



Deliverable D6.2 – First Dissemination and Communication Report

WP6 – Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation

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HORIZON-MISS-2021-OCEAN-02-01- Blueprint demonstration for co-created effective, efficient and resilient networks of MPAs

Document History

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Brief Description	The First Dissemination and Communication Report for the Blue4All project (Deliverable D6.2) provides a comprehensive overview of the progress achieved in raising awareness, fostering engagement, and sharing project outcomes during the first 23 months of the project under Work Package 6 (WP6). This report highlights the implementation of communication tools, events, and platforms to maximize impact. It also introduces key initiatives such as the MPA Community Network and the Networking Platform on BlueBioMatch, which aim to support collaboration and knowledge exchange among Marine Protected Area (MPA) managers and stakeholders. Reflections on challenges, updated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and plans for future improvements are also included.
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1. Executive Summary

This report presents the communication and dissemination achievements of the Blue4All project during its first 23 months, covering the period from January 2023 to December 2024. It highlights the project's contributions to advancing Marine Protected Area (MPA) management across Europe and reflects on the reach and impact of its outreach activities. Through a targeted and multi-channel dissemination approach, Blue4All achieved an estimated cumulative exposure of approximately 252,000 contacts—including policymakers, researchers, industry professionals and other relevant stakeholders, through events, newsletters, social media, and an enhanced online presence.

Key achievements include:

- Establishing a professional visual identity, producing cohesive branding materials, and creating two promotional videos to communicate project objectives and showcase the Networking Platform for MPA stakeholders.
- Engaging with stakeholders through 55 events, both through participation and through interactive sessions and collaborative efforts with Mission Ocean initiatives, fostering meaningful dialogue and knowledge sharing.
- Developing the MPA Community Network, a transformative initiative designed to streamline collaboration, centralize tools and resources, and promote knowledge exchange among MPA managers and stakeholders across Europe. This network includes a dedicated Networking Platform hosted on BlueBioMatch, which facilitates cross-sectoral discussions, mentoring, and collaborative problem-solving.

The report also identifies areas for further improvement, such as updating the KPIs, expanding engagement with the Networking Platform, and refining dissemination tools to better support stakeholders' needs. By addressing these challenges and implementing targeted actions, the Blue4All project is well-positioned to continue driving impact in the second phase. These efforts will ensure a robust legacy, aligning with Mission Ocean's objectives and establishing Blue4All as a pivotal contributor to effective MPA management and marine biodiversity restoration in Europe and beyond.

2. Communication and Dissemination Actions and Awareness Outcome

During the first 23 months of the Blue4All project, the communication and dissemination (COMDISS) activities under Work Package 6 (WP6) have made significant strides in raising awareness about the project's objectives, fostering meaningful engagement, and sharing its outputs with a diverse range of stakeholders. Through a structured and strategic approach, the project has successfully connected with audiences across the globe, reaching policymakers, academics, industry professionals, and marine conservation stakeholders.

This deliverable outlines the achievements to date, provides insights into how dissemination activities are tracked, and identifies areas for improvement to optimize communication efforts in the upcoming phases.

The communication and dissemination efforts have been instrumental in promoting Blue4All's objectives and developments as a key project for Marine Protected Area (MPA) management and biodiversity restoration in the EU and beyond. These achievements span across multiple channels and touchpoints, ensuring a broad reach and substantial engagement.

Between January 2023 and December 2024, Blue4All logged 250 communication and dissemination activities (see Annex 1). Project-wide engagement data shows that Blue4All has reached **a minimum of 52,013 people** across all communication and dissemination activities during this period. This figure is based on verifiable numeric entries to the tracking document and social media analytics on Hootsuite. The figure is a conservative analysis, as some communication and dissemination activities were recorded, but without a measure of how many people were reached, therefore safely implying that the number is indeed larger.

In addition to the figure of 52,013 individuals reached, Blue4All benefited from exceptional visibility through participation in events, especially the Blauw Innovatiedorp sector event in Ostend in May 2024, where over 200,000 are counted to have participated. Thus, aggregating the audience figures recorded for each activity – using direct attendees for events and workshops, total opens and subscribers for newsletters, post reach/impressions for social media and unique visits for the website – gives an **estimated cumulative exposure of more than 252,000 contacts**.

This is dominated by event participation/attendance (202,941 possible outreach) and social media reach (approx. 34,800 impressions in total). Newsletter (both official and external features reached a combined subscriber base of 6272), website visits (especially to blogposts reaching approximately 8000 unique views) and multiplier communications activities from partners contribute the remainder (such as press releases and other media, external featuring, flyers).

All figures are discussed in depth in the coming sections. Overall, this figure and general upwards trends throughout the analysis indicates a robust mix of online and offline activities and is a very positive directional indicator of project visibility.

Visual identity and positioning

At the outset of the project, significant effort was dedicated to establishing a cohesive and professional visual identity to ensure a strong and unified brand presence.



This foundational work included designing the project logo, creating standardized templates for presentations and documents, and producing branded materials such as a project leaflet (which was recently updated), slide deck, poster, and MPA Community Platform banner to ensure consistency across all communications. These elements are detailed in Deliverable 6.1.



Figure 1 - Updated Leaflet

These resources were co-designed with input from all project partners, fostering collaboration and ensuring a unified representation of the project. All visual identity materials are readily available in the consortium's shared workspace (SharePoint) to facilitate their consistent use in dissemination efforts. Promotional materials have further bolstered the project's visibility at events, conferences, workshops, and webinars. These include two roll-up banners, updated flyers featuring the latest RBINS logo and an updated map of test sites and Living Labs, as well as stickers highlighting the new MPA Community Network (see [Chapter 5](#)).



Figure 2 - MPA Manager and Local Community Sticker



Figure 3 - Project Roll-Up

Additionally, two videos were produced to effectively communicate the project's objectives and the significance of its MPA networking platform:

1. Project Introduction Video

The project introduction video ([Watch here](#)) provides an engaging introduction to the project, explaining its mission, scope, and key objectives. It emphasizes the importance of fostering collaboration and innovation in MPAs to address challenges in marine conservation and sustainability. The video conveys the project's overarching vision to both technical and non-technical audiences.

2. MPA Networking Platform Video

The MPA networking platform video ([Watch here](#)) focuses on the features and functionalities of the platform designed to connect and empower MPA stakeholders. It demonstrates how the platform facilitates knowledge sharing, fosters partnerships, and supports the sustainable management of MPAs.¹



Figure 4 - MPA Networking Platform Video

By leveraging these resources, the project has successfully established a strong presence in both academic and public spheres, ensuring impactful dissemination of its goals and achievements.

¹ Both the introductory video and the MPA Community Network video were updated in August 2025 to reflect revisions to the project's Living Lab and Information site maps, as well as the updated name and logo of the MPA Community Network. The updated versions currently record 55 views for the introductory video and 6 views for the MPA Community Network video. In addition, the previous version of the introductory video accumulated 50 views, while the MPA Community Network video, originally hosted on the SUBMARINER Network YouTube channel, reached 76 views. Beyond online metrics, both videos were presented at several events and meetings, further contributing to their overall reach. Continued dissemination efforts are planned to increase visibility and engagement.

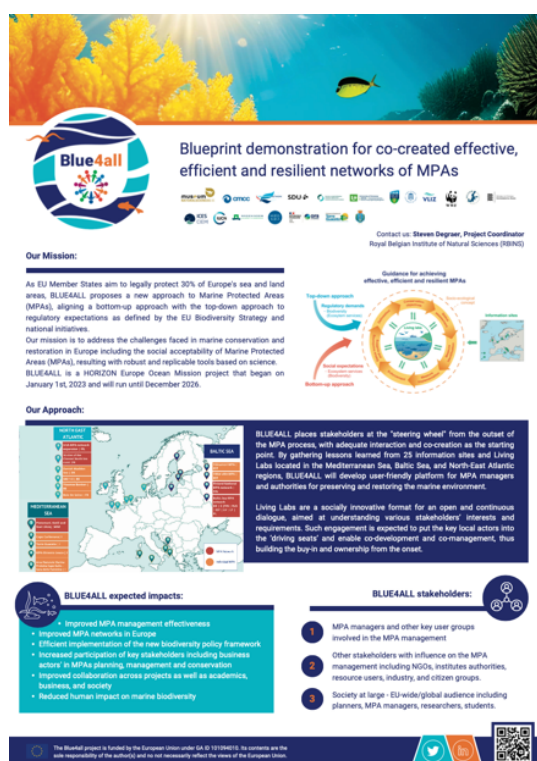


Figure 5 - Project Poster

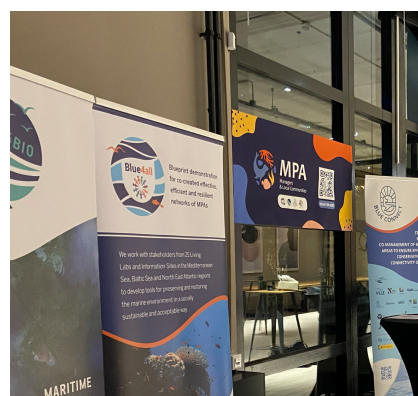


Figure 6 - MPA Community Banner Displayed at the Mission Arena 3



Figure 7 - Project Video

These materials have been instrumental in engaging stakeholders and audiences during conferences, workshops, and other dissemination activities.

Social media presence

Further extending its reach, the project's social media strategy has achieved an engagement rate of 8.15% (based on Hootsuite, the platform used by Blue4All to measure Social Media engagement), significantly surpassing comparable industry range of 1-3.5%. With 120 published posts between mid-January 2023 and end of December 2024, on LinkedIn, X, and YouTube, Blue4All has attracted almost 700 followers (694 exactly) and generated over 750 shares and likes across the three platforms, demonstrating a robust and growing connection with its audience.

In addition to the official project social media activities mentioned above, Blue4All has benefited from partners and multipliers (such as related projects) posting and sharing about the project on their own LinkedIn, Facebook, and X channels during this time period. According to the internal tracking tool, 46 posts have been self-reported by the initiatives listed below, with a minimum total of 13,593 impressions. Such active participation by consortium institutions, as well as making further online links with relevant projects through tagging and cross-referencing will continue to be very helpful for Blue4all's communication and dissemination efforts.

Partner	Posts	Reach
MEDSEA	21	7,047
UTARTU	5	2,195

Partner	Posts	Reach
CMCC	10	1,803
OFB	2	958
CROSSGOV (related project)	1	904
MSP4BIO (related project)	3	353
SDU	1	333
WWF Adria	3	0 (none reported)
total	42	+13,593

Whilst both the official LinkedIn and X pages support the project's communication and dissemination efforts, LinkedIn has proven to perform better. Cumulatively, during the period from January 2023 to December 2024, LinkedIn and X gathered a total of 21, 253 impressions, with LinkedIn garnering over 4 times the impressions that X did, with 16,252 and 5,001 respectively. The YouTube channel was set up only three months ago and requires more engagement and promotion to increase its reach – thus far only two videos have been posted.

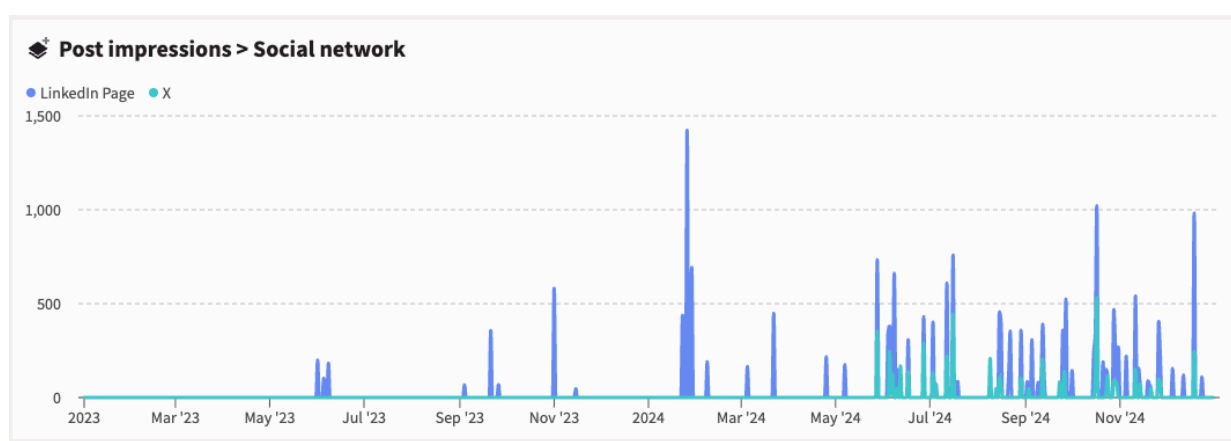


Figure 8 - Post Impressions LinkedIn and X (Source: Hootsuite)

The growth in followers can be seen on both X and LinkedIn below, however a discernible drop-off occurs for X in December 2024, as the follower count drops and stagnates. This can be linked to a largescale abandonment of the platform by the (global) public at this time due to growing ethical concerns. Conversely, LinkedIn follower counts continue to trend steadily upwards into 2025.

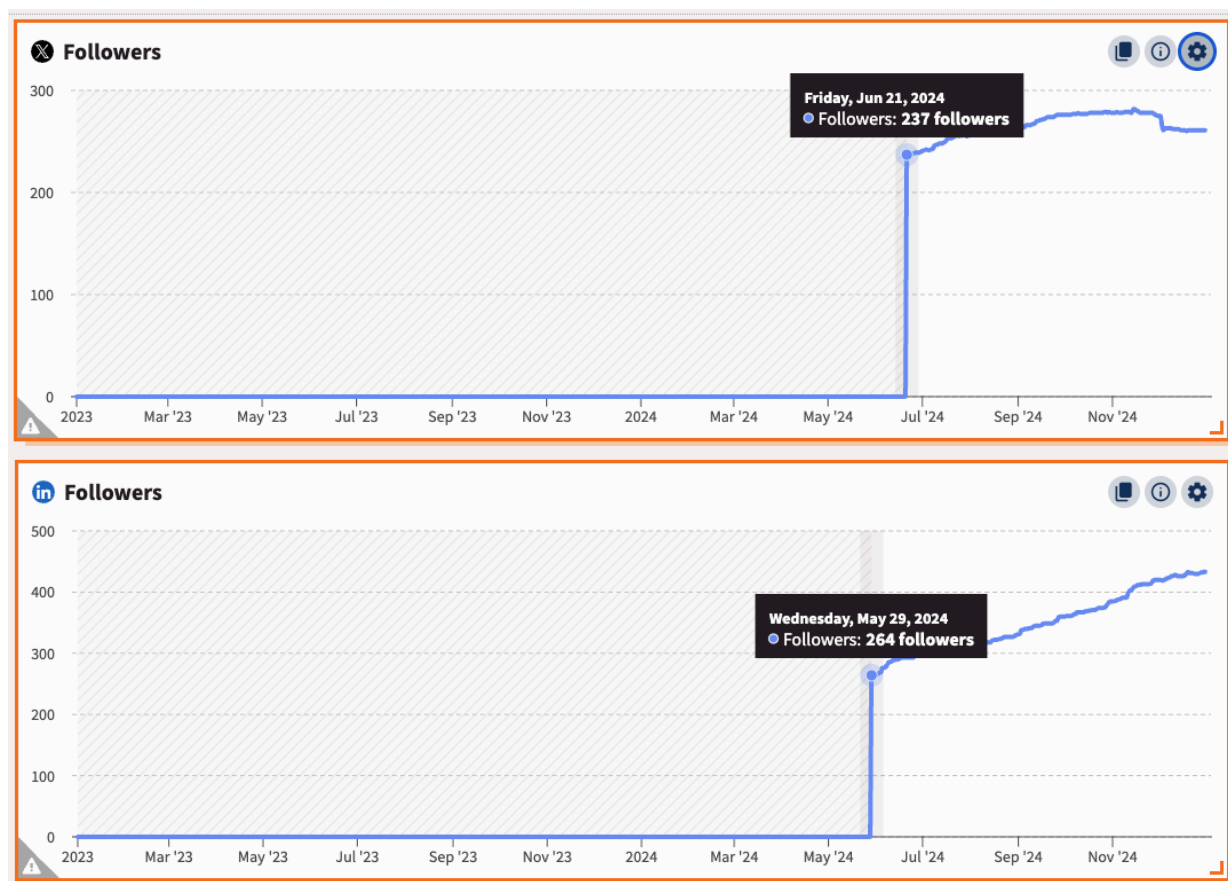


Figure 9 - Followers and change in followers over time Blue4all X and LinkedIn accounts (Source: Hootsuite)

Note: that no progression metrics available before 29 May 2024 for LinkedIn or before 21 June 2024 for X, as the project was not being tracked with the current analysis software, Hootsuite. However, each platform was initiated with a post about the Kick-off meeting in late January, and thus in gathered 264 followers (LinkedIn) and 237 followers (X) between January 2023 and May/June 2024.

We're moving!
This account will no longer be active. Follow us on these channels:

@BLUE4ALL
 @BLUE4ALL
 www.blue4all.eu

Subscribe to our newsletter

Join our community

Figure 10 - Announcement X (We're moving!)

A strategic shift was initiated with a gradual move away from the X platform. This decision reflects evolving dynamics on the platform, including declining engagement rates, reduced content visibility

due to algorithmic changes, and increasing concerns regarding the suitability of the platform for science-based communication and stakeholder engagement. Additionally, broader trends across the research and public sector communities indicate a reassessment of X as a dissemination channel, with many organisations reducing activity or discontinuing use due to concerns related to content moderation, reputational risk, and alignment with institutional values. From a project perspective, the platform has shown limited effectiveness in reaching key target audiences compared to LinkedIn, where engagement is more consistent and aligned with the professional and policy-oriented stakeholders relevant to Blue4All. As a result, resources are being reallocated towards platforms that provide greater impact, improved audience targeting, and stronger alignment with the project's communication objectives. Namely, LinkedIn and the set up of an Instagram channel under the umbrella of the MPA Community Network.

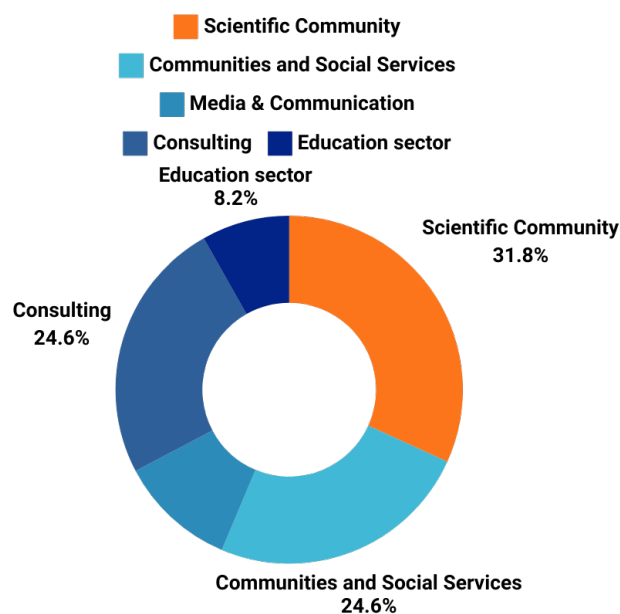


Figure 11 - Type of Audience Reached Through Blue4All Social Media (LinkedIn and X)

The audience is composed of diverse professional sectors, with a notable focus on **Research** (43%), **Consulting** (20%), and **Community and Social Services** (15%). Other key groups include professionals in **Media and Communication** (10%), **Marketing** (5%), and **Education, Product Management, and Engineering** (7% combined). This tailored strategy ensures content resonates with these audiences, using accessible and visually engaging formats to communicate scientific outputs effectively.

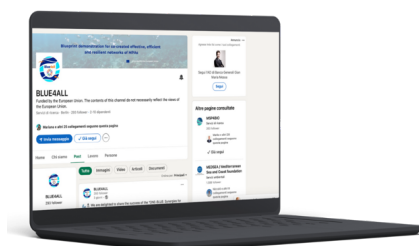


Figure 12 Project's LinkedIn Account

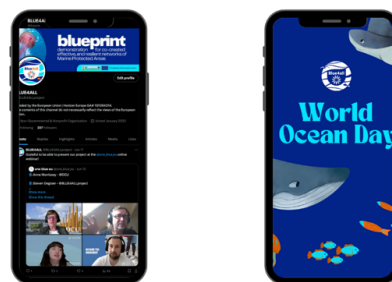


Figure 13 Project's X Account

Events and joint actions to maximize impact

Events have been a cornerstone of Blue4All's outreach strategy, serving as a platform to present its objectives and findings and to foster collaborations across diverse sectors. The project has actively participated in 55 events, delivering 39 presentations, demonstrations and trainings that have reached a cumulative audience of almost 3,000 attendees (2941 exactly). Moreover, Blue4All's presence at one mega-event in May 2024, the Blauw Innovatiedorp 2024 in Belgium, expanded possible outreach of the project to the over 200,000 attendees present, resulting in a combined possible total exposure of over 202, 941. These activities have significantly amplified Blue4All's visibility and strengthened its stakeholder network.

A notable component of this engagement has been Blue4All's co-organization of workshops at the [Blue Mission Banos Project's three Mission Arenas](#) held so far in [Gothenburg](#), [Riga](#), and [Amsterdam](#). These workshops brought together experts and practitioners to explore innovative tools and strategies for MPA governance and marine biodiversity restoration. By organising booths and workshops, and facilitating discussions and hands-on scenarios, these sessions highlighted policy recommendations, stakeholder engagement methodologies, and practical approaches to marine conservation. An important output of each Mission Arena is the regional Roadmap, established based on input from all workshops.

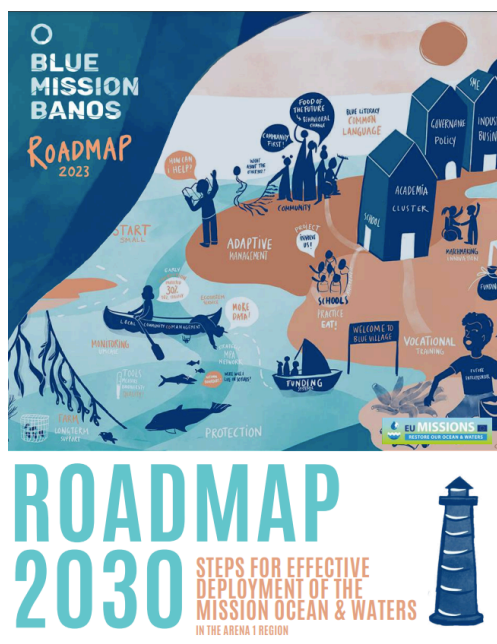


Figure 14 - Roadmap Mission Arena 1 & 2



Figure 15 - Workshop "Connecting Seas: Cooperation and Tools for EU MPAs" at Mission Arena 3

In addition to these contributions, Blue4All participated in key international events such as the [ESP Europe Conference](#) and the [UN Ocean Decade Conference](#). During the latter, the project collaborated with [MSP4BIO](#) and [ULTFARMS](#) to host the interactive workshop "[Become an MPA Manager for a Day](#)". This session engaged 80 participants in real-world scenarios to address MPA governance challenges, utilizing tools co-developed by the projects. The joint effort not only showcased innovative solutions but also reached a diverse audience, including policymakers, academics, and MPA managers, amplifying the collective impact of these collaborations.

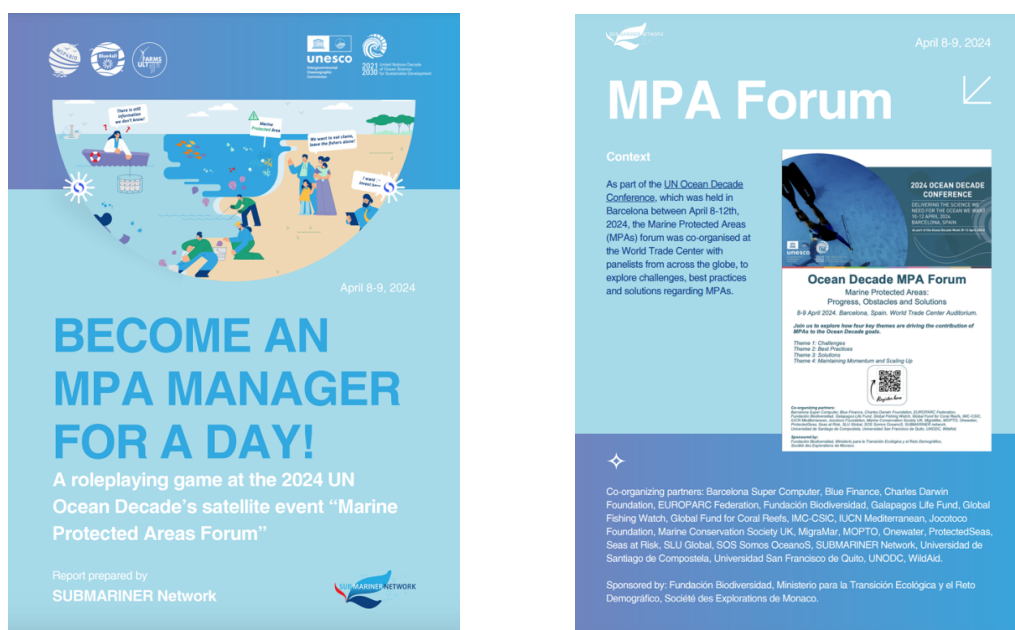


Figure 16 – Report Role Play at the MPA Forum



Figure 17 MPA Role Play Game at the UN Decade Conference

The project's dissemination activities have targeted a broad audience, with academia representing the largest segment, followed by industry stakeholders, authorities, and policymakers (as shown in Figure 16). Attendance at blue economy events in particular also contributed to the project receiving exposure to wider but relevant audiences. The "Blue Innovation Village 2024" hosted by the De Blauwe Cluster (Blue Cluster) from 23 to 26 May 2024, was a leading example of such an opportunity. As the largest maritime festival in Belgium, Blue4All was well placed with a promotional stand and presentation throughout the event, providing access and potential exposure to [the over 200,000 people](#) who attended and making important links with many blue economy organizations.

A comprehensive overview of all events and the associated communication and dissemination activities is available in Annex 1, providing detailed records for reference.

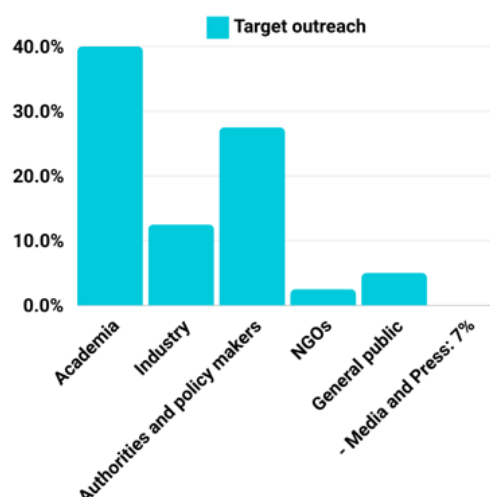


Figure 18 Audiences reached

Newsletter

The **Blue Horizons newsletter** has become a cornerstone of communication for advancing marine conservation initiatives. Initially launched as a joint effort between **Blue4All** and its sister project, **MSP4BIO**, the newsletter has had with 1,276 unique opens across the four 4 issues published in Sept 2023 (354 opens), December 2023 (266 opens) April 2024 (357 opens) and June

2024 (299 opens).

The subscriber base as of December 2024 is 172 – a small but very engaged audience, which is steadily growing, especially as further projects become involved in its production.

Recognizing the importance of collaborative approaches and synergies between projects, the new Blue Parks Ocean Mission project [BLUE CONNECT](#) has now joined the initiative, reflecting its shared focus on effective **MPA implementation and management**. This addition strengthens the newsletter's mission to serve as a unified platform for disseminating knowledge, sharing best practices, and engaging a broader audience in marine conservation efforts.

The partnership with BLUE CONNECT comes at a central moment as [MSP4BIO](#) **nears its conclusion**, ensuring the continuity of this vital communication tool while transitioning into a broader scope of initiatives. The redesigned format of the newsletter reflects this evolution, providing a more cohesive framework that aligns with the larger vision of the **MPA Network Initiative**. This initiative aims to foster a well-connected and effectively managed network of MPAs across Europe, building on the insights and achievements discussed in the deliverable.

In addition to its core distribution, **Blue4ALL's developments have been prominently featured in other newsletters**, such as the **SUBMARINER Network newsletter**, which boasts over 5,500 subscribers, the **ULTFARMS newsletter**, with more than 100 subscribers, and the MEDSEA monthly newsletter with almost 500 subscribers. These features not only amplify the reach of Blue4All's work to a combined subscriber base of 6272 (included Blue4All's internal base of 172, as reported by December 2024) but also reinforce the interconnected nature of efforts to enhance marine biodiversity and sustainable management practices through effective project cooperation.

Publications



Publications on Seaweed-Based Market Applications

Need some summer reading? The new publications are focused on a variety of topics such as regulatory assessment, ecosystem services recommendations for policy and investors, and an initial assessment of market application potential.

[Read the deliverables here](#)



When the Ukraine war entered the Oslofjord

The Norwegian government's decision to allow increased nitrogen discharges from an ammunition factory into the already distressed Oslofjord caused strong protests. In response, the Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA) proposed compensatory measures like financial support for environmental projects, technological innovation, and ecological restoration.

[Read the article here](#)



Dove Magazine on the Capo Carbonara MPA

In an article in the Italian travel magazine Dove, SUBMARINER project Blue4All's efforts to align the interests of institutions, the community, and operators, with the goal of achieving optimal integration between tourism and marine ecosystem preservation are highlighted.

[Read the article](#)



Challenges in Coastal Ecosystem Management

This article highlights the alarming challenges in coastal ecosystem management, such as the disappearance of 8 out of 10 birds over the past 50 years and the misclassification of ecological health due to inadequate metrics. The upcoming management plan for Norwegian marine areas emphasises the need for a holistic approach that includes more levels of biological diversity.

[Read the article here](#)

New SUBMARINER Projects

Figure 19 Submariner newsletter featuring Blue4all achievements



Figure 20 First edition of the Blue Horizon promotional card



Figure 21 Second edition of the Blue Horizons promotional card featuring the MPA Network and the projects involved

Website and Online Presence

A significant aspect of Blue4All's communication strategy has been the establishment of a robust and dynamic online presence, centered around its project website. As outlined in **Deliverable 6.1**, the website serves as a central hub for disseminating information and fostering stakeholder engagement (**Milestone 2**). During months 10 and 11 of the project, the homepage underwent a comprehensive redesign, and the overall structure was reformulated to enhance its user-friendliness and visual appeal. These updates were aimed at creating a more engaging and accessible platform for a diverse audience.

The website features a regularly updated homepage and a structured main menu, with sections that include:

- **About:** Provides detailed information about the project, including its objectives, research areas, consortium members, advisory board members, and its connection to Mission Ocean.
- **Case Studies:** Highlights descriptions of 25 MPAs and MPA networks (BLUE4ALL Information Sites and Living Labs), offering insight into the project's focus areas.



Figure 22 - Blue4ALL Website Living Labs Section

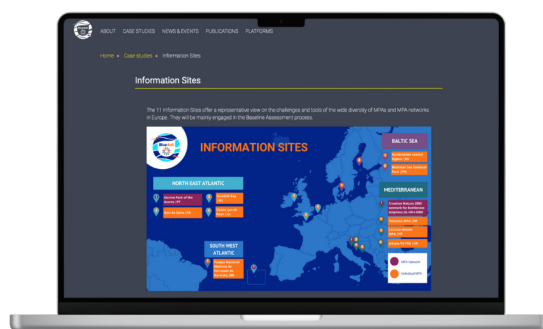


Figure 23 - Blue4ALL Website Information Sites Section

- **News & Events:** Updated with information on project-related activities, including workshops, conferences, and the communication-related activities partners have been involved with.
- **Publications:** Houses newsletters, deliverables, and other media resources. Summaries of key public deliverables are uploaded to ensure timely dissemination, pending formal approval.
- **Platforms:** Showcases tools and outputs related to Blue4All's initiatives.

The website has recorded a total of nearly **8,000 unique visits** from **90 countries** from its creation **until December 2024**, demonstrating its global reach and relevance. Most visitors come from Germany, the United States, and Italy, indicating strong engagement from both European and international audiences but also showcasing that the projects impact reaches beyond European borders. The structured content not only provides updates on news, events, and resources but also serves as a centralized platform for stakeholders and interested audiences to explore the project's test sites and Living Labs.

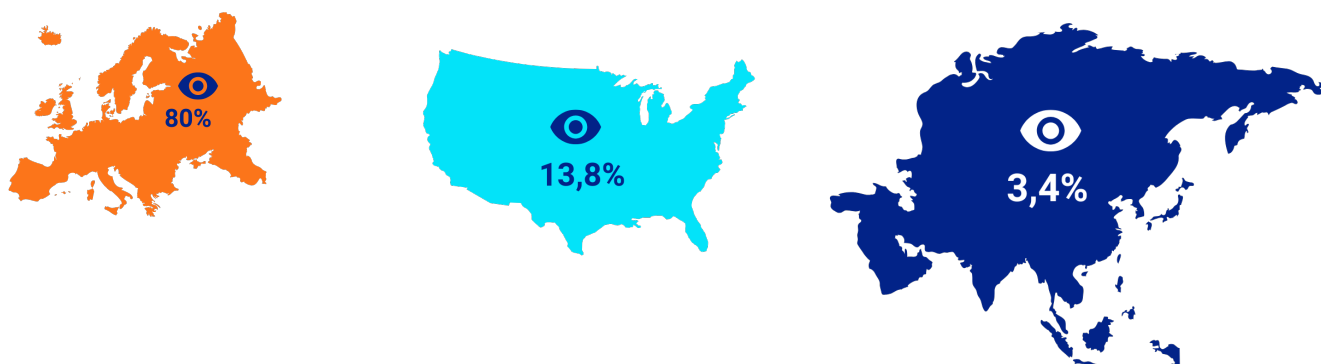


Figure 24 - Percentage of Website Views by Continent

By combining functionality and accessibility, the Blue4All website has positioned itself as a critical resource for stakeholders seeking comprehensive information about the project and its ongoing activities. This platform continues to be integral to Blue4All's efforts to ensure transparent and effective communication.



Figure 25 - Blue4ALL Website Total Visits until December 2024

Blue4all (Scientific) Publications

Within the first 23 months of the project, one peer-reviewed scientific article has been published under WP2 (Task 2.3): Van Schoubroeck, S., Anougmar, S., Finizola e Silva, M., Ala-Harja, V., Statzu, V., Everaert, G., Watt, L., Barboza, F. R., and Compennolle, T. (2024), [Valuation of ecosystem services in marine protected areas: a comprehensive review of methods and needed developments, published in Ecosystem Services](#). The article presents a systematic review of 100 peer-reviewed papers on ecosystem service valuation in MPAs and MPA networks. It examines both monetary and non-monetary valuation methods and highlights the importance of combining these approaches to better capture the full range of ecological and socio-economic values associated with MPAs. The review also identifies important methodological gaps, particularly regarding supporting and regulating ecosystem services, as well as non-use and option values, and outlines areas where further methodological development is needed. In addition to this initial publication, a strong pipeline of scientific outputs is in development. Between two and three academic papers are expected to be finalised and submitted or published in 2025, with a further four to five publications anticipated in 2026. These forthcoming articles will cover key thematic areas across work packages, reflecting the maturation of project results and analyses.

During the first 23 months, efforts have primarily focused on communication-oriented materials and intermediate outputs. These include visual and outreach materials such as posters and flyers, as well as summaries of key deliverables, which are publicly accessible via the project's publication page. While formal dissemination briefs have not yet been produced, this reflects the timing of the project's research outputs, with many of the core findings emerging toward the end of 2024 and continuing into 2025. Looking ahead, the project will place increased emphasis on translating scientific results into targeted dissemination formats. In particular, a series of science briefs and policy briefs are planned for development 2025–2026, drawing on peer-reviewed publications, key deliverables, and consolidated project findings. These outputs will support knowledge transfer to

policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders, ensuring that scientific insights are accessible and actionable. In parallel, a factsheet is currently under development, focusing on the outcomes of tool testing activities conducted across the Living Labs. This will provide a concise and practical overview of methodologies and applications, further strengthening the project's dissemination portfolio.

WP6 Management and internal organization

To ensure accurate and comprehensive reporting, Blue4All has implemented a systematic approach to collecting dissemination data from its partners. This process includes structured monthly updates requested by the WP6 leader, where partners are encouraged to share details of their communication activities. These updates are complemented by discussions during WP6 meetings, core team meetings, and General Assembly sessions, providing opportunities for partners to report on their dissemination efforts.

All collected data is logged in a centralized Communication-Dissemination Excel sheet, which serves as a comprehensive repository of the project's communication activities. This sheet tracks events, publications, social media posts, and other dissemination outputs, ensuring a detailed and organized record of achievements (see Annex 1).

Reflections on Future Improvements

While Blue4All has made substantial progress in its dissemination activities, there are several targeted improvements planned to further optimize impact and engagement.

First, the Blue4All website, while performing well, can be enhanced to provide a more dynamic and engaging experience for stakeholders. The event calendar will be more regularly updated in the future, featuring activities from key marine conservation hubs such as the Mission Ocean Blue Parks Community, SUBMARINER Network, Marine Training Platform, MPA Europe project, Bio Protect project, BLUE CONNECT project, Protect Baltic, EU MSP Platform, and other relevant platforms. To ensure that we can regularly update the event calendar on the website, an additional Excel sheet has been set up, where information on upcoming events related to Blue4All will be tracked through partner input. Furthermore, a session at the General Assembly will be dedicated to mapping relevant communication and dissemination events and other opportunities in 2025. Additional improvements, such as an increase in frequent news updates, interactive polls, and downloadable resources, will make the website more engaging and useful for visitors.

The newsletter remains a vital tool but requires focused efforts to expand its subscriber base beyond the current 172. Future improvements will include targeted campaigns leveraging sister project networks, social media promotions, and event visibility. By incorporating exclusive content and interactive formats, we aim to make the newsletter more appealing and valuable to a broader audience.

Social media efforts, while impactful, could benefit from more diverse and interactive content, integrating a structured three-pillar strategy. The objective is to increase engagement and raise awareness of MPAs, while contributing to the project's dissemination and uptake objectives.

Pillar 1: MPA Solutions Hub Promotion

This pillar is aligned with the timeline of the MPA Solutions Hub / Blueprint platform launch and will be implemented as a dedicated content series, including:

- Introduction to the Hub (short video tutorials)
- Guidance on its use
- Presentation of specific tools, features, and the challenges they address
- Testimonials or stories from partners involved from behind the tools (tagging them for increased reach).

By incorporating real-life use cases and dynamic video tutorial content, this approach aims to make the platform more accessible and relevant for MPA managers, in turn supporting dissemination and uptake.

Pillar 2: Case Studies and Living Labs

This pillar focuses on showcasing project results and practical insights through:

- Success stories from case studies and Living Labs
- Re-promotion of Living Lab video content
- Recaps of activities and key outcomes
- Geographically structured content reflecting different project sites

The objective is to communicate project results in a clear and accessible manner, while reinforcing the project's practical impact and visibility.

Pillar 3: MPA Awareness and Engagement

This pillar focuses on awareness-raising and community engagement through:

- The travelling photo exhibition and contest, using images to tell MPA stories
- Sharing community and stakeholder perspectives and voices
- Educational content on MPA management (i.e. including interactive quizzes)
- Alignment with relevant international awareness days
- Content on project events and their outcomes

This content stream aims to broaden audience reach, encourage interaction, and support capacity building by connecting audiences with experiences and perspectives from MPA communities.

Lastly, while the project's event participation has been strong, adopting a strategic selection process will ensure a greater return on investment. By focusing on high-profile conferences and workshops that align closely with Blue4All's objectives, we can maximize visibility and strengthen stakeholder engagement.

These planned improvements will establish a more cohesive and efficient communication framework, enhancing the project's visibility, outreach, and overall impact.

Proposed Next Steps

To address these challenges and build on the successes achieved so far, Blue4All will focus on the following actions:

- **Enhancing the Website:** Develop a dynamic and regularly updated event calendar, integrate events from key marine conservation platforms, and add interactive features to boost engagement.
- **Expanding Newsletter Reach:** Launch targeted campaigns to grow the subscriber base, feature exclusive content, and collaborate with sister projects to promote the newsletter across broader networks.

Optimizing Social Media Strategy: Increase the frequency and diversity of posts, provide real-time updates during events, and focus on interactive and visual content to foster deeper engagement based on the new Excel tab, meant to map the upcoming activities of the entire consortiums. Content on LinkedIn will follow a clear and consistent structure, with posts organised into thematic pillars, each supported by a dedicated posting schedule.

- **Strengthening Event Participation:** Adopt a more strategic approach to event selection, focusing on high-impact conferences and workshops that align with Blue4All's objectives and priorities.
- **Develop an Exploitation Strategy:** In 2025 we will focus on developing an exploitation strategy to ensure the legacy of the Blue4All project.

3. Update of the Communication and Dissemination Strategy

The original Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the Blue4All project were set out during the proposal phase, as well as the development of **D6.1, the Communication and Dissemination Strategy**, to measure the effectiveness of our efforts in raising awareness and promoting project outcomes. As the project has progressed, several factors have made it necessary to update these KPIs:

1. **Evolving Definitions of Indicators:** During the implementation phase, some KPI definitions have evolved.
2. **Refined Ambitions:** Based on initial results, we have identified certain indicators that are easily achievable under current conditions. To drive further growth in visibility, reach, and impact, we have revised these targets to be more ambitious while remaining achievable.
3. **Stakeholder Needs and Feedback:** Continuous engagement with stakeholders has highlighted new priorities, such as the need for increased (transparency in) communication with the stakeholder engagement groups (SEGs) and the effectiveness of (re)presenting the Blue4All project and its results at events. These priorities have influenced the revision of our KPIs.

The updated KPIs were developed in collaboration with all Work Package leads and the WP6 team, to ensure that the revised targets are both desirable and feasible to achieve during the second half of the Blue4All project. The visual below highlights the updated KPIs and their new targets (a more comprehensive KPI table can be found as Annex 2).

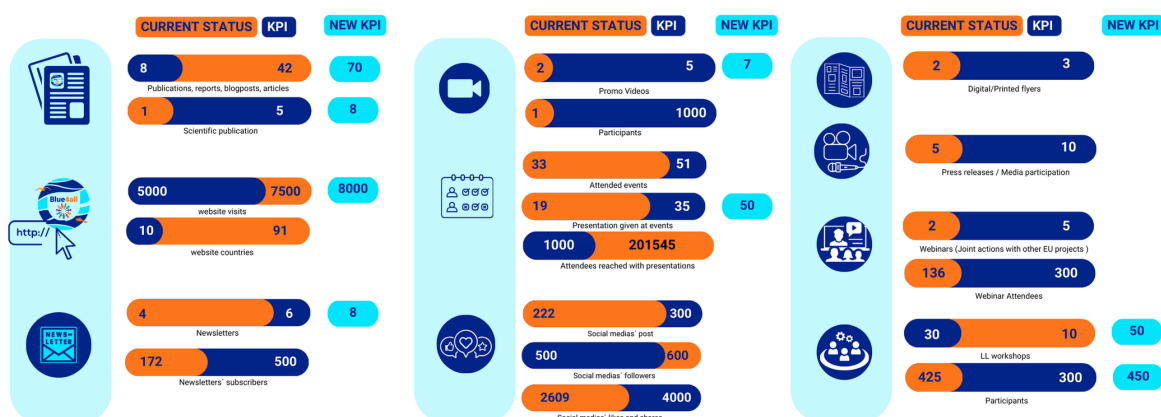


Figure 26 - KPIs and their updated targets

Explanations for Updated KPIs

Publications

The KPI for publications, which includes blog posts, reports, and articles, has been significantly increased from **8 to 70**. This adjustment reflects the recognition that these formats have been, and will continue to be, essential tools for communicating project progress and outcomes. Blog posts and reports allow us to quickly share detailed project updates, insights, and findings with our audience, bridging the gap between quick social media updates and long-form academic publications. Expanding this target ensures the project remains highly visible and actively engages with diverse audiences.

Scientific Publications (Manuscripts)

The target for scientific manuscripts has been increased from **5 to 8**. Following discussions with academic contributors, it was agreed that a more ambitious target is both necessary and achievable. As the project progresses, the results being generated will provide significant opportunities for dissemination within the scientific community. While not all manuscripts are expected to be formally published before the project's conclusion, the increased target reflects the critical role of these outputs in highlighting Blue4All's contributions to scientific knowledge and policy development.

Website Visits

The KPI for website visits has been revised from **5,000 to 8,000** to reflect the already achieved traffic levels and the anticipated growth in audience engagement. This adjustment accounts for the impact of enhanced website content and more strategic dissemination efforts which are expected to drive additional traffic during the project's second phase.

Newsletter

- **Number of Newsletters:** The original KPI of **6 newsletters** has been increased to **8 newsletters**, ensuring the publication of at least 2 newsletters per year throughout the project's duration. With the Newsletter's evolving identity and a growing community, a higher frequency will help maintain momentum and provide regular updates.

- **People Reached (Total Opens):** The KPI for newsletter opens has been updated from **800 to 2,000**, reflecting a stronger focus on growing the audience and expanding the project's network. Efforts to promote the newsletter, combined with high-quality and more clustered content among projects, aim to achieve this increased reach.

Promo Videos

The KPI for promo videos has been updated from **5 to 7** to better reflect the expanded scope of planned video outputs. Videos are an engaging medium for effectively communicating key messages to diverse audiences, combining visual and narrative elements. The updated target accounts for:

- The completed **Blue4All Project promo video** and **MPA Network Platform video**.
- Four additional **Living Lab videos** (one for each Living Lab) to communicate their unique contributions.
- A final video summarizing project outcomes.

Events (Presented)

The KPI for events presented has been increased from **30 to 50** to reflect the project's growing presence and strong collaboration with other initiatives. Blue4All has exceeded initial expectations, with team members being invited to speak at numerous external events. The enhanced target reflects the project's success in building partnerships and securing visibility through collaborative opportunities.

Living Labs (Interaction/Events)

The project's KPIs for Living Lab activities were significantly increased to better reflect the level of engagement required to ensure stakeholder buy-in and support co-creation processes. Specifically, the number of Living Lab events and interactions was adjusted from **10 to 50**, and the target for participant engagement was increased from **300 to 450**.

These changes were informed by the development of **D4.2: Living Lab Engagement Plan**, which emphasized the importance of more frequent and meaningful interactions to onboard stakeholders effectively and facilitate collaboration within the Living Labs. The initial plan underestimated the scale of engagement necessary, but the updated targets align with the observed need for increased interaction. Furthermore, the project leveraged existing stakeholder networks within MPAs wherever possible, contributing to a higher-than-anticipated number of stakeholders being reached.

While the current KPI framework primarily focuses on quantitative metrics, we acknowledge the importance of complementing these with qualitative indicators to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of communication and dissemination activities. In the next phase of the project, we aim to incorporate measures that assess the value and effectiveness of outputs alongside their reach. For instance, qualitative insights may include user feedback on digital platforms, assessments of content relevance, and stakeholder perspectives on events or materials. These additional qualitative measures will be tracked starting 2025 and reported on in the second Communication and Dissemination Report, ensuring a more holistic evaluation of our progress and impact.

Further Changes to the Communication and Dissemination Strategy

As part of the evolving communication and dissemination efforts, further changes have been introduced to ensure the long-term impact and legacy of the Blue4All project. One key update involves advancing the timeline for the development of the **Exploitation Plan (D6.4)**. Originally

scheduled for completion in Month 44, the first draft will now be prepared by **Month 36**. This proactive approach aims to facilitate early planning and implementation of strategies to exploit the project's results effectively. By prioritizing this aspect, the project will ensure that its outputs and findings are not only disseminated during its duration but also contribute to a lasting legacy. Although legacy-building efforts have already been initiated, these will be formally outlined and consolidated in the Exploitation Plan, providing a comprehensive framework for sustaining the project's impact beyond its conclusion.

4. Blue4All and Mission Ocean

The Blue4All project has actively engaged with the Mission Ocean & Waters (MO) initiative, aligning its communication and dissemination efforts with the broader objectives of the Mission. A key aspect of this alignment has been the integration of MO's visual identity into Blue4All's communication outputs. By incorporating MO's branding and visual materials, the project ensures consistency and mutual reinforcement of key messages across various platforms. Notably, the Blue4All website features a dedicated [Mission Ocean](#) section, which provides an overview of the Mission, its objectives, and Blue4All's role within it.

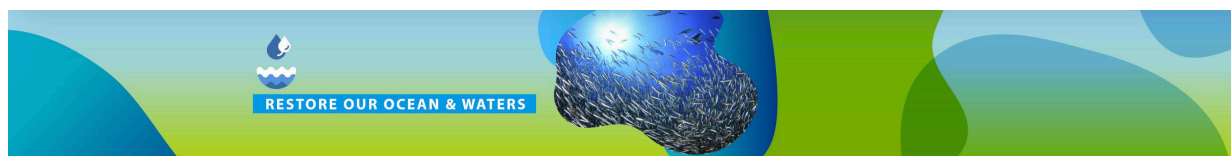


Figure 27 - Mission Ocean Visual Identity

Blue4All has participated in multiple Mission Ocean events, establishing itself as an active contributor. The project has been presented at all **Blue Parks Community workshops** held in 2023 and March 2024. During these workshops, Blue4All delivered project presentations, participated in discussions, and contributed insights to support the community's work. In dedicated meetings with the Mission Ocean Implementation Platform, Blue4All representatives explored collaborative pathways for creating the **MPA Managers and Communities Networking Platform**, considering how to include a dedicated space to showcase Blue Parks project solutions and discussing synergies with the **MPA Network** and the Blue Parks Community.

The project has also taken a leading role in the **Mission Ocean BlueMission BANOS Arena events** in the Baltic and North Sea regions. Blue4All partners actively organized and spoke at these events, presenting project results, engaging with regional stakeholders, and seeking input to validate its work. At the **Arena 3 event** held in Amsterdam on 26-27 November 2024, Blue4All hosted a dedicated session with MSP4BIO, Blue Connect, MPA Europe, and BioProtect. This session focused on identifying project synergies fostering future collaboration, and exploring ways to maximize impact through joint contributions to national, regional, and local policies and decision-making processes. In another workshop of the same event, Blue4All presented its work on business and financial models for MPAs providing context for discussion on financing effective marine conservation.

Blue4All has also built strong connections with other projects and initiatives. This includes partnerships with **MedPan** (part of the Advisory Board), **HELCOM**, and active collaborations with projects such as **Ocean Citizen**, **Protect Baltic**, **MSP4BIO**, **MPA Europe**, and **Prep4Blue**, as well as newly awarded projects such as **Blue Connect**, **BioProtect**, and **Pharos**. Through participation in

MSP4BIO Science-Policy Dialogues, Blue4All has contributed to joint policy briefs aimed at improving MPA management. Furthermore, the project has co-organized various joint events, both online and in person, with these initiatives. Strong links have also been established with **MSP projects**, particularly through Think Tank activities, reinforcing Blue4All's role as an important player in promoting synergies and driving collective impact.



5. MPA Community Network

The MPA Community Network (MPA-CN) is envisioned as a transformative initiative to streamline and connect the efforts of MPA-related projects across Europe's sea basins. Its goal is to foster synergies among projects, provide a unified voice for MPA stakeholders, and serve as a one-stop shop for MPA managers seeking knowledge, tools, and resources. While rooted in EU-funded initiatives, the network will also actively engage with relevant non-EU and non-EU-funded initiatives, thereby broadening its scope and increasing its added value as an inclusive and globally relevant community. The network is designed as a long-term legacy and exploitation mechanism of the Blue4All project, ensuring that project results, tools, and knowledge continue to be accessible, actively used, and further developed beyond the project's lifetime. In this context, it aims to move beyond project-specific dissemination and instead



Figure 28 - MPA Community Network Logo

establish a sustained, practice-oriented community that supports ongoing collaboration and knowledge exchange. The MPA Community Network will function as a dynamic space enabling interactions among MPA managers and between MPA managers and key stakeholders, including local communities, policymakers, and representatives from blue economy sectors. Through the MPA Solutions Hub (developed under WP5) it aims to centralise, in one accessible space, relevant outputs and tools developed for Marine Protected Area managers and their communities by existing (EU-funded) projects targeting ocean conservation and restoration. In doing so, it establishes a solution-oriented, user-driven entry point that extends beyond the scope of individual projects, while leaving room for broader contributions and the development of thematic collaboration as the community evolves. In addition, the network is intended to initiate and strengthen cross-project collaboration, reducing duplication of efforts in demonstration sites and resource development, while encouraging a more integrated, “beyond project silos” approach. This is particularly relevant in the context of achieving the objectives of Mission Ocean, especially Goal 1 on protecting and restoring marine and freshwater ecosystems and biodiversity in Europe by 2030. Finally, the MPA Community Network aims to provide a practical and accessible environment for MPA managers to exchange experiences, share lessons learned, seek mentorship, and access project outputs, thereby supporting more effective and adaptive management of MPAs. The

The MPA Community Network aims to function as a collaboration, networking, and knowledge-sharing initiative, which:

- Strengthens networking and engagement among MPA managers and relevant stakeholders, including local communities, policymakers, and blue economy actors.
- Provides a central access point to relevant resources, tools, and project outputs, improving the usability and uptake of existing knowledge.
- Supports cross-project collaboration and reduce siloed approaches by encouraging alignment and exchange between EU-funded initiatives and related global efforts.

- Increases the visibility of ongoing initiatives, results, and opportunities relevant to MPA management.

Public-facing Structures of the MPA Community Network

The MPA Community Network is designed as a multi-layered initiative, combining internal coordination mechanisms with externally visible tools and services. In addition to internal processes (such as member communication, coordination meetings, and collaboration among participating projects) the MPA-CN is built around two main public-facing structures that support its core functions of networking, knowledge exchange, and dissemination:

1. **The Website:** The website (together with its social media channels on LinkedIn and Instagram) serves as the main information space of the MPA Community Network. It acts as the central entry point through which stakeholders can learn about the network, its objectives, and ongoing activities. It provides updates and news, highlights the projects involved, and showcases ongoing collaborations, thereby strengthening the visibility and identity of the MPA-CN as a coherent, Europe-wide initiative. In addition, the website will integrate access to the MPA Solutions Hub, a centralized hub that will house/feature tools, resources, and outputs related to MPA management. This hub will provide easy access to guidelines, best practices, case studies, and other valuable materials, ensuring that users can quickly find and utilize the tools they need. By integrating these resources in one place, the hub will serve as an essential reference point for MPA managers and their collaborators.
2. **The Networking Platform:** A dedicated digital space for MPA managers to connect, share experiences, and collaborate with one another. It will also facilitate interactions between MPA managers and stakeholders, including local communities, policymakers, and blue economy actors. The Networking Platform will be hosted on [BlueBioMatch](#).

By creating a shared brand and visual identity for MPA-related projects in Europe, the network further aims to consolidate efforts, increase visibility, and improve recognition of project outputs. Current collaborations already include Blue4All, BlueConnect, BioProtect, and MSP4BIO, with ongoing discussions and synergies being developed with the Pharos, Protect Baltic, and MPA Europe projects. Together, these efforts contribute to positioning the network as a comprehensive and coordinated resource for MPA management across Europe.

Building on Existing Networks: The Added Value of the MPA Manager and Local Community Network

In Europe, several regional networks facilitate collaboration among MPA managers, providing (mostly offline) platforms for knowledge exchange and capacity building. Notable among these are:

1. **MedPAN (Mediterranean Protected Areas Network):** MedPAN is a network of MPA managers in the Mediterranean, established to promote effective management of MPAs and ensure the conservation of marine biodiversity in the region. The network facilitates experience sharing, provides technical support, and develops cooperation among Mediterranean partners. Activities include data collection, management, analysis, and dissemination, as well as organizing thematic workshops and training sessions to enhance the practical skills of MPA managers.

2. **HELCOM MPA Management Network (Baltic Sea):** In the Baltic Sea, HELCOM has established an MPA Management Network (EN MPA MANET). This network aims to enhance the management of Baltic Sea MPAs by facilitating regional cooperation, experience exchange, and capacity building among MPA managers. It supports the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and works towards an ecologically coherent and effectively managed network of MPAs in the region.

Identified Gaps and Added Value of the MPA Community Network:

Despite the existence of these regional networks, there is currently no Europe-wide online platform that streamlines communication and collaboration among MPA managers across all sea basins. The Blue4All project's needs and baseline assessment revealed a strong desire among MPA managers to better facilitate discussions and cooperation across different sectors, MPAs, and countries, all working towards the common goal of marine conservation. The MPA Community Network seeks to address these gaps by adopting a complementary and integrative approach. Rather than establishing a new standalone network, it aims to act as a connecting layer across existing initiatives, linking projects, regions, and stakeholder groups where relevant.

In particular, its added value lies in:

- Supporting exchange across sea basins and projects, where opportunities arise beyond regional and project-specific contexts.
- Complementing event-based interactions with additional channels that enable more continuous engagement over time.
- Encouraging engagement between different stakeholder groups, including conservation actors, local communities, and blue economy stakeholders, where relevant to MPA management.
- Improving access to existing knowledge and outputs, by bringing together resources and tools developed across projects in a more structured way.

In parallel, the development of the MPA Community Network has taken place alongside other thematic initiatives at the European level with related objectives, notably the European Blue Parks Community and the BioAgora Biodiversity Knowledge Network. From the outset, exchanges have been initiated with these initiatives to explore potential synergies, ensure complementarity, and avoid duplication of efforts. While each initiative operates within its own mandate and scope, ongoing dialogue has helped to identify areas of mutual interest, and collaboration opportunities will continue to be explored as these initiatives evolve.

Ensuring Effective Networking Across Communities

The MPA Community Network functions as a practical knowledge transfer and networking mechanism, facilitating exchange between MPA managers, projects, and relevant stakeholders. Rather than relying on a single platform, networking within the MPA-CN is supported through a combination of complementary channels. This approach reflects the reality that MPA managers often operate under significant capacity and time constraints, while also working within diverse governance, institutional, and regional contexts. As a result, a more flexible and adaptive

approach is required to effectively support interaction and engagement. To ensure meaningful and sustained networking between MPA managers and the wider community, the MPA-CN operates through:

- Online meetings: Regular online member meetings and cross-project exchanges.
- Presence at in-person engagement and events: Networking and dissemination is reinforced through targeted participation in regional and international events (for example HELCOM, Croatia MPA workshops), recognising that trust-building and collaboration often require face-to-face interaction.
- Direct contact channels (website and email): The network acts as an intermediary, receiving requests and facilitating connections beyond formal platforms.
- Targeted matchmaking and direct facilitation: The consortium actively connects stakeholders based on needs and opportunities (for example linking MPAs with NGOs, funders, or other MPAs).
- The BlueBioMatch networking group: A structured digital environment supporting continuous exchange (see section below).
- Interactive tools and formats: Tools such as the MPA games support engagement in workshops and events, creating alternative and accessible entry points for networking.

Online Networking space on BlueBioMatch

The Networking Platform, hosted on [BlueBioMatch](#), constitutes one of the key tools supporting interaction within the MPA Community Network. It provides a structured digital environment where MPA managers, stakeholders such as blue economy sectors and policy makers, and project representatives can connect, exchange information, and follow up on interactions initiated through other channels of the network.

To join the platform, users must sign up for BlueBioMatch, a well-established digital ecosystem that supports collaboration and information sharing. Once signed up, users can access the Networking Platform through the working groups section of BlueBioMatch.

Figure 29 - BlueBioMatch Registration

Platform Functions

The Networking Platform is equipped with a range of features to facilitate interaction, information sharing, and collaboration:

- **Live Feed:** A central space where the platform's purpose is explained, partner organizations and contact points are introduced, and members can post updates. Members can interact with content through comments and likes.
- **Members Directory:** A complete list of platform members, allowing users to view profiles and initiate private conversations through live chat.
- **Direct Messaging and Group Chats:** Users can communicate one-on-one through a private messaging function and also create group chats for collaborative discussions, enabling more personalized and flexible interactions.
- **Mentoring Function:** The platform includes a mentorship feature designed to pair MPA managers with experienced tool developers or other MPA managers who have already applied certain tools. This function facilitates knowledge sharing, provides tailored support, and helps promote the effective implementation of tools and strategies across different MPAs.
- **Events Section:** A space where members can share and access information about relevant events to encourage participation and networking.
- **News Section:** Dedicated to updates, announcements, and project news shared by members.
- **Media Center:** A repository for important documents, such as public deliverables, guidelines, and other resources, uploaded by SUBMARINER.
- **Forums:** Discussion spaces that facilitate thematic and regional interactions. Forums are organized into:
 - **Regional Forums:** Baltic Sea, North Sea/Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Black Sea.
 - **Thematic Forums:** Tools for MPA Management
 - Additional can be created for specific groups, Living Labs or Topics, as deemed necessary by Contact Points or the consortium later on.

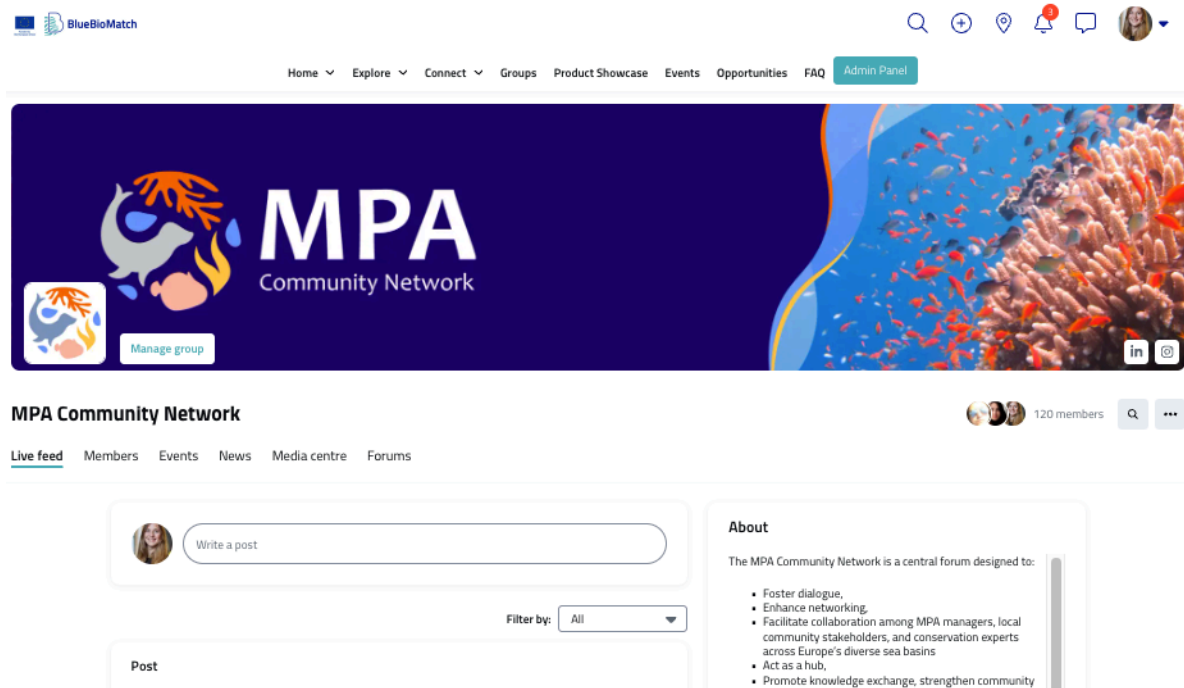


Figure 30 - MPA Networking Platform on BlueBioMatch

Platform Sustainability and Management

The platform's sustainability and effective operation are supported through collaborative management:

- **Administration:** SUBMARINER serves as the main administrator, managing member access and maintaining the technical backend.
- **Engagement:** WWF Adria will invite Living Lab contact points to join, supported by CMCC, which will prepare invitation templates for use with stakeholder engagement groups. SUBMARINER and CMCC will ensure the platform remains active by posting bi-weekly updates, engaging with members, and linking relevant stakeholders. Contact Points will actively involve their respective Living Labs and stakeholder groups.
- **Content Contribution:** Task contributors from T6.4 (CMCC, RBNS, SUB, SDU, SYKE, UCD, UNIPA, UTARTU, VLIZ, HELCOM, WWF Adria, IUCN, and MEDSEA) will provide regular content, upload materials to the Media Center, and monitor platform activity. To ensure that the forums within the Networking Platform remain active and engaging, each forum were assigned to a partner from the corresponding region or thematic area. These designated partners will act as moderators, responsible for fostering discussions, encouraging participation, and ensuring that the forums remain relevant and dynamic.

Platform Access and User Onboarding

The Networking Platform is a closed community, restricted to approved users to ensure a focused and relevant membership.

- Interested users must first sign up for BlueBioMatch apply to join the platform's working group.
- Applications will be reviewed by SUBMARINER to ensure alignment with the platform's objectives.
- Approved members will receive access to the platform, supported by a video tutorial to guide them through its features.
- An invitation campaign will formally invite identified stakeholders and partner projects via social media and Newsletter #6 – the launching campaign for the Networking Platform is planned for February 2025.

Monitoring and Feedback

To ensure the platform's success, regular monitoring and feedback mechanisms will be implemented:

- **User Feedback:** Bi-annual surveys and feedback forms will capture user experiences and suggestions for improvement.
- **Engagement Metrics:** Metrics such as user activity, forum participation, and content uploads will be tracked to assess platform performance and inform adjustments.
- **Progress Updates:** Results and updates will be included in Deliverables 6.3 and 6.5 to ensure alignment with Blue4All's broader goals.

Reflections on BlueBioMatch and Alternatives

While **BlueBioMatch** provides a strong foundation for hosting the Networking Platform, feedback from partners has identified areas for improvement to better align it with the needs of MPA managers. Currently, the platform feels tailored to the blue bioeconomy, which may be less

immediately appealing to conservation-focused users. However, this focus on the blue economy is also a significant strength. One of the major gaps identified in MPA management is the insufficient communication and interaction among MPA managers themselves, and between MPA managers and blue economy sectors, particularly around MPA measures, sustainable use, and co-management. A platform that brings these actors together in the same space is precisely what is needed. Once the tools developed across EU MPA projects are available through the MPA Solution Hub, the platform will serve as the natural gateway for MPA managers to discover and access them while simultaneously connecting with relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, the presence of active communities on the platform, such as the Algae Community (335 member) and the Ocean Art and Science Collective (223 members), demonstrates its capacity to support dynamic networking and sustained engagement across different stakeholder groups.

To enhance its appeal to conservation stakeholders, adjustments could include revising the visual identity, slogan, and navigation to prominently feature marine conservation themes and ensure accessibility to MPA-focused resources and tools. Importantly, this limitation is already being addressed at platform level through a planned rebranding process. BlueBioMatch will be undergoing a transition towards “BlueActionMatch” in 2026 (under the BlueActionBANOS project), which reflects a strategic shift from a sector-specific blue bioeconomy focus to a broader, mission-oriented platform supporting conservation, restoration, depollution, and sustainable blue economy transitions. This rebranding aims to remove perceived entry barriers for stakeholders outside the blue bioeconomy (such as marine conservation actors, local authorities, and MPA managers) while maintaining the existing user base and functionalities. The transition is guided by the principles of continuity and inclusivity, ensuring that the platform expands its scope without losing its established community and trust base.

The Networking Platform hosted on BlueBioMatch presents a promising opportunity to foster collaboration among MPA managers and stakeholders. However, ensuring active engagement from MPA managers remains a practical challenge, given their already demanding workloads. To mitigate the risk of limited buy-in, it will be essential to explore strategies for integrating the platform into existing workflows and demonstrating its relevance to their immediate challenges. Offering hands-on training and tailored support could further emphasize its value, helping to secure the platform’s effectiveness as a collaborative tool. Therefore, meetings with Living Lab contact points and the Living Lab MPA managers will be set up to finalize a buy-in strategy.

Furthermore, the platform’s current sign-up process has been identified as a challenge, particularly for MPA managers. Although the platform already benefits from an established user base within the blue economy sector, and the registration process has already been refined to appeal to MPA managers, it requires additional efforts to attract MPA managers and demonstrate its relevance for marine conservation. Moreover, while it is relatively easy to engage other projects and initiatives to collaborate on the platform, ensuring individual MPA managers join and actively participate remains a key priority. To address these challenges, we are pursuing multiple strategies to facilitate MPA managers' onboarding and encourage active participation:

1. **Engagement Through Contact Points:** The Contact Points play a critical role in reaching out to Living Labs and Information Sites. They can encourage their Stakeholder Engagement Groups to join the platform, and initial discussions have already indicated interest from these groups.

2. **Direct Invitations to Networks:** Leveraging our existing networks, we will send personalized invitation links directly to MPA managers and stakeholders. These invitations will highlight the benefits of joining the platform and provide step-by-step instructions to simplify the process.
3. **Assisting with Sign-Up:** In specific cases and with the MPA manager's consent, we can facilitate the process by signing up users on their behalf, removing the burden of navigating the current sign-up system. While this approach is not scalable, it can be highly effective for key individuals or groups.
4. **Strategic Planning at the General Assembly (GA):** During the next GA, a dedicated strategy session will be held to discuss and refine the onboarding plan. We will gather input from CPs, MPA managers to identify additional ideas and solutions for overcoming barriers to participation.

In addition, regional collaboration with networks like **MedPAN** and **HELCOM** can expand engagement, bring in valuable expertise as well as entice MPA managers to join the platform. BlueBioMatch can further increase its relevance by ensuring forums are purpose-driven, actively moderated at an institutional level, and tailored to regional and thematic needs. Features like mentorship pairing between MPA managers and tool developers, as well as integrating regional and cross-sectoral discussions, can solidify BlueBioMatch as a critical hub for connecting MPA managers, local communities, and blue economy actors.

Table 1 - Alternative Hosting Platforms for the MPA Networking Platform

Hosting Platform	Pros	Cons
Mission Implementation Blue Parks Community Portal	- Centralised initiative linked to EU Mission Ocean - Easy reach to projects - High-level visibility and policy relevance - Contains solution space for projects to submit their solutions	- Interactions are largely event-based and episodic (e.g. webinars, annual meetings) - Limited space for continuous, user-driven exchange - Primarily project-driven, with limited direct involvement of MPA managers and local stakeholders Focused mainly on Blue Parks and closely related initiatives, limiting broader cross-sectoral engagement
LinkedIn	- Widely used and familiar platform with low entry barriers - Large and diverse professional user base	- A LinkedIn group was created early on but generated little to no engagement from MPA managers. - The platform does not support focused, sustained peer exchange. - Its generic nature limits relevance for marine conservation and MPA needs. - It lacks key features such as structured knowledge sharing,

		working groups, and mentorship tools, which are available on BlueBioMatch.
Blue4all Project Website	• Full control over content and structure • Strong alignment with project outputs and branding • Suitable for dissemination of results and resources	• Less visibility • Limited sustainability beyond project duration (typically discontinued 5 years after project end) • Risk of low uptake due to need to build a user base from scratch

These comparisons highlight that while several alternatives offer valuable functionalities, none provide a single solution that combines structured interaction, knowledge organisation, cross-sectoral engagement, and long-term sustainability. In this context, BlueBioMatch represents a pragmatic and adaptable choice, particularly when embedded within the broader, multi-channel approach of the MPA Community Network.

Addressing Current Limitations and Next Steps

While the Networking Platform is already operational and generating initial interactions, its current use is still developing towards a more practice-oriented and exchange-driven environment. The next phase will therefore focus on strengthening its role as a space that actively supports peer learning, knowledge exchange, and collaboration among MPA managers and stakeholders.

This is particularly relevant given the context in which MPA managers operate. Their engagement with online platforms depends on clear relevance, ease of access, and the extent to which the platform supports concrete management needs. The further development of the Networking Platform will therefore focus on increasing its practical value and usability.

To support this transition, the following areas will be prioritised:

1. Reorienting the platform from information sharing to practice-based exchange

A key priority is to stimulate more structured and relevant interaction. Communities rarely become active through self-organisation alone. They usually require active cultivation, facilitation, and stewardship to ensure that members experience sufficient value for the time they invest. For this reason, content management on the platform will become more targeted and facilitative.

Rather than relying mainly on general updates, the focus will shift towards:

- structured thematic discussions around practical MPA challenges;
- peer exchange on concrete management questions;
- curated sharing of tools and methods accompanied by short explanations of use cases, lessons learned, and applicability.

2. Increasing the number of MPA managers through targeted and differentiated onboarding

A further priority is to increase the number of MPA managers actively participating in the platform. At present, it is relatively easy to involve partner projects and institutional actors, but much harder to convert individual practitioners into active members.

The strategy for improving MPA manager participation should therefore be more targeted than a general open invitation campaign. It should include:

- direct invitations through trusted intermediaries, especially Living Lab contact points and existing regional networks;
- tailored messaging for different manager profiles and regional contexts;
- onboarding that explains not only how to join, but why participation is useful;
- visible examples of concrete benefits, such as access to peers, tools, lessons learned, mentoring, and funding or project connections;

3. Improving accessibility and entry points

Further efforts will focus on making access to the platform more intuitive and aligned with user expectations. While registration is necessary to maintain a relevant and trusted community space, improvements will focus on:

- clearer entry points and guidance for new users;
- targeted onboarding materials (for example short guides or tutorials);
- responsive support for new users during initial engagement.

In parallel, the ongoing evolution of the platform's positioning (including the planned transition towards BlueActionMatch) is expected to further improve clarity of purpose and perceived relevance for a broader range of stakeholders. Finally, the MPA Community Network will continue to evolve alongside the development and uptake of the Networking Platform, with increased efforts dedicated to ensuring that its growth is aligned with user needs and emerging opportunities. This includes strengthening facilitation, expanding engagement, and continuously adapting its structure and content to support a more active, practice-oriented community. In this way, the Network is expected to progressively mature into a sustainable and widely used space for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and mutual support among MPA managers and stakeholders.

ANNEX 1 – Communication and Dissemination Tracking Table

