

## EU Mission: Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030 and the Western Balkans

The Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030” is European Commission’s commitment to reverse the deterioration of the ocean, seas, rivers and lakes, which are ultimately one single system. This Mission is based on the Starfish report proposed by the Mission Board, an independent expert group chaired by Pascal Lamy.

With a 2030 horizon, this Mission targets three main challenges for our ocean and waters: biodiversity degradation, pollution and carbon emissions. The objectives to be achieved are fully in line with strategies under the European Green Deal, namely the Biodiversity Strategy, Zero Pollution Action Plan and Sustainable Blue Economy Strategy. Broad public mobilisation and a digital ocean and water knowledge system (known as Digital Twin Ocean) will support this ambition.

The Mission encourages regional engagement and cooperation through “lighthouses” in major basins, which will bring together initiatives and act as hubs to develop and test new solutions in each area. Governance support structures are now in place to foster basin-scale Mission ecosystems, including EcoDaLLi (Danube river basin lighthouse) and BlueMissionMed (Mediterranean Sea basin lighthouse). Lighthouse events to mobilise stakeholders will take place on 3-4 April in Bucharest, Romania and 30-31 May in Palermo, Italy.

President von der Leyen said: “*Our mission to protect the ocean needs to be as big as our shared responsibility*”. Because this is a challenge that is beyond any one of us to tackle. To deliver on all these goals, we need to join forces and work together.

That is why a Mission Charter has been launched, which is accessible online and open to every public or private interested party. Over 300 actions have been submitted, and over 200 are already part of the Mission. The biggest share of Charter actions comes from the Mediterranean countries and regions (64 actions), while 26 actions take place in the Danube basin and 11 actions in Western Balkans. Actions in each lighthouse basin and cross-basin can benefit from mutual collaboration and future scaling up. The European Commission, therefore, warmly invites Western Balkan countries and regions to join this Mission by submitting actions and initiatives that contribute to restoring our blue planet.

Entities from the Western Balkans are also active in Mission Ocean and Waters projects under Horizon Europe, mostly in the Danube and Black Sea basin:

- **DALIA**, which will develop a tool which will be integrated into Danube Mission Hub for better decision making to improve restoration of fresh and transitional water ecosystems (Serbia);
- **DANUBE4all**, which will co-develop with stakeholders a comprehensive Restoration Action Plan for the Danube river basin lighthouse to the improvement of ecological status, biodiversity and ecosystem connectivity (Serbia);
- **EcoDaLLi**, which will integrate knowledge towards improved governance at Danube Basin level building upon existing initiatives bringing together existing governance structures (Serbia);

But also in the Mediterranean Sea basin:

- **REMEDIES**, which will guide citizens in becoming plastic entrepreneurs and will provide zero-waste solutions to all actors (Serbia, Albania);

As well as a cross-basin Blue Parks project:

- **BLUE4ALL**, which will align top-down regulatory demands about European (networks of) MPAs with bottom-up societal expectations as a guarantee for achieving effective, efficient,

and resilient MPAs and networks of MPAs which meet EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 objectives (Montenegro)

Additionally, regions from the Western Balkans have the opportunity to be associated in Mission projects funded under Horizon Europe through calls for “associated regions” launched by the projects. They can be financially supported to design plans for replication of the innovative solutions developed by the projects. Projects funded under the previous work programmes are starting publishing [calls for “associated regions”](#). The new work programme for 2023 has been adopted and [calls are open](#) until 20 September 2023.

Get on board and join this Mission to collectively restore our most precious resource: our waters! This is not European Commission’s mission; it is everybody’s mission.

**More information: [Restore our Ocean and Waters \(europa.eu\)](#)**