narrow gender gaps, expand targeted training programs, and invest in inclusive innovation ecosystems. Consortium ambassadors—including Lidia Rossi (ForMare), Laurence Martin (Federazione del Mare), Ziad R. Nesrine (Leancubator), and Emna Sohlobji (Cluster Maritime Tunisien)—shared experiences and strategies to empower women and foster leadership in the maritime sector, promoting a more equitable and sustainable blue economy.



Blue Ecosystem Project Meeting, Durrës – April 8, 2025

During the Blue Ecosystem Steering Committee meeting, CallmeBLUE was presented as a complementary initiative supporting sustainable cluster development in the Euro-Mediterranean region. While Blue Ecosystem accelerates solutions to blue economy challenges through co-creation and multi-stakeholder engagement, CallmeBLUE focuses on establishing new clusters in southern Mediterranean countries. Synergies identified included knowledge transfer from mature to emerging clusters, particularly in circular economy and environmental innovation, harmonization of cluster development tools and stakeholder engagement methods, and joint training and capacity-building activities.

UNOC in Nice - June 10, 2025

CallmeBLUE participated in the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) session on “Finance and Innovation as Sustainable Blue Economy Accelerators”, held during **Mediterranean Day at the Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3)** in Nice, France.

This high-level event brought together Mediterranean stakeholders to discuss how innovation, finance, and cooperation can drive a more inclusive and resilient blue economy.

CallmeBLUE was represented by Laurence Martin (Federazione del Mare, Italy), Ziad Nesrine (Leancubator, Algeria), and Emna Sohlobji (Tunisian Maritime Cluster), who collectively highlighted the strategic role of maritime clusters. Their interventions emphasised how clusters connect startups, researchers, industry, and institutions, enabling innovation to translate into concrete actions through structured cooperation and territorial anchoring.

The session reinforced CallmeBLUE’s vision of a connected, inclusive, and innovation-driven Mediterranean, underlining the importance of strengthening clusters as platforms for dialogue, skills development, and investment-readiness. The participation in UNOC3 contributed to increasing the visibility of Mediterranean maritime clusters and fostering synergies with regional and international initiatives supporting the Sustainable Blue Economy.



18th UfM Regional Platform on Sustainable Blue Economy in Brussels on October 15-16, 2025

CallmeBLUE actively contributed to the 18th UfM Regional Platform on Sustainable Blue Economy in Brussels, bringing together institutional leaders and stakeholders from 43 Mediterranean countries.

The meeting provided a key opportunity to share achievements, align regional priorities, and foster cooperation for a more inclusive, sustainable, and innovative blue economy.

CallmeBLUE showcased its role in strengthening maritime cluster alliances and promoting North–South cooperation, with concrete impacts at local and regional levels. Lidia Rossi, Managing Director at ForMare (Lead partner) presented the overall objectives, priorities, and results, highlighting key success factors for cluster development identified in Algeria and Tunisia. The Maghreb Maritime Clusters Alliance, presented by the Tunisian Cluster Maritime, illustrated how CallmeBLUE supports regional governance, networking, and strategic collaboration across the Mediterranean.

The project also aligns with broader regional initiatives, creating synergies with WestMED, Interreg Euro-Med and NEXT-MED programmes, BlueMissionMed and the Plastic Busters Initiative.

Ecomondo 2025 Beacon Conference, November 6, 2025

CallmeBLUE partners actively participated in the Beacon Conference “Blue Horizons: Trans-Mediterranean Cluster Collaboration for Innovation in Energy, Clean Tech, and Bioeconomy”, organised by Cluster BIG in collaboration with the Ecomondo Scientific and Technical Committee. The high-level session, co-chaired by CINEA and Cluster BIG, brought together representatives from international public institutions, research organisations and private stakeholders, providing an important platform for CallmeBLUE partners to contribute to strategic discussions on transnational cooperation, cluster-driven innovation and sustainability. The conference highlighted the role of maritime and industrial clusters in advancing clean technologies, strengthening industrial competitiveness and supporting the blue economy, while also addressing key policy frameworks such as the European Ocean Pact and the Mediterranean Pact.

These participations collectively strengthened CallmeBLUE's network, enhanced its visibility, and facilitated the exchange of best practices.



5th WestMED stakeholders Conference, November 27-28, 2025

The Cluster Med Alliance – CallmeBLUE has been awarded the WestMED Project Award 2025 on Cluster Category, in the WestMED Stakeholder Conference recognizing its role as a pilot initiative that strengthens maritime clusters across the Mediterranean and promotes North–South and South–South collaboration.

The conference addressed cross-cutting priorities such as Blue Skills and Ocean Literacy, Maritime Clusters, Energy Transition, Maritime Spatial Planning, Aquaculture, and Climate Change. CallmeBLUE’s participation highlighted its role in empowering clusters, unlocking opportunities, and strengthening Mediterranean cooperation, and this recognition reflects CallmeBLUE’s contribution to a more connected, resilient, and innovation-driven regional blue economy.

4. Final Conference

The Final Conference of the CallmeBLUE project, entitled “*Maritime Clusters: Accelerating Mediterranean Cooperation in the Blue Economy*”, was held on 27 November 2025 in Tunis, in a hybrid format, with in-person participation at the Royal ASBU Hotel and online attendance via Zoom. Simultaneous French interpretation was provided to ensure broad accessibility. The event was organized back-to-back with the WestMED Stakeholder Conference, reinforcing synergies between CallmeBLUE and wider Mediterranean governance processes.

The conference represented the culmination of CallmeBLUE’s stakeholder engagement trajectory, providing a strategic platform to present project achievements, validate approaches with external actors, and collect forward-looking inputs to support cooperation, exploitation, and legacy pathways. It brought together a diverse community of maritime clusters, policy makers, innovation actors, and blue economy stakeholders from across the Mediterranean, confirming the project’s role as a catalyst for North–South and South–South cooperation.



4.1 Objectives, structure and target audience

As documented in the Final Conference Report, the event aimed at:

- Present and consolidate CallmeBLUE results in strengthening maritime clusters and supporting capacity building and innovation across Southern Mediterranean countries.
- Reflect on lessons learned and assess how project results could be leveraged beyond the project's lifetime.
- Validate CallmeBLUE methodologies, tools, and cooperation models with external stakeholders.
- Contribute to shaping future collaboration frameworks aligned with regional initiatives such as WestMED and UfM.

To maximise interaction and knowledge exchange, the conference combined multiple engagement formats such as keynote speeches framing policy priorities and project positioning, project presentations, high-level panel and roundtable discussions enabling strategic dialogue among clusters, policy actors, and innovation stakeholders, interactive exchanges and Q&A sessions, and case-based discussions and testimonials, notably on Learning Labs and matchmaking workshops, grounding discussions in practical experience.

These formats supported both strategic reflection and operational validation, reinforcing the conference's role as a consolidation and capitalization milestone.

To reflect the above-mentioned engagement format, the conference was structured into four main segments:

1. *Opening Session – Fostering Cooperation in the Mediterranean Blue Economy*, providing the policy and strategic framing, with contributions from the WestMED National Hub, the European Commission (CINEA), and UfM representatives.
2. *Session 1 – CallmeBLUE Results & Achievements*, dedicated to the presentation and validation of project outputs, including Learning Labs, matchmaking workshops, toolkits, and the Stakeholder Engagement Regional Platform.



3. *Session II – North–South & South–South Cooperation: Building Cluster Excellence*, organized as a high-level roundtable focusing on capitalization, replication, and long-term cooperation perspectives.
4. *Closing Remarks*, synthesizing key messages and reinforcing alignment with regional sea-basin priorities.

The discussions addressed key themes aligned with CallmeBLUE objectives and stakeholder priorities, including:

- The strategic role of maritime clusters as enablers of sustainable blue economy development.
- North–South and South–South cooperation dynamics in the Mediterranean.
- Skills development, upskilling and professionalization of emerging cluster managers.
- Innovation ecosystems, investment readiness, and access to finance.
- Future cooperation opportunities and synergies with WestMED, UfM and other regional frameworks.

The Final Conference targeted a *broad and multi-level stakeholder ecosystem*, in a hybrid format enabled the participation of a diverse and representative group of Mediterranean stakeholders with a total of **51 participants in presence** and **25 online**, and it is important to consider the enlarged impact given by the WestMED Stakeholder Conference involving **more than 200 participants**, including:

- Policy makers and representatives of national and regional institutions.
- Maritime cluster managers and cluster networks.
- Researchers, universities, and innovation actors.
- Entrepreneurs, SMEs, accelerators, and business support organizations.
- Representatives of regional initiatives and EU-level bodies.

Participants and speakers represented a wide geographic coverage, including:

- Northern Mediterranean EU Member States.
- Southern Mediterranean countries, with strong representation from North Africa.

- Cross-Mediterranean and regional organizations active in blue economy policy and cooperation, like UfM, WestMED National Hubs and the European Commission (CINEA).

Sectorally, engagement spanned maritime clusters, innovation ecosystems, research and education, blue skills development, maritime transport, fisheries and aquaculture, renewable energy, and cluster governance structures, confirming the cross-sectoral nature of the CallmeBLUE community.

This diversity reflected the multi-stakeholder approach underpinning CallmeBLUE and its alignment with sea-basin cooperation principles, ensuring a strong institutional and ecosystem representation.

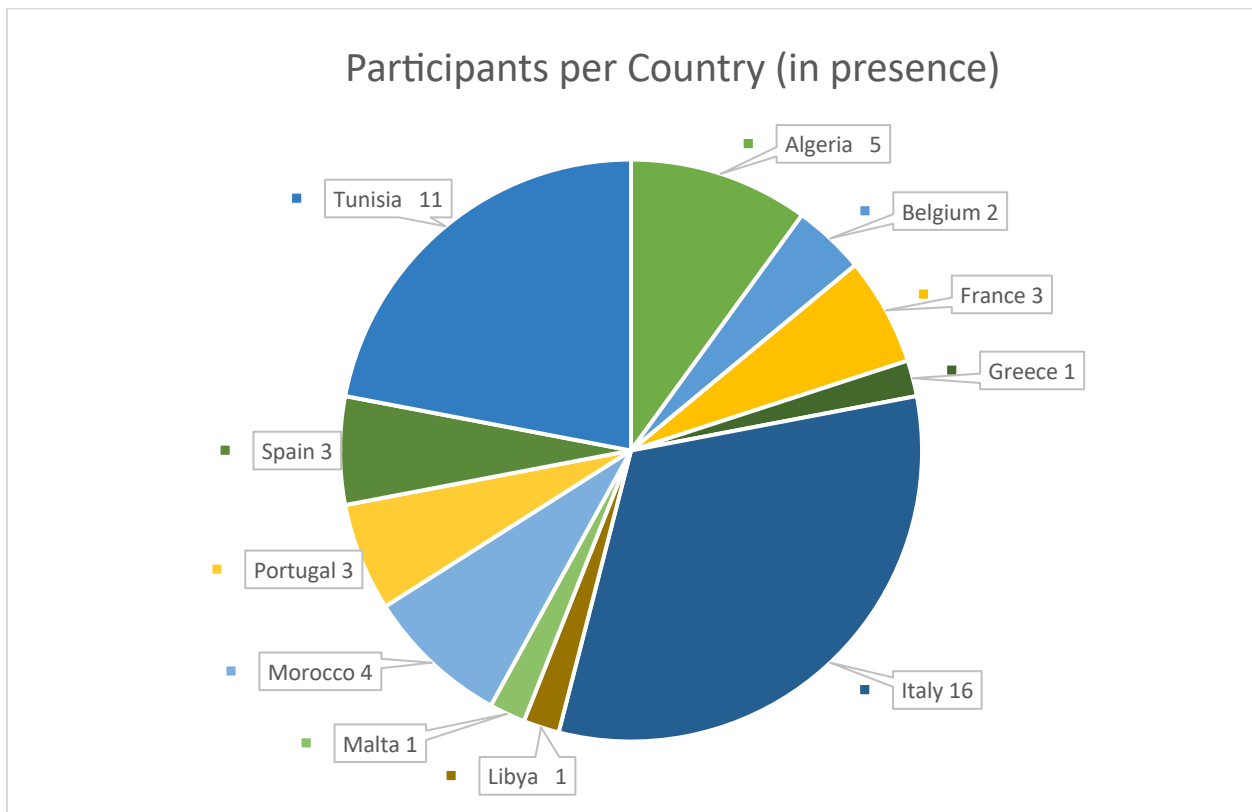


Figure 5: Final Conference participants per country in presence

4.2 Engagement and Key Messages

Stakeholder engagement during the Final Conference occurred at multiple levels:



- Strategic engagement, through high-level panels and roundtables addressing future cooperation and policy alignment.
- Operational validation, via presentations and discussions on Learning Labs, matchmaking workshops, and digital tools.
- Forward-looking exchange, identifying opportunities for follow-up initiatives, replication, and integration with WestMED and UfM processes.

The conference thus functioned not only as a dissemination event, but as a structured consultation and consolidation mechanism within the stakeholder engagement lifecycle.

External stakeholder contributions converged around a set of consistent and interrelated messages. Participants highlighted persistent gaps in skills and professional capacity for emerging cluster managers, particularly in Southern Mediterranean contexts, and stressed the need for practical tools addressing the legal, administrative and governance dimensions of cluster development.

In parallel, stakeholders underlined the importance of tailored mechanisms capable of effectively bridging innovation ecosystems between the Northern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean. Within this context, CallmeBLUE was widely recognised as a transferable and credible cooperation model for maritime cluster development, with its strong focus on North–South and South–South collaboration validated as strategically relevant for deeper Mediterranean integration.

Looking forward, stakeholders recommended further strengthening digital platforms to support matchmaking and networking beyond the project’s lifetime, alongside the continuation of targeted capacity-building actions addressing digitalisation, climate adaptation and access to finance. The need for closer alignment with regional policy frameworks, notably WestMED and UfM, was also emphasised to ensure long-term coherence and sustainability.

Finally, discussions pointed to clear opportunities for replication and scale-up of the CallmeBLUE model in other maritime contexts and sea basins, reinforced by stronger links with EU funding instruments, innovation acceleration networks and the consolidation of strategic partnerships. Collectively, these inputs confirmed the relevance, credibility and scalability of CallmeBLUE’s stakeholder engagement approach and provided a solid foundation for its legacy and exploitation strategy.



4.3 Follow-up: Regional Meeting on 24th of February in Rome

The scope of this regional meeting is to have the representativeness of North-South Clusters of the Mediterranean Sea basin to further reflect on a shared vision for the regional Alliance of Maritime Clusters, building on the existing WestMED Cluster Alliance of which all project partners are members.

Concretely, it will do so by translating its strategic priorities, model of cooperation and mechanisms for communication, into tangible result over the project end in a long-term perspective. This approach will be strongly aligned in the frame of WestMED Alliance priorities and UfM regional cooperation.

The main scope of this meeting will be therefore to transform project's outcomes into a sustainable Roadmap for cluster collaboration and regional blue growth, through the following discussions:

- How to provide a valuable follow-up and build upon CallmeBLUE results.
- How concretely support emerging and embryonic clusters of southern shore area to move beyond and toward a strategic Roadmap for regional Alliance.
- How to promote capacity building programs and offer concrete services to members of the Med clusters for future innovation processes for the blue economy sector.
- How to concretely cooperate with the members of the clusters and the Key actors through common projects, shared programs of cooperations.
- How to promote tailored services that each cluster can offer to the Med ecosystem (e.g. acceleration programs, open innovation, training, business opportunities, tech transfer).

This cooperation model will concretely prepare the ground to establish a concrete operational roadmap for future collaboration, outlining joint activities to foster north-south and south-south cooperation in a long-term perspective.



Conclusions

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan of CallmeBLUE demonstrates how a structured, multi-level and adaptive engagement strategy can effectively support maritime cluster development and cooperation across the Mediterranean. Throughout the project lifecycle, engagement was not treated as a standalone activity, but as a transversal mechanism underpinning needs assessment, co-creation, validation, dissemination and long-term exploitation of results. By combining targeted communication actions, participatory methodologies and strategic partnerships, CallmeBLUE successfully mobilised a diverse ecosystem of clusters, SMEs, research institutions, public authorities and policy stakeholders from both the Northern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean, while also fostering cross-basin linkages with Atlantic actors.

The evidence collected through quantitative indicators and qualitative feedback confirms the relevance and effectiveness of the engagement approach. Stakeholders actively contributed to the refinement of project tools, validated the project's cooperation model, and articulated clear priorities for future action in areas such as skills development, innovation ecosystems, governance frameworks and policy alignment. High-level events, external conferences and strategic alliances — including formal cooperation agreements — further strengthened CallmeBLUE's institutional anchoring and visibility within the wider blue economy landscape.

Importantly, the engagement process laid the foundations for a sustainable community, extending beyond the project's duration. Through reinforced cluster cooperation, digital platforms, and alignment with regional frameworks such as WestMED and the Union for the Mediterranean, CallmeBLUE has positioned its results for continuity, replication and scale-up. In this sense, stakeholder engagement has been both a driver of project implementation and a cornerstone of its legacy, ensuring that CallmeBLUE contributes meaningfully to a more connected and inclusive Mediterranean blue economy.



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Abbreviations

Term	Definition
HAD	Hub Azul Dealroom
WCA	WestMED Cluster Alliance
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
PMM	Pôle Mer Méditerranée

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