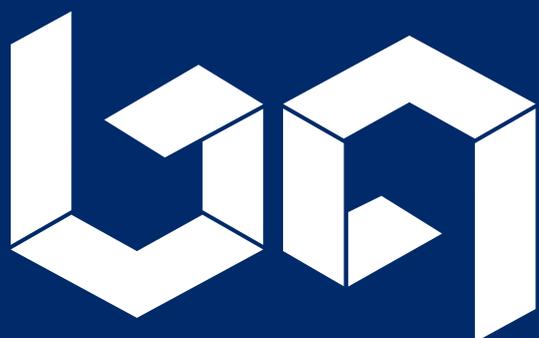


MUNICIPALITY
OF PIRAEUS



ΔΗΜΟΣ
ΠΕΙΡΑΙΑ



BluAct



second wave





The BluAct Network (Second Wave) Starting up the Blue Economy

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THE BLUACT SECOND WAVE CITIES

The City of Piraeus, Greece
The City of Gdansk, Poland
The City of Koper, Slovenia
The City of Boulogne-sur-Mer, France

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1. INTRODUCTION 5

- 1.1 Creating a dynamic Blue Growth Eco-system in Piraeus 5
- 1.2 About BluAct 6
- 1.3 About URBACT 7
- 1.4 About this report 8

2. ABOUT THE GOOD PRACTICE 9

- 2.1 Establishment Of A Strong Multi-Agency Governance Structure 10
- 2.2 Competition Preparation 13
- 2.3 Competition Delivery 16
- 2.4 Incubation Programme 18
- 2.4 Ongoing Celebration And Promotion 20

3. THE TRANSFER METHODOLOGY 22

4. THE ADDED VALUE OF TRANSNATIONAL WORKING 24

- 4.1 The impact of Coronavirus 26

5. THE CITY TRANSFER STORIES 27

- 5.1 Boulogne Sur Mer (FR) 28
- 5.2 Gdansk (PL) 33
- 5.3 Koper (SI) 42
- 5.4 Piraeus (GR) 49

6. CONCLUSION 52



1.1 CREATING A DYNAMIC BLUE GROWTH ECO-SYSTEM IN PIRAEUS

It was early 2018, when we first referred to the phrase “BluAct”.

Of course, the legacy of the city of Piraeus’ track record in the promoting and developing the Blue Economy predates this date somewhat. It was back in 2014, that the city first put in place Blue Growth Piraeus, the first-ever EU level innovation competition established specifically for the maritime and maritime economy (or the Blue Economy).

The aim of this first competition was to try and strengthen the ‘traditional’ marine and maritime sectors by stimulating and supporting entrepreneurs with new, innovative business ideas. Through an open call for proposals, Blue Growth Piraeus sought to inspire and help early-stage entrepreneurs realise innovative concepts and develop jobs and services related to marine and maritime resources. In developing the Blue Growth Piraeus competition, the first step of competition organising team was to pull all the relevant stakeholders together to establish the ‘Marine-scape’ – an ecosystem of partners, sponsors, advisors and academia – to come together to deliver the initiative.

This ‘Marine-scape’ has also been fundamental to helping us to develop a range of other initiatives in Piraeus for supporting the Blue Economy – including the Blue Lab, the Piraeus Centre for Start-ups, the Educational Programme on Robotics, the Business Centre Support and the Blue Park and the Knowledge and Innovation Community for the Blue Economy in Piraeus (platform and apps for the digital change of the sectors of blue economy). Close partnership working with

the public, private, educational and community sectors is central to the work we do in helping to stimulate the Blue Economy in Piraeus.

The URBACT Theory that effective urban regeneration requires the establishment of strong multi-stakeholder groups, co-creation and participatory practices and integrated policy making is enshrined in the Piraeus approach to the development of the Blue Economy.

Over the years, since the inception of the Blue Growth Piraeus, the city has worked hard to build a thriving eco-system of support for the Blue Economy. This concept was set out in the Blue Growth Strategy we developed back in 2018. Going forward, we aim to further strengthen our Blue Growth Ecosystem, by formalising the relationships that sit at the heart of the ‘Marine-scape’ concept – by establishing a Blue Economy Cluster in Piraeus.

Strong international relationships will also continue to be important to Piraeus going forward. Through the BluAct project, we have been fortunate to work closely with a range of cities across Europe – nine of which have directly benefitted from the transfer of the Blue Growth Piraeus project, but many more of which we have also worked with on other linked and related activities. We thank the URBACT Programme for supporting the BluAct Network through its two phases, because the city of Piraeus has also learned a great deal from working with other cities from across Europe.

We commit this final Network Product of the BluAct project to you and hope you will find it an interesting read. **The future is blue!**

1.2 ABOUT BLUACT

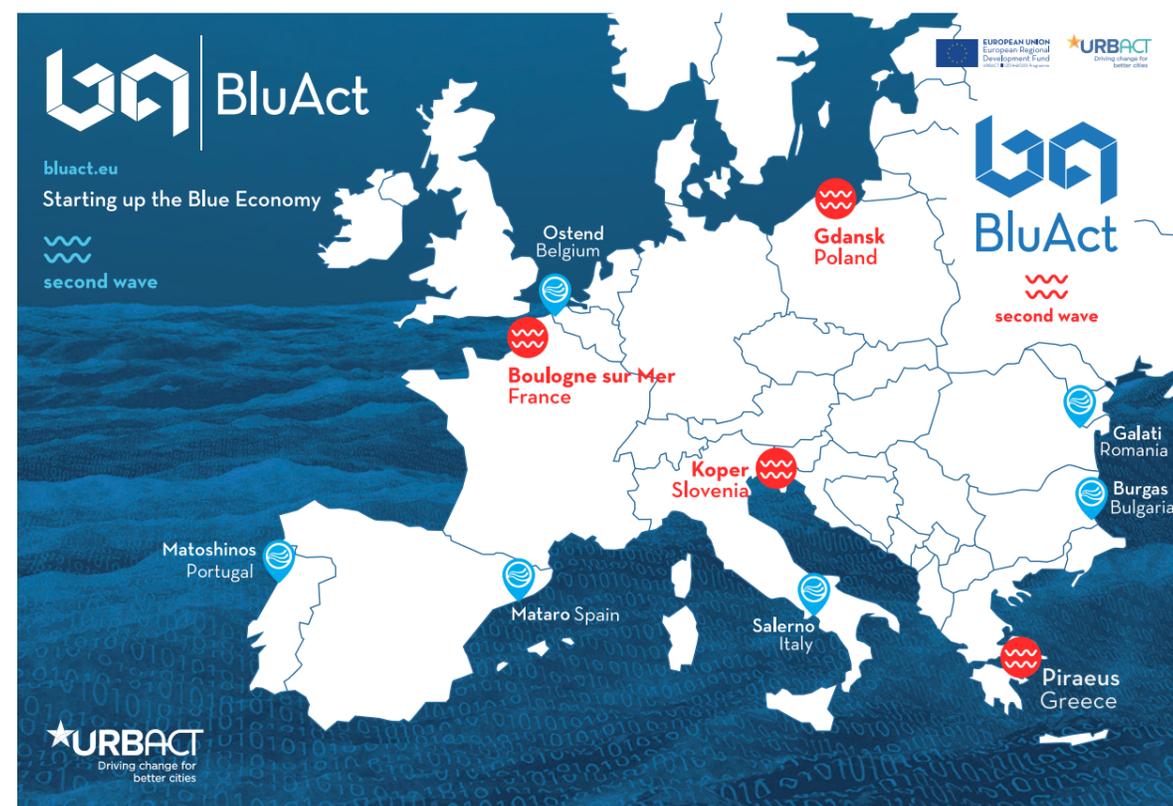
The BluAct Transfer Network is a sustainable urban development initiative that aims to support an improvement and transfer of a Good Practice in the field of Blue Growth Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

Over the lifetime of its work, the BluAct Transfer Network has directly supported nine cities to adopt a good practice in Blue Economy entrepreneurship that was originally developed by the city of Piraeus.

- In the FIRST WAVE of the Network (which ran 2018 -2021) seven European port cities worked together to transfer the Good Practice, including Piraeus (GR), Mataro (ES), Ostend (BE), Galati (RO), Matosinhos (PT), Burgas (BG) and Salerno (IT).
- In the SECOND WAVE of the Network (which ran 2021 - 2022) four European port cities including Piraeus (GR), Gdansk (PL) Koper (SI) and Boulogne-ser-Mer (FR).

This good practice, known as the Blue Growth Initiative, is an entrepreneurship competition that stimulates new ideas for innovative ideas linked to the Blue Economy and then offers business support and incubation services to the competition applicants to boost innovation and job creation.

Through an approach of creating URBACT Local Support Groups and engaging local stakeholders and other interested parties, the ultimate aim of the BluAct Transfer Network is to support the participating cities to enhance their systems and practices for stimulating blue economy inspiration, innovation and entrepreneurship, to boost skills, innovation, job creation and other, far reaching results in the respective partner cities.



1.3 ABOUT URBACT

Since 2002, URBACT has been driving change all over Europe by enabling the cooperation and idea exchange amongst cities within thematic networks, by building the skills of local stakeholders in the design and implementation of integrated and participatory policies, and by sharing knowledge and good city practices.

CORE PRINCIPLES

Cities are at the forefront of today's greatest challenges and opportunities. Climate change, intergenerational gaps and digital disruption are just some common turning points for European cities. And yet, cities are also home to cultural diversity, economic opportunities and essential services. It's by sharing experiences with other cities that we can harness the many opportunities of sustainable urban development. This is where URBACT comes in.

URBACT promotes integrated development to support cities implement horizontal and vertical policy integration. Positive change can best be made when local authorities collaborate with different levels of governance (regional, national, EU) –vertical integration – and when they tackle challenges and problems in a holistic way that considers environmental, economic, and social dimensions at the same time – horizontal integration.

URBACT has developed a series of processes and tools, as a part of the URBACT Method. It encourages cities to re-think centralised governance structures and shift towards more inclusive and holistic models. URBACT's participatory approach recognises that sustainable urban development is driven by action-oriented strategies, which are co-created and implemented with local people.



THE URBACT III PROGRAMME

In URBACT III, which ran 2014-2020 and which the BluAct Transfer Network was a part, the programme supported **678 partner cities across Europe** and focused on sharing good practices through transfer networks and implementing integrated action plans.

THE URBACT IV PROGRAMME

For the period 2021-2027, URBACT IV builds on the legacy of past Programmes and includes even more opportunities for cities to make positive change. The current Programme integrates the crosscutting EU priorities of digital, green and gender-equal policy-making into its activities.

Previously successful types of Networks like Action Planning and Transfer will continue, while a new type of Network will be developed to strengthen the connections between the European Urban Initiative and the URBACT Method.

For the first time, URBACT provides support to towns and cities in EU pre-accession countries – Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia. Their participation in the URBACT programme is financed by the EU's Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA).

URBACT IV is co-financed by Member and Partner States, alongside the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) – with a budget of EUR 79 769 million. The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance also supports URBACT with a budget of EUR 5 million.

More information about the URBACT IV programme is provided at the: Operational Cooperation Programme

1.4 ABOUT THIS REPORT

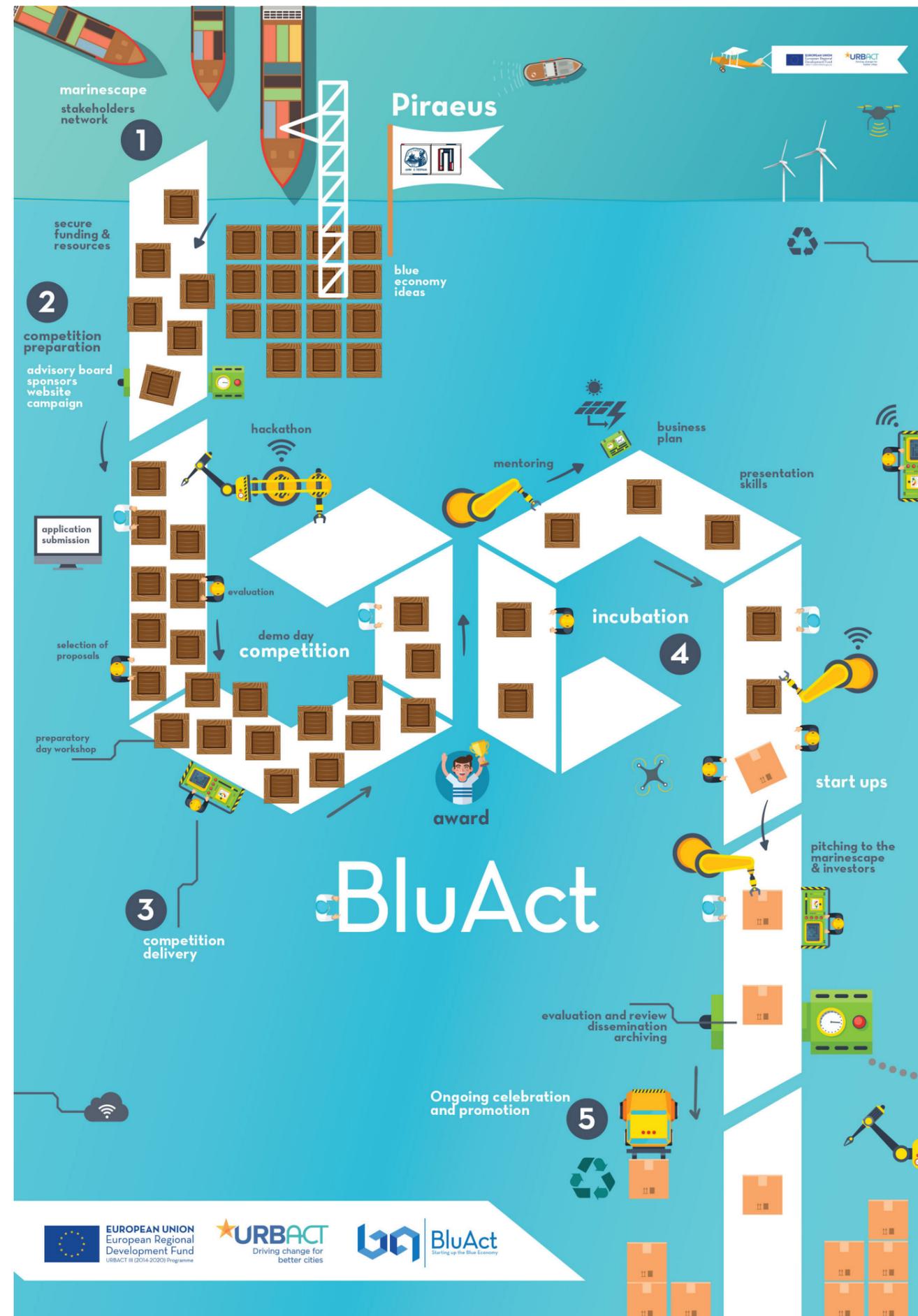
This report is a compulsory output of an URBACT Transfer Network. It is designed to explain the achievements and learning of the network, reflect the network's journey and consider lessons learned. This report builds on the material created in the network, including the content produced by partners along the journey.

This report has been prepared by the Lead Expert, in consultation with partners. It is intended to reflect the partners' and network's learning experience.

In accordance with the guidance produced by URBACT, the content of this report covers

- An introduction to the Good Practice, the city partners and their diversity
- An explanation of how transnational in an URBACT network has added value to the cities work
- A presentation of the highlights of the journey - successes and challenges
- A description of how the cities transferred the good practice
- A critique of the process the partners went through
- Suggestions for the next steps of the involved partner cities – how they might sustain some of the initiatives developed in BluAct

The final version of this report will be distributed at the BluAct Final Network Event in Piraeus in December 2022.



ABOUT THE GOOD PRACTICE

The city of Piraeus established the Blue Growth Initiative (BGI) - an innovation and entrepreneurship competition for the Blue Economy - to strengthen the maritime and marine sectors of the economy in the city and stimulate the development of innovative business ideas.

The Blue Growth Initiative helps early stage entrepreneurs realise innovative concepts and create jobs in the Blue Economy. In Piraeus, the competition has run for eight years and the city's approach of delivering the initiative - through an ongoing programme of promotion - has built the competition year-on-year, so that the majority of partners in the marine landscape now support the delivery of the initiative every year.

Throughout the lifetime of the initiative, Piraeus have evolved and adapted the structure of the competition – both to take account of a changing partnership landscape, but also to strive for continuous improvement in project delivery.

That said, whilst the Blue Growth Initiative has evolved over the lifetime of its delivery, the competition has essentially been structured around five core 'phases'.

These five 'phases' of the Blue Growth Initiative have provided the transfer partners with a framework to structure their transfer. These five 'phases' are set out over the next few pages.

2.1 ESTABLISHMENT OF A STRONG MULTI-AGENCY GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

ESTIMATED TIMESCALE: 4-6 MONTHS INITIALLY, BUT DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARTNERSHIP IS ONGOING

In order to deliver the Blue Growth Initiative, the city of Piraeus has established a strong multi-agency governance structure for overseeing the delivery of the initiative.

They refer to this multi-agency governance structure (which comprises public, private, community and academic partners) as the 'Marine-scape'.

This entrepreneurial, innovation partnership brings together all the key stakeholders in the city of Piraeus that are committed to the promotion of Blue Growth. This partnership is heavily represented by the private sector, which gives it credibility and access to a range of influential business leaders. The 'Marine-scape' performs a range of functions.

- **Strategy & Direction:** Members participate in the Advisory Board of Blue Growth Initiative and their active involvement has had positive effects on the development of Blue Growth Initiative.
- **Lobbying & Influence:** Members of the 'Marine-scape' come together to influence the wider economic development system, to ensure that the Blue Economy is suitable prioritised in local economic development plans. For example, in Piraeus, the partners have come together to ensure that the Blue Economy was included as a priority field in the regional smart specialization strategy (RIS3) and ensure that Research, Development, and Innovation in Blue Economy is favoured in receiving funding.
- **Delivery:** Members help raise the profile of the Blue Growth Initiative amongst potential beneficiaries and aspiring entrepreneurs. They provide an invaluable community engagement role, which also extends to potential sponsors, supporters and delivery partners.

As Piraeus has launched new initiatives in the city, the 'Marine-scape' has also played a significant role in leading these initiatives, to become a strategic, place-based Blue Economy partnership, overseeing the creation and establishment of a dynamic eco-system for supporting the delivery and integration of a range of skills, business support and infrastructure investments.





In the BluAct Transfer Network, in line with the URBACT Method, all the transfer cities established an URBACT Local Group (ULG) comprised a range of public, private, academic and community partners, to replicate the structure and approach developed in the Piraeus 'Marine-scape'.

In undertaking this task, the Transfer cities utilised a range of Stakeholder Analysis and Development tools contained in the URBACT Toolbox.

In some of the less well developed regions of Europe, these URBACT Local Groups might only comprise a small number of partners (because despite being a port city, their blue growth eco-system might not be so well developed).

In more developed regions, with more intense blue growth stakeholder systems, the 'Marine-scape' can comprise over two to three hundred partners and may even formalise their structures through, for example, the establishment of blue growth cluster organisation or network.



2.2 COMPETITION PREPARATION

ESTIMATED TIMESCALE: 3 MONTHS

During this phase of the delivery of the Blue Growth competition, the transfer city needs to secure the resources they need to deliver the competition, put in place the necessary systems and processes to deliver it and develop the marketing collateral needed to launch it.

SECURING THE RESOURCES TO DELIVER THE PROGRAMME AND SUPPORT THE ENTREPRENEURS

As far as securing the resources to deliver the competition is concerned, the resources needed to deliver the initiative might come from one organisation or from a number of partners who co-invest to create it. The investment may also include a mix of cash investment and/or in-kind support provided by a range of partners (who might deploy their different competencies across the entire competition 'process' to create an integrated competition structure under a single unifying brand). As far as the scale of resources are concerned, these too can vary, and may range as little as €10,000 for a small competition (for example built around a hackathon style event) to anywhere between €30,000- €100,000, or more, for a larger scale event or series of events.

In Piraeus' case, they launched the first competition with very little external funding but relied heavily on in-kind contributions from partners.

THE ACTIVITIES THAT NEED RESOURCING

In order to run the competition effectively and put in place the support the early stage entrepreneurs that enter the competition need to scale their business ideas, it is important for the partnership to agree reasonably quickly which partners are willing and able to contribute and then design the competition programme around the available resources. Put simplistically, over and above the formation of the ULG, the resources required by a city to deliver a Blue Growth Entrepreneurship competition generally break down into three broad categories:

- Project Coordination: A Project Manager to 'curate' the overall programme of activities in a city.
- Marketing and Promotional Support: Because one of the major challenges of delivering a Blue Growth competition is finding sufficient high quality applicants with an idea that could develop into a viable business, marketing needs generally to be based around a partnership approach, with as many 'routes to market' as possible being exploited to generate potential business ideas. This could include community ideation activities, such as hackathons.
- Incubation Support: Once the applicants have submitted their business ideas, the next major challenge of any entrepreneurship competition is supporting the applicants to develop those ideas into viable businesses.

This process of seeking the support to deliver the competition and designing the programme to match the available resources may be an iterative process, where partners discuss how to organise the most effective arrangements, and where other partners are drawn into the process or approached to provide additional capacity to ensure the delivery arrangements are well designed and as robust as possible (in terms of structuring the competition to maximise the achievement of the cities goals for organising such a competition).

PRE-LAUNCH PREPARATION

Once the key partner contributions to deliver a Blue Growth Entrepreneurship competition have been secured and agreed, the necessary collateral needs to be developed to enable the competition to be launched.

This can include the establishment of a dedicated web-presence and the necessary marketing material (banner stands, flyers, social media material etc.). As a minimum, the web-presence should explain the goals, terms and structure of the competition and include an interactive form to enable applicants to submit their project idea.

At launch stage, the focus of the competition is set (in the first year of delivery, the Blue Growth challenge in Piraeus focussed on innovative business ideas for products and services in the following categories: Information & Communication Technologies; Environmental Protection & Energy Conservation; Fisheries; Sustainable Maritime Tourism; Water use; and Shipping & Logistics).

In addition, at this stage of the competition, the closing date for the receipt of business proposals is set.



In the BluAct Transfer Network, in line with the URBACT Method, all the transfer cities worked with partners to utilise participatory methods and processes to co-create the competition structures and delivery model. In undertaking this task, the transfer cities have been able to utilise a range of tools in the URBACT Toolbox and some mainstream service design tools, put forward by the Lead Expert.

This process of designing the competition structure and approach in each of the transfer cities has had to take account of the sophistication, maturity and buoyancy of the local entrepreneurial system in each city. In port cities from less developed regions, with a more latent entrepreneurship system, the partners generally need to be more active in creating structured ideation processes and reaching into communities to find viable business ideas. In these regions, because the ideas that are generally generated from these kind of activities are further from the market, they also need to put in place more intensive incubation support programmes to help applicants develop these ideas into viable business propositions. In more developed regions, more 'traditional' marketing efforts might generate sufficient ideas.



2.3 COMPETITION DELIVERY



ESTIMATED TIMESCALE: 3 MONTHS

In this stage of the competition, the transfer city launches the competition, through close collaboration with a range of other local partners, evaluates the proposals, prepares participants for a demo day/awards ceremony and holds the awards ceremony.

This is a critical stage to the success of the overall competition, as sufficient high quality proposals need to be generated to deliver a successful competition outcome. The key elements of this phase of the competition, generally break down into three basic elements

- Proposal Generation and submission. Following the development of the necessary marketing material, the competition is launched via a coordinated marketing, communications and outreach programme. During this critical proposal generation stage of the competition, partners generally organise a range of activities to publicise the competition and generate project ideas. Because creative disruption in the maritime sector and creating synergies between sectors, technologies, different actors and sustainability principles can introduce promising new business opportunities and ideas, many of the events that are organised in this phase of the project are structured around the kind of events that generate good quality ideas (hackathons, sandpits, challenge sessions with major businesses etc.).
- Proposal Evaluation. Assuming sufficient proposals have come in by the stated deadline the proposals which are valid and submitted on time on the competition's online system will be evaluated by the competition judges. In Piraeus, in the first year of the competition, the evaluation of proposals was undertaken by a committee of maritime and business experts.
- A demo day / awards ceremony. Following the evaluation process, it is often common to organise a demo day and awards ceremony to showcase and celebrate the competition applicants. The structure of these demo days / award ceremonies generally vary, depending on the structure of the competition in each city. Generally speaking, the teams with the highest scores are asked to present their proposals to the evaluation committee at a public event and the winners of the competition are announced. These award ceremonies generally provide the competition winners to pitch their business ideas to senior representatives from the marine and maritime economy, potential mentors and investors.

In the BluAct Transfer Network, the approach to competition delivery has varied quite considerably, as cities have adapted the good practice to suit their particular local circumstances, the maturity of their local entrepreneurship eco-system, the nature of their blue economy, the cities resource base and the central focus of the municipality. The idea of cities adapting the good practice to better fit their local circumstance is a central tenet of an URBACT Transfer Network.

Some smaller, more peripheral cities with less 'naturally dynamic' entrepreneurship eco-systems generally have to work harder to reach into local skills systems and communities to organise structured ideation activities to encourage residents to develop blue growth business ideas that can progress onto the main competition.

Other cities, in more developed regions, have generally been able to draw strong business ideas out of their local base of nascent entrepreneurs.

2.4 INCUBATION PROGRAMME

TIMESCALE IN THE PIRAEUS MODEL: 3 MONTHS

During this stage of the competition the winning entrepreneurs are supported to develop their idea, to try and scale it and fully establish their business in the region.

In this stage of the competition, winners are offered business support, in the form of training, mentoring, advice, office space, access to finance, access to patient customers and the right conditions to help them develop their idea further and start their business venture. The nature of the support provided can vary, depending on the needs of the applicants, how mature their business project is and the capabilities and goals of the partnership. For example:

- Pre-Acceleration or Pre-incubation: With cities with a high number of applicants with early-stage business ideas (for example those generated through structured ideation activities), the support offered can comprise a mix of pre-acceleration or pre-incubation support (for example providing beneficiaries with support to develop their business model, Minimum Viable Product, financial plan, personal skills, pitching skills etc.)
- Incubation or Acceleration: With cities with a high number of applicants with more developed business ideas (i.e., with a high number of applicants that already have a well-developed Minimum Viable Product at the point of application) the support might either comprise incubation or acceleration support. An incubator

programme is generally more open-ended than an accelerator and tends to focus on nurturing and mentoring competition winners over a longer period of time – say, over a year – through the provision of support to develop a strong product-market fit, office space and mentoring. Generally speaking, there's no intense programme in an incubator - just an environment of collaboration and support when needed. Conversely, an accelerator programme is designed to rapidly boost growth, and provides a time intensive and structured programme of support (i.e., skills training, access to finance support and mentorship) designed to 'accelerate what might ordinarily have been several years of slow growth into a few short months.

In some cities, the pre-acceleration is delivered before the demo-day and award ceremony (as a demo-day preparation day), to ensure the entrepreneurs maximise the opportunity to develop a strong business proposition before they pitch their idea in front of potential investors and mentors.

In Piraeus, the offer available to competition entrants has varied, over the lifetime of the Blue Growth Initiative. In the first year of the competition, winners were provided with access to co-working spaces as well as business incubation services developed by Aephoria.net, a pioneer sustainable-business incubation program that fosters business practices with a triple-bottom-line approach.



In the BluAct transfer cities, the nature of the incubation support that cities have tended to put in place has, again, varied quite considerably. The services provided have generally been adapted, according to the dynamics of the local entrepreneurial system, the nature of existing business start-up programmes in the city, the resources of the city etc.

What transfer partners have learned over the lifetime of the project, is that it's quite important to ensure that incubation support programmes are tailored towards the particular support needs of the competition winners and the particular goals of the cities entrepreneurship competition (i.e., if the goal is to create more new businesses, it is vital the support programme is structured in such a way as to maximise the achievement of this goal).



2.5 ONGOING CELEBRATION AND PROMOTION

TIMESCALE IN THE PIRAEUS MODEL: ONGOING, OVER THE LIFETIME OF THE COMPETITION

The final phase of the project is not a process which happens at a discrete point in the competition but occurs over the lifetime of the programme. It is included in the good practice structure though because it is a critical-essential component of organising such a competition (i.e., failure to deliver this element of the programme largely undermines the value/benefit of organising such a competition).

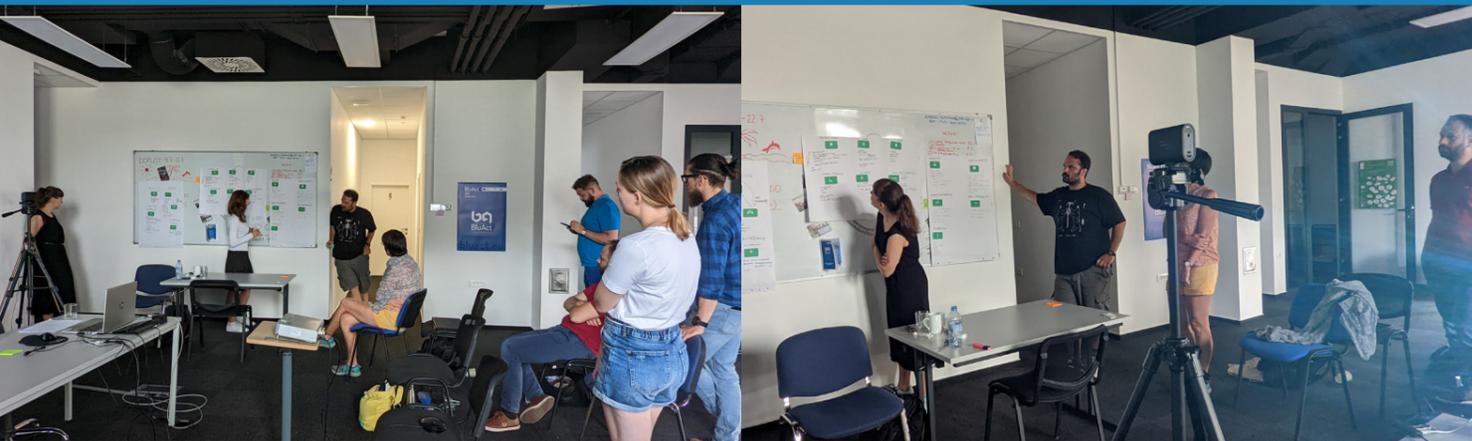
Over the lifetime of the programme, the organisers and wider partners involved in delivering the competition must widely celebrate and promote the emerging entrepreneurs and the overall concept of blue growth entrepreneurship. Widespread celebration of the achievements of the competition helps to attract more entrants, sponsors, partners, political support etc. Failing to deliver this component successfully will undermine a city's ability to build and sustain the competition into future years. It will limit their potential to retain partners, mentors and sponsors.

In the first Piraeus competition, all teams were required to participate in promotional media and press events related to the Blue Growth marine challenge competition and the Aephoria.net program. This included, but was not limited to, giving interviews and providing content for press releases and other promotional material.

In agreeing to promote their work, competition winners are not required to disclose any proprietary or otherwise confidential information related to their businesses and Intellectual Property advice is provided as part of the incubation programme.

In the BluAct Network, cities were able to learn from the work of Piraeus' retained communications team, Designature, who have many years' experience of promoting blue growth entrepreneurship competitions in the city of Piraeus.

The skills, tips and techniques acquired by the transfer cities has helped them with the promotion of their competitions, over the lifetime of their delivery.



THE TRANSFER METHODOLOGY

In order to aid a highly effective transfer process from the Municipality of Piraeus to the other partner cities in the BluAct Network, the Lead Expert and the Lead Partner sought to develop a transfer methodology that aided partners manage an effective transfer of the good practice. This transfer methodology was built around the same framework as the one adopted in first phase of the BluAct Transfer Network, as illustrated by the table below.

No.	Goal (This network will)	Mechanisms that supported the Goal
1	Establish a strong ambition and transfer 'culture' across the partnership	The culture of the meetings; the relationships between partners; an inspirational programme of high-quality speakers/experiences; and celebrating achievement and success.
2	Support cities to develop robust Local Transfer Plans that support them to develop a clear plan to successfully transfer the Good Practice	Local Transfer Plan Development - helping cities to develop an adapted Local Transfer Plan, which is agreed by their URBACT Local Group (ULG).
3	Facilitate Transnational exchange and learning to deliver the key knowledge, capabilities and understanding required to support the receiving cities to manage an effective transfer of the GP in advance of the requirement	Deliver an inspirational and experiential programme of transnational Exchange and Learning, which provides partner cities with the skills, knowledge and capabilities they need to successfully transfer the Good Practice, on a 'just in time' basis.
4	Unblock challenges/barriers and promoting sustainability through bi-lateral and tri-lateral exchange	Organise regular bi-lateral/tri-lateral exchanges, to act as 'quality circles' to unblock challenges/barriers and explore opportunities to enhance the initiative
5	Support cities, ULG's and ULG co-ordinators to manage a successful transfer through an ongoing programme, coaching, mentoring and transfer plan monitoring	Organise regular co-ordination meetings, one-one's between the Lead Partner / Lead Expert and Project Partners, to provide the support needed to ULG co-ordinators and ULGs to transfer the Good Practice. This process will also monitor the progress of actual transfer against the plan, and feed knowledge into the transnational learning programme to ensure it adapts to meet partners needs

STRUCTURE OF THE KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND LEARNING PROCESS

The structure of the knowledge exchange and learning process for transferring the Good Practice comprised:

- An initial period of intensive learning: through which partners developed a detailed understanding of the URBACT Method, the Good Practice itself etc.
- A series of transnational exchange meetings: where partners visit a number of the cities in the Network to acquire the thematic knowledge, skills and capabilities needed to successfully deliver the transfer (on a Just in Time Basis); deal with particular themes, issues and challenges; undertake individual reviews; and where the Lead Partner and Lead Expert work with individual cities to address particular transfer issues.
- A series of Bi-Lateral Meetings: which were used to define transfer challenges, identify potential solutions & transfer knowledge/skills & capability.
- Regular one-one's between the LP/LE and PPs: which took place online and were designed to monitor the transfer progress and provide support to the individual cities.



THE ADDED VALUE OF TRANSNATIONAL WORKING

A key aim of URBACT is to “enhance the institutional capacity of public authorities”. URBACT contributes to sustainable urban development objectives and aims to reinforce the effectiveness of the EU’s Cohesion Policy. URBACT has an officially recognised role to play in achieving Policy Objective 5 in particular – bringing “Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories”. The process of transnational exchange and learning supports the goals of EU Cohesion Policy. Beyond the fundamental benefits of learning from each other, learning from the good practice city and sharing wider experiences (i.e., cluster policy, blue growth entrepreneurship policy etc.), several other clearly identifiable benefits are observable from the transnational exchange and learning process in the BluAct Transfer Network. These include:

Enhancing partners comparative understanding of different entrepreneurial eco-systems: In the BluAct Transfer Network, transfer cities were able to come together to examine, experience and explore the different partner cities entrepreneurial eco-systems, their approach to stimulating blue growth and learn about how different cities structure their local delivery arrangements (examining common thematic issues, like how to develop effective local partnerships, delivering entrepreneurial support etc. from a range of different perspectives)

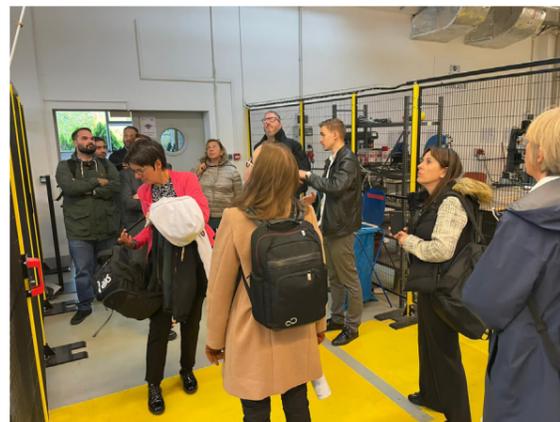
Enhancing partners understanding of the need to adapt their delivery approach to suit local circumstances: In line with the goals of the Smart Specialisation approach, URBACT Transfer Networks encourage partners to adapt the implementation of the good practice to ensure it suits their particular local circumstances. For example, in BluAct some partners, whose cities had particularly low

levels of entrepreneurship and/or high levels of out migration, opted to focus heavily on organising structured ideation activities (like hackathon’s) to stimulate more business ideas from the local population. Others with higher levels of natural entrepreneurship were able to rely on more ‘traditional’ marketing activities to draw applicants with more developed business plans into the process. Urbact supports partners to recognise the fundamental importance of tailoring interventions to suit the particular needs of the territory, thereby enhancing local policy making and the effective deployment of resources.

Enhancing understanding of how to tailor blue growth competitions to support different types of applicant: In addition, in the BluAct Transfer Network, cities with different local entrepreneurial eco-systems also learnt how to adapt their competition structures to suit their particular localities. Cities with lower levels of natural entrepreneurship, who used structured ideation activities to generate new business ideas, generally stimulated more ‘early stage’ business ideas. Cities with more developed entrepreneurial cultures, generally attracted business ideas that were ‘closer to market’. These two different approaches, which were largely influenced by the nature of the local entrepreneurial eco-system, also impacted on the incubation offer that different cities needed to develop and the partners that they needed to work with to develop an incubation offer. Cities that generated ‘earlier stage’ business ideas needed to develop a more robust Incubation offer, involving both pre-incubation and incubation, to provide more in-depth support to the business ideas generated. Those that generated business ideas that were ‘closer to market’, were generally more able to rely on a more ‘classical’ incubation offer – involving more ‘ad-hoc’ support - which were often capable of being provided by an indigenous incubation provider in the city.

Through the process of transnational learning, the BluAct partner cities developed a better understanding of these issues and began to explore – through a process of action learning - how their own entrepreneurial ecosystem compared to others and how they needed to adapt their competition to suit the needs of the local market. Without transnational learning and exchange, the implementation of their local competitions would have likely been much less effective than it was.

All in all, through a process of transnational learning and exchange, a process of action learning and the establishment of a local group of stakeholders to drive the programme, the transfer cities enhanced their capacity and capability to implement an effective transfer.



4.1 THE IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS

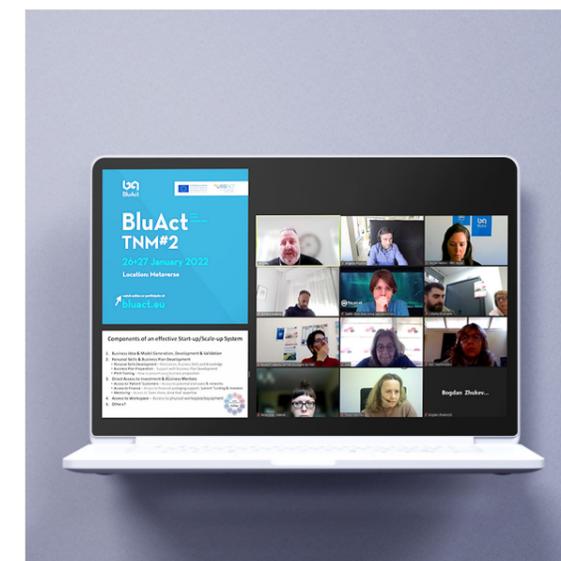
At the outset of the formation of the second wave of the BluAct Transfer Network, the Coronavirus was still a live issue, and the network commenced its work and the delivery of the transfer process overshadowed by the health emergency and the linked travel restrictions.

In the case of our transnational learning and exchange, this meant the arrangements needed to be delivered in a virtual environment, with the first two transnational meetings (in September 2021 and January 2022) being delivered online.

That said, by the time we reached March 2022, travel restrictions had been lifted and

we were able to hold our first 'physical' meeting in Boulogne Sur Mer. All other subsequent meetings in Koper (June 2022), Gdansk (October 2022) and Piraeus (December 2022) were capable of being delivered as hybrid events ('physical' and 'virtual').

As far as the transfer process and competition delivery was concerned, the Coronavirus had limited direct impact, because many of the restrictions had been lifted by the time partners had launched their competitions. That said, a number of the cities also utilised the online learning skills they had learnt during the epidemic to structure the delivery arrangements of their competitions to deliver increased impact.



BOULOGNE-SUR-MER (FR)



ABOUT BOULOGNE-SUR-MER

The district of Boulogne-Sur-Mer is located in the Hauts-de-France Region, in a coastal area in the North of France. The area has a population of 116,000 inhabitants.

The area hosts the most important fishing port of France and has a strong fishing industry and processing sector. In Capécure, the industrial area, more than 380,000 tons are processed every year.

Tourism is also an important economic sector for Boulogne-Sur-Mer and the surrounding area. Located in the “Côte d’Opale”, Boulogne-Sur-Mer boasts a significant number of many tourism attractions, including a strong natural environment, preserved coastal towns and villages, heritage, museums, and also Nausicaa, the largest sea centre in Europe.

The urban area shows many contrasts in its population and income structures. The city of Boulogne-Sur Mer suffers from a high unemployment rate. 26 % of the population is aged under 20, 57 % is aged from 20 to 64 and 17% is aged over 64 years old. The average family size is 2.4 people.

The median income of the family population is €17,587 (compared to the median income in France of €21,713). Socio-economic classes are composed of employees (30 %), workers (28 %), technicians and associated professionals (24 %), upper socio-professional category (11%).

The whole coast from Boulogne to Calais is outstanding and is classified “Grand Site National”. Only outstanding sites benefit from this label in France, meaning it benefits from specific grants to support its maintenance and preservation, despite the significant number of tourism visitors.

As elsewhere in Europe, a major environmental problem is the coastal erosion due to climate change. The state, the university and many other stakeholders are working together to tackle this issue.

The Smart Specialisation for the Hauts de France Region (The SRDEII) targets five innovative sectors, with the following ones are the most relevant for Boulogne-Sur-Mer:

- Boosting the important and varied regional industry (agri-food, transportation, textile, etc.) through shifting towards the third industrial revolution characterised by four themes - industry of the future, energy efficiency, circular economy and service economy
- Strengthening the tertiary sector and applied research in research and education
- Boosting innovation through the development of cross-sector plans
- To create and restart companies through the implementation of a ‘Starter Plan’. This plan particularly encourages innovative start-ups through offering them workspace, expertise and connecting them to potential partners.
- To help companies to grow through the implementation of a ‘Booster Plan’. This plan encourages innovation by accompanying companies who want to innovate in accessing networks and funding
- The implementation of an Employment Plan, to increase job creation
- A Territorial Plan to ensure that innovation and growth spread harmoniously on the whole territory. Innovation is addressed through the co-funding and creation of innovation parks such as Technopolis, Incubators and Accelerators.
- As far as services and solutions that already exist in in the region to support the development of the Blue Economy, the following initiatives are worthy of note:
- The Ocean Hackathon© - an initiative which encourages sharing, the use of new digital technologies and an entrepreneurial spirit to enhance the value of marine and maritime data, often by repurposing it. Data providers focus their efforts on improving data accessibility and comprehension and are involved in coaching participants throughout the event. Since it was first launched in 2016, Ocean Hackathon© has brought together a new community around the ocean and digital environments. The organisation of Ocean Hackathon® consists of three phases, the

call for applications from cities, the call for challenges from natural or legal persons and registration allowing the constitution of teams.

- BIMER (Brevet Initiation à la Mer) – a programme designed to make more young people aware of maritime culture and job opportunities in the sector
- The Université du Littoral Côte d’Opale (ULCO) provides numerous skills development opportunities such as diplomas dedicated to the ocean environment, seafood and aquatic products, seafood quality, seafood sanitary safety, agrifood and seafood processing.
- Hodefi (www.hodefi.fr/) provides business support for innovative start-ups in Hauts-de-France

ORIGINAL AMBITION

In their Transfer Roadmap, produced at the outset of the project in September/October 2021, Boulogne-Sur-Mer identified , their primary objective as being the need to:

Improve the attraction and retention of blue growth entrepreneurial talent in Boulogne-Sur-Mer by further strengthening the process for supporting aspiring entrepreneurs to turn their business ideas into well-developed business plans.

In the Transfer Roadmap Boulogne-Sur-Mer identified a need to further strengthen the processes for:

- Promoting the maritime sector, particularly to young people, many of whom do not see the sector as an attractive sector to work in .
- Supporting aspiring entrepreneurs to provide them with further support to turn their business ideas into well-developed business plans.



TRANSFER JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

In order to achieve these goals, Boulogne-Sur-Mer identified several new solutions they would develop to offer to different target groups in the Municipality, to augment the existing structures and projects that already operated in the area to support the development of the Blue Economy. These augmented solutions included:

- Ocean Hackathon© Preparation workshops - organised for young people to raise the awareness of the Ocean Hackathon© and increase the number of young people that actually participated in the event. This solution was developed as Boulogne-Sur-Mer had identified that the attrition rate for the number of young people signing up to join the Ocean Hackathon© to those subsequently joining the event was quite high, and it was hoped these kind of workshops would increase their involvement.
- Innovation Camps for schoolchildren (Camps de l’innovation) - to allow students to have a first experience of meeting entrepreneurs for a day, to work together, develop their creativity and innovate in the responses they provide to a predefined challenge (e.g., maritime traffic, fisheries, pollution, etc.) and explore the potential of developing an innovative project.
- Enhanced incubation support for hackathon winners – In addition, Boulogne-Sur-Mer sought to strengthen their post-hackathon/incubation support processes in order to help them to develop their project idea further, improve the quality of their project and better prepare the competition winners for an onward pathway into business. This enhanced incubation offer comprised a mix of workshops and expert mentoring, provided after the delivery of the core hackathon.



SUCSESSES ACHIEVED BY BOULOGNE-SUR-MER

In conducting a post project evaluation, Boulogne-Sur-Mer has identified that they achieved most of the outputs they set out to achieve in the BluAct project, although the number of people attending events, the number of businesses incubated, and the number of new businesses started was actually lower than they set out to achieve.

This may, in part, be because some of the planned activities above are not due to be implemented until the 2022 Ocean Hackathon© and Boulogne-Sur-Mer might not fully feel the impact of these events until after this year's event. That said, it is also universally recognised that supporting winning projects in ideation activities like Hackathons through to actual business start-ups is always a challenging issue. Generally speaking – although it depends on the precise structure of the proposed ideation activities – these kind of practical events are good for exciting young people into blue entrepreneurship, but not always guaranteed to generate large numbers of start-ups.

That said, we understand that through the establishment of the Urbact Local Group and the delivery of the BluAct Transfer Network, the team in Boulogne-Sur-Mer have increased their joint working with a number of other blue growth agencies in the area, to improve the coherence of support services in the area. In addition, the team has been asked by elected members to develop a roadmap on the challenges and opportunities presented by the Blue Economy, which may help them lever further support into the agenda.

These enhanced delivery partnerships and the increased political support the team in Boulogne-Sur-Mer have secured for the blue economy through their involvement in the BluAct Transfer Network may be the major achievements achieved by the team in Boulogne-Sur-Mer.

CHALLENGES BOULOGNE-SUR-MER EXPERIENCED

At the outset of the project, the team in Boulogne-Sur-Mer identified a number of challenges impacting on their ability to inspire more people into blue growth entrepreneurship in the city and stimulate higher levels of blue growth start-ups. This included:

- The demographic decline in the area, caused by a brain drain to larger metropolitan areas, an increasingly aging population and one of the highest unemployment rates in the region
- Difficulties in attracting new talents and keeping them in the city
- Difficulties in keeping qualified young people in the city
- Difficulties in starting long term projects
- Difficulties in mobilising winning teams from hackathons into business start ups
- Difficulties involving private sector companies in activities to promote the blue economy.

Generally speaking, these issues do not necessarily appear to have been fully addressed or overcome through the delivery of the BluAct project in Boulogne-Sur-Mer.

The predominant industrial strength of the area, in a relatively mature sector of the blue economy (fishing and fish processing) appears to be limiting the appeal of the sector to young people. Similarly, the somewhat mature and 'traditional' nature of this sector may also be inhibiting firms from joining the ULG/hackathon process.

The fact that there appears to be quite a poor flow through from the hackathons through to the creation of new business start-ups also doesn't necessarily appear to be helping to renew the industrial base of the local area, or produce any new, cutting edge firms to participate in future competitions.

RESULTS ACHIEVED BY BOULOGNE-SUR-MER

That said, Boulogne-Sur-Mer has built an enhanced multi-stakeholder group for delivering blue growth entrepreneurship competitions in the area and appears to have secured a greater commitment from the political system to support the endeavours to promote the Blue Economy in the area, going forward.

They also appear to have improved the entrepreneurial and work related skills of numerous young people in the area, by enabling to participate in hackathons where they can meet other stakeholders in the blue economy and work on practical projects that they might not ordinarily be exposed to.

Through the BluAct Transfer Network, they have also been able to experiment with organising some activities that have been expressly created to try and increase the number of young people that participate in the Ocean Hackathon© and enhance the quality of incubation support to increase the number of competition winners that ultimately end up creating a new business. At the time of writing though, it would appear questionable as to whether these goals have been fully achieved (although they may ultimately have a stronger impact on the 2022 edition of the Ocean Hackathon©)



NEXT STEPS

In light of the above issues, we envisage that Boulogne-Sur-Mer would benefit from continuing to work with their elected members and wider ULG stakeholders to further strengthen their operations by:

- Developing the framework for the promotion of the Blue Economy, with their elected members and existing stakeholder groups
- Reviewing the central 'Theory of Change' or 'Intervention Logic' that underpins the project to explore what else might be done to achieve the stated goals of generating more innovative, cutting edge firms in the blue economy in Boulogne-Sur-Mer to stimulate the industrial renewal of the area
- Explore the potential of trying to achieve greater thematic and territorial integration in the delivery of blue growth initiatives in the locality, by working more closely with existing regional and local stakeholders to explore how they might be mobilised more strongly in support of their aspirations to stimulate the blue economy.
- Broadening the delivery activities in Boulogne-Sur -Mer to reduce the reliance on hackathons for young people, to explore the potential of stimulating business ideas from more established entrepreneurs, with business ideas that are 'closer to market' than those that hackathons generally produce, which tend to be much more 'early stage' ascent.





GDANSK (PL)

ABOUT GDANSK

Gdansk is the capital and largest city of the Pomorskie Voivodeship and the most prominent city in the vicinity of the cultural and geographical region of Kashubia. Gdansk is Poland's principal seaport and the centre of the country's fourth-largest metropolitan area.

The Port of Gdansk is one of Poland's most important gateways and a major hub for the South and East Baltic region, with recently expanded Deepwater Container Terminal (DCT) extending the most energy efficient and cost competitive route for the region's exports, improving Poland's competitiveness in the global market and facilitating inter-regional trade.

In addition to a developing offshore wind industry in Poland's EEZ's (Exclusive Economic Zones), Gdansk is also developing a growing understanding of the importance and advantages of Blue Economy entrepreneurship.

Available data about entrepreneurship in Gdansk come from 2019 indicates that:

- There has been a 3.7% annual increase of registered business
- There are 79,857 businesses registered in region at the end of December 2019
- 6,749 new businesses were registered in 2019
- 96.8% of businesses employ less than 9 employees in the total number of registered businesses
- 67.6% of self-employed people are running a business in the total number of registered businesses
- The unemployment rate in Gdansk is 3.5%, while in the wider Pomorskie Region reaching 6%.

During recent years, the decline of the maritime industry has halted, with the exception of declining productivity of large state-owned shipyards (Gdansk, Gdynia and Naval Shipyard).

In 2019 the Gdansk Entrepreneurship Foundation (GEF) conducted research among start-ups in Gdansk. 75% of them stated that Gdansk is a better place to do business than other large cities in Poland. 99% agreed that Tricity is a place with good influence on the development of start-ups. As far as the type of support needed, 81% were looking for more support with sales, 77% with management, 74% with branding and 72% with marketing.

It is worth noting that the available data applies to the pre-Covid situation and that entrepreneurs' situation, and needs have changed quite significantly post pandemic.

According to estimates, the Polish Blue Economy generates approximately €3.2 billion in GVA (2018), which represents an increase of over 40% since 2009. That said, the Blue Economy constitutes only 0.8% of national GVA (2018), indicating that its potential for growth can be enhanced even further.

Pomorskie Region is one of the most rapidly developing regions of Poland, with a population over 2.3 million. The GDP of Pomorskie was €29.2 billion in 2018, accounting for almost 6% of Polish economic output. Forces that drive the economy of the region are two Special Economic Zones, proximity of the international airport, several shipyards and ports, manufacturing, logistics, ICT, energy and services outsourcing. Energy and manufacturing, in particular for the offshore sector, are perceived as the region's priorities.

Shipyards located in the region are the main suppliers of the specialised PSV vessels, heavy lift jack-up vessels and offshore constructions to ship owners from Norway, Denmark, United Kingdom and USA. Apart from manufacturing for offshore, Gdansk and Gdynia have become a leading Baltic centre of traditional shipbuilding, including advanced LNG ferries, Arctic container vessels, luxurious yachts, ship repairs and conversions and ship design.

The emerging offshore renewable energy sector enhances the perspective of Pomorskie and Poland for improved direct and indirect job market in the Blue Economy. It is

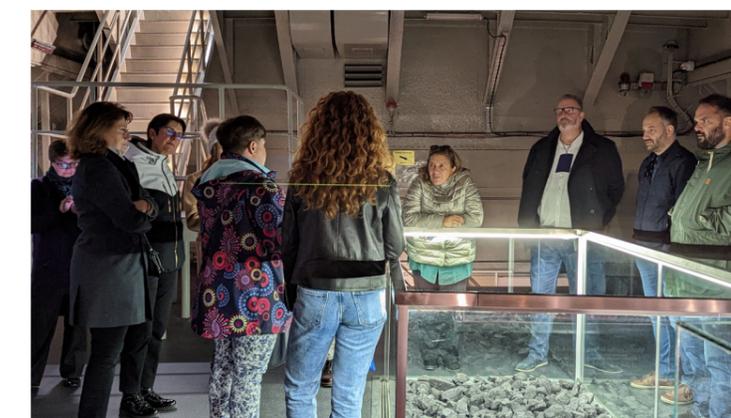
estimated that in Poland 60,000 to 77,000 of new workplaces will be created, with a requirement for 25,000 to 35,000 training courses, while the predicted share of Pomorskie will be 30,000 of new jobs and 20,000 training courses needed.

Tricity Metropolitan Area is a unique conglomeration of academia, with 26 higher education institutions offering an education at the highest level in the wide variety of fields: Gdynia Maritime University (the largest maritime university in Europe), Gdansk University of Technology, the Naval Academy, University of Gdansk, University of Medical Sciences, Academy of Music, Academy of Fine Arts, University of Physical Education and Sport. Also, many research institutes are located in the region, including Institute of Oceanology PAS, Institute of Hydro-Engineering PAS, Institute of Fluid-flow Machinery PAS, Maritime Institute in Gdansk. As the ports and shipyards are playing significant role in the economic and social development of the city and the region, the city of Gdansk and the entire Pomorskie Region faces unique challenges and opportunities associated with the transition to a Blue and Green Economy and exchanging the declining and

descending heavy industries for the innovative and creative ones. The broader goal to be reached by Gdansk and Pomorskie is to reach a sustainable development in the area and in the surrounding coastlines.

The strong presence of shipyards and ports in the Pomorskie Region generates requirements for considerable number of technical specialists. In Pomorskie but also nationwide there is noted shortage of technical specialists, which combined with low unemployment rate in the region creates problems with acquiring enough staff to fulfil needs of the maritime sector. There is huge pressure in Poland to assure the highest standards of the higher education, but in recent years technical schools of the mid-level seemed to have been neglected. This combined with the economic migration results in the current state of shortage in that area.

On the other hand, some specialists point out that it is difficult to reach an industry that is seen are closed – especially for young professionals. That, together with another challenge – the traditional work culture in some of the companies in the industry, not taking into account the changing labour market, is leading to the departure of talented people from the industry.





ORIGINAL AMBITION

In their original Transfer Roadmap, Gdansk identified the core challenge that they were seeking to address was the relatively low levels of innovation in some of the marine and maritime sectors in Gdansk.

Based on this core challenge, Gdansk identified their primary objective as being the need to:

Stimulate increased public-private cooperation and public investment to support the growth of Blue Economy enterprises and enhance their international competitiveness through the stimulation of increased investment into Research and Development of innovative products, knowledge and skills base, services and technologies, whilst also ensuring the environmentally sound exploration and exploitation of marine resources.

In the Transfer Roadmap Gdansk also identified a need to:

- Inspire and help young entrepreneurs to realise innovative concepts relating to marine and freshwater resources by inviting them to participate in an entrepreneurship competition
- Create new jobs and promote a new innovative ecosystem, posing the sea in the forefront of economic development
- Stimulate intersectional cooperation between business – municipalities – universities - media by inviting its representatives to join the Urbact Local Group (ULG) and continue this co-operation after the project ends.
- Strengthen diversity and inclusion in the maritime industry by ensuring the representation of men and women in ULG and as experts (representation matters).
- Connect and integrate Tricity and regional strategic policies and actions regarding Blue Economy by inviting local and regional governments to participate in ULG.
- Implementing green and blue priorities throughout the project, activities and services by updating team members about the solutions used in project and by preparing a guideline for future projects.

TRANSFER JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

In their Transfer Roadmap, Gdansk largely focused their local activities on trying to achieve two primary objectives, namely:

- Developing a strong multi-stakeholder ULG group that helped co-create the programme and design the blue growth entrepreneurship competition.
- Delivering a highly effective pre-acceleration programme for aspiring entrepreneurs with a strong marine/maritime related business idea

As far as the achievement of this first objective of developing a strong multi-stakeholder ULG group is concerned, over the lifetime of the BluAct Transfer Network, Gdansk undertook the following activities:

- Organisations were invited to the first meeting to initiate the ULG group from across the scientific, business, local authorities, offshore developers and supporting business sectors.
- During the project there were 10 ULG meetings, including ones organised specifically to inspire and evaluate the effectiveness of partners work.
- The group was briefed on the precise criteria and rules of the Gdansk Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Competition. The members of the ULG worked together to create the rules but were also encouraged to

become mentors for competition entrants and supported the participants during the whole pre-acceleration process.

- All applicants to the competition took part in the pre-acceleration programme, which was built around an established, tried and tested STARTER pre-acceleration process.
- The ULG members were also involved in actively supporting participants to develop their ideas and business models. During the process the ULG members behaved like 'patient customers' – being engaged in the launch, through verification and developing ideas, they were eventually persuaded to utilise their personal skills and know-how to judge the winning start-ups at the competition Demo Day, and then supporting them with ongoing mentoring support
- Space was created for partners, ULG members and businesses to network and co-design the programme, helping members to gain new suggestions and expert recommendations to test new formula of ULG meetings in the future. This approach aimed to encourage participation and the development of practical solutions that were capable of being used to stimulate the blue economy and maritime sector.
- Interim evaluation work on the progress of the ULG recommended further multisectoral cooperation to make more space for the stimulation of creative ideas and new



solutions – not only technical and technological but also including educational and cultural or social issues.

As far as the second objective of delivering an effective Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Competition is concerned the Gdansk competition, generated seven start-up teams that were supported to develop their maritime and marine business ideas. The pre-acceleration phase of the competition was made up of the following activities:

- Workshops (May 2022 - June 2022): Consisting of 32 hours of support encompassing marketing, branding, building a brand image, team building, selling a product/service, product/service development, work life balance, business scaling and pitching
- A Start-up Bootcamp (July 2022 – September 2022): Consisting of 30 hours of support with individual consultations with experts, covering obtaining investments for start-ups (6 hours), marketing (6 hours), product and service sales (5 hours), business scaling (4 hours), pitching (3 hours), product / service development (2 hours),

law (1 hour), team building (1 hour), branding (1 hour) and accounting (1 hour).

- A Demo Day (September 2022): Involving seven pitch decks being presented, with the event being open to the general public. There was also a motivational lecture for start-up teams and the audience. During the Demo Day, the jury voted the Mobile Monitoring project - an inspection and measurement platform that increases safety and shortens the time of handling environmental incidents carried out by companies or local government units - as the best business idea. In addition, the project developed by Proton Solutions was distinguished.

The Incubation programme which followed the Demo Day consisted of support from a particular business, who provided mentoring and space for testing the products helping competition entrants to develop a viable product/service and reducing the risks associated with the product development and incubation phase.



SUCCESSSES ACHIEVED BY GDANSK

As far as the successes achieved by Gdansk is concerned, perhaps the most tangible illustration of the effectiveness of their programme is the quality of the seven business ideas generated, which included:

- AIVision – an active low-energy active vision system providing virtual monitoring system operator service for ports and maritime infrastructure facilities
- Bespoke Jacket – a software tool that automates the execution of the preliminary design of JACKET supporting structures for offshore wind farm facilities
- Contiro – a platform for order management of sea containers
- CPSdrone - a company producing industrial drones for underwater inspection
- Mobile Monitoring - an inspection and measurement platform that increases safety and shortens the time of handling environmental incidents carried out by companies or local government units
- Proton Solutions – a system to improve the work of shipbuilding companies
- safecrossroads.com – warning siren - a system that increases safety at marine terminals.

However, to only focus on the quality of the applicants to the competition as a measure of the success of Gdansk's work in BluAct would potentially devalue the considerable valuable work they have done on building the capacity of their ULG to oversee the delivery of the competition and sustain their Blue Economy activities into the future.

In addition to co-creating the competition with a range of stakeholders from across the public, private, academic and community

sectors, utilising highly participative processes and involving stakeholders from Gdansk in Transnational Networking Meetings, Gdansk has really developed the capacity of the ULG to operate as a really effective leadership team, persuaded partners to directly support the delivery of the project and really enabled them to play a positive strategic and operational role in helping to guide the future direction of the initiative.

Indeed, the quality of the ideas generated in the competition can partially be laid at the door of the ULG and the involvement of its experts in the implementation of the competition. But moreover, the involvement of the ULG members as cocreators of the project has enhanced their commitment and willingness to develop the initiative further.

Thanks to the cooperation with the ULG group, the city of Gdansk has been persuaded of the value of opening up the competition to teams from all over Poland, who will be able to apply to the next edition of the competition. This will allow STARTER to attract many more innovative ideas that respond to the local challenges of the city in the marine and maritime sector in the future.

The positive reception of the Gdansk Entrepreneurship Competition has also contributed to an increased awareness of the role of Blue Economy and a change at the administrative level. In September 2022, the City of Gdansk published a modified Gdansk 2030 Plus strategy which strengthened the competitiveness of the seaport as one of the actions for achieving the Innovative City goal. This provision raises the chances of continuing the Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Competition as a cyclical program to support the implementation of innovation in the maritime sector, and directly increases the chances of regular funding for the competition.



CHALLENGES GDANSK EXPERIENCED

The barriers and challenges that Gdansk envisaged might potentially inhibit them from delivering the Transfer were:

- The outbreak of the pandemic. This made some changes in the formula of meetings and slowed down the pace of activities in the project as well as impacting on the structure of Transnational Network Meetings at the beginning of the project. This issue also delayed Gdansk developing as full an understanding of the good practice transfer process as they might have liked.
- The lack of local identity with the maritime industry in Gdansk. Despite the potential associated with the Baltic Sea and the construction of wind farms, one of the main barriers in the business environment which inhibits a strengthening of the sector is the lack of networks involving sector representatives in Gdansk
- The somewhat closed nature of the marine and maritime sector in Gdansk also makes engagement with experts in the sector more difficult
- The reluctance of businesses to share knowledge in the maritime sector, out of competitive tensions, is also a barrier to building space, trust and sharing ideas in planned multisector network
- The fragmentation of initiatives and events related to the Blue Economy allow can result in chaos for experts and businesses, when trying to decide which initiative is worth engaging in and spending/investing time into
- The lack of involvement at the local authority level in the development of innovation in the Blue Economy at the beginning of the project was seen as a potential challenge
- The lack of knowledge on how to transfer technology to the maritime industry, and the lack of knowledge on the needs and problems of the sector was seen as a problem
- Not fully appreciating the benefits of the transfer of innovation to the maritime sector was seen as a problem
- The perceived levels of bureaucracy within public authorities, many of whom have very strict rules for spending money needs lots of time to plan and predict activities and results in a constantly changing environment
- The lack of any financing for innovations which are risky, as start-ups are (failure is also gaining experience, not only wasting money).



RESULTS ACHIEVED BY GDANSK

As indicated previously, Gdansk was highly successful in generating seven high quality cutting-edge technology based business ideas through their Blue Growth Entrepreneurship Competition. This in itself is a significant achievement which has only been possible because of the highly collaborative approach that STARTER Incubator has developed with local marine enterprises, academics, research institutes and the professional adviser community. Because of the way in which STARTER has directly involved the ULG members in creating the contest challenges, examining the needs in the maritime sector, developed the competition structure etc., the ULG members appear to have developed a deeper understanding of the needs of entrepreneurs in the sector and a stronger commitment to getting directly involved in supporting them. The result has been that they have created a number of ULG representatives that are willing to act as “patient customers” to the competition entrants, being willing to directly support the competition entrants to further develop their ideas.

By creating strong social bonds between ULG members over the lifetime of the project has helped to create a stronger and more committed partnership whose members are willing to create more space for cooperation, meeting other experts, exchanging experience, gaining new knowledge, promoting innovation in the sector and develop local, regional and international networks to strengthen the sector in Gdansk.

In addition, the public authorities involved in the project have become more open to participate equally in a multi-sectoral partnership to find new solutions and technologies to support the sector.

Going forward, the strength of the Gdansk ULG provides the partnership with a strong platform to build upon.

NEXT STEPS

In the next phase of the programme, Gdansk plans to organise two further meetings of their ULG to involve the ULG members in evaluating the project and the partnership.

This will build on meetings held in September and October 2022 to reflect on the progress of the partnership.

This evaluation process might lead to further developments that might be trialled going forward. This could include:

- Exploring how STARTER might also increase the commitment of the business owners and employers from where their ULG members are drawn to further support the initiative (because the ULG members gain significant value from developing their career, networks and understanding of the innovation process by participating in the ULG).
- Inviting new members, experts and potential idea owners to join the ULG to find practical solutions to address the needs and potential of the local and regional sector.
- Increasing the engagement with young people, students, employees and ideas owners to inspire them to pursue entrepreneurial pathways in the blue economy
- Creating a plan and strategy for the ULG group to evaluate develop a pathway that enables them to strengthen their wider international partnerships in the maritime sector.





KOPER (SI)



ABOUT KOPER

The Municipality of Koper has a total area of 311 km² and population of about 51,000. The city Koper is the one of the oldest and the fifth largest city in Slovenia. Located at the coastline of the Adriatic Sea in Slovenian Istria in the southwestern part of the country, approximately 5 Kilometres south of the border with Italy and 20 Kilometres from Trieste and its port, Koper is the largest coastal city in the country with a population of about 25,000 inhabitants.

Today, the Gulf of Trieste, of which the Gulf of Koper forms a small part, remains an economically important strategic area. The Gulf of Trieste extends 100 Kilometres inland, which is particularly important for the transshipment of goods and raw materials from the south to the interior of the European continent.

As Slovenia's only international cargo port, the Port of Koper plays an important role in this respect. Although this economic activity is important and, spatially speaking, very visible, as the area of the Port of Koper covers a large area, coastal towns are also devoting themselves to other activities, especially and increasingly to the tourism industry, one of the fastest growing and most important industries in the area.

All this brings constant changes and challenges in space and the environment, in society and in the economy.

The average age of the population in the Coastal-Karst region is rising and was 44.8 years in 2020, which is above the national average (43.6). The share of population aged 65+ is increasing, as is the share of population aged 0-14, while the share of population aged 15-64 is decreasing.

The region's population is growing mainly due to immigration. In 2020, the total growth rate per 1,000 inhabitants was 20.4, which is 14.2 index points higher than the national average (6.2). In 2020, natural increase per 1,000 inhabitants was negative (-2.4), while total migratory growth per 1,000 inhabitants was positive at 22.7.

The region's economy is closely linked to its

geostrategic position and natural features, which allow the development of transport, logistics, tourism and agricultural activities. The large business companies in connection with the port, logistics and transport have a significant impact on the region's economic activity, while small and medium-sized enterprises are well developed.

GDP per capita in 2017 was the second highest in Slovenia (€21,242). In 2019, GDP per capita in the region reached €22,894. According to the Business Register of Slovenia - AJPES, 4,895 business association and 3,360 self-employed individuals were operating in the region in 2020. About half of the companies in the region are located in the Municipality of Koper, where more than half of all employees in companies generated 70.7% of total revenues.

Port of Koper is the major contributor to the socio-economic profile of the Municipality of Koper and to the economy. It still acts as a driver of socio-economic development in the municipality and attracts new residents to the region. The activities of the Luka Koper contributed to about 1.4% to Slovenia's GDP in 2018. One of the main challenges facing the port is traffic congestion due to poor quality of hinterland connections, which affects not just the economic aspect but also the environmental and spatial aspects.

One of the most important sectors contributing of the blue economy, besides port activities, is tourism. The Coastal Region is a strongly touristic region. In 2018, more than one million tourists visited the region, accounting for 17.6% of all visitors to Slovenia. The share of overnight stays exceeds 20%. Domestic visitors dominated the tourist arrivals in 2020, accounting for 72% of overnight stays, while foreign visitors accounted for only 38%. The ratio of domestic to foreign tourists in the region was reversed. Before the pandemic, the majority of tourists, 66.3%, were foreigners.

In the academic year 2019/2020, the Coastal-Karst region was home to 3.702 students who attended various faculties of different universities. The number of students has been

declining over the period 2013-2018, due to an ageing population or a poor demographic picture of the region, however, the number of graduates has started to increase again in 2019.

Tertiary education in the region is provided by the University of Primorska (with its six faculties: Faculty of Humanities (UP FHŠ), Faculty of Management (UP FM), Faculty of Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Information Technologies (UP FAMNIT), Faculty of Tourism Studies - Turistica (UP FTŠ Turistica), Faculty of Health Sciences (UP FVZ), Faculty of Pedagogy (UP PEF)), Faculty of Maritime and Transport of the University of Ljubljana, and the Higher Vocational School under the umbrella of the Srečka Kosovel School Centre in Sežana.



ORIGINAL AMBITION

In their original Transfer Roadmap, Koper indicated that they wanted to use the BluAct project and the competition to:

Introduce students to one of their options after graduation, to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities in one of the sectors of the blue economy, to overcome the shortage of companies dealing with the content of the blue economy and the lack of innovative business ideas that are sustainable and include the concept of a circular economy.

The Regional Development Centre (RDC) Koper went on to explain that the project aims to, through the organising of a competition for the best entrepreneurial idea, serve to introduce the blue economy to young people as a possible entrepreneurial opportunity, as a starting point for finding blue business ideas to kick-start the blue economy, and to introduce students to entrepreneurial support institutions that can help them shape their career paths.

They continue, by explaining their aspiration for the project to also serve as a platform for young people to get involved in the blue economy, with the competition itself being aimed at students, a target group that will be entering the labour market in the years to come, after graduation.

They conclude that through the implementation of the BluAct Transfer Network, RDC Koper aims to:

- Get to know good practices in Blue Economy entrepreneurship from different cities
- Have opportunity to exchange knowledge and experiences with project partners
- Expand their network across Europe (ULG members and future entrepreneurs)
- Get to understand better the blue economy entrepreneurship
- Adapt the good practice and to develop a solution which is sustainable and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions

- Start up the blue economy in Coastal-Karst region and rediscover a valuable connection to the sea in a way that respects and connects with the sea
- Identify new blue and sustainable ideas and create a Blue Economy ecosystem in the city/region



TRANSFER JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

In implementing the Transfer process, RDC Koper largely followed the five main steps in transferring good practice but adapted it to better suit the local context.

Following the development of the Transfer Roadmap, the next and all subsequent steps were the actual implementation of the transfer of good practice. Koper first established a URBACT Local Group comprising members from all four key stakeholder groups – representing the public, private, academic and community sectors.

The group was composed of representatives from RDC Koper, Adval company, the Faculty of Management University of Primorska and the Centre for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship Piran. The main task of the group was to follow up the competition for the best entrepreneurial idea and to transfer good practice to the local environment. The members also followed the content of the individual Transnational Network meetings. Numerous ULG meetings were held to plan the organisation and delivery of the competition. The second step was to establish cooperation with the Faculty of Management and the Faculty of Tourism Studies and their professors. Before the students started developing their business ideas, they were introduced to the URBACT programme, the BluAct Second Wave project, the blue economy in Europe and Slovenia, and the upcoming Sustainable

INNOchallenge business idea competition led by RDC Koper.

Between October 2021 to May 2022, seven lectures/workshops were held by RDC Koper. After familiarising themselves with the content, the students (of different semesters and courses) then started to develop their business idea. They developed their ideas in groups in specific entrepreneurship courses (the start dates of the courses and the duration of the courses varied), which they attended as part of their study programme.

The professors then evaluated the ideas and selected the best ones to go through to the next round. 15 ideas made it to the next round. These were then peer-reviewed by a jury made up of three representatives from the Faculty of Management, a representative from RDC Koper and a representative from Adval (a ULG member). From the 15 ideas, the jury selected 5 final ideas, which were presented by the groups at the FestINNO event on 25 May 2022.

Beforehand, the members of the finalist groups were informed about their appearance at the event by their professors. These Professors helped them to prepare to present their proposals to the audience. At the Demo Day, five groups presented their business idea and the audience voted for the best one. As the event was held online due to uncertain conditions (COVID-19), the audience

voted for the best idea using an online voting tool. The audience was most convinced by the idea Greener, the idea of setting up a company that would provide training on reducing packaging waste, making changes in the work process in this respect, and organising entrepreneurial competitions on waste reduction.

Second place was shared between two business ideas. The first idea proposed the creation of 3D models of coral reefs made of environmentally friendly materials, which would be placed on the seabed in a location between Koper and Izola. The artificial models would be covered with real corals, which would then develop on their own and contribute to biodiversity. It was planned that the artificial coral reef could also serve as a tourist attraction for diving enthusiasts and a location for a diving school. Another idea was to set up a sustainable tourism agency, Blue Adventure, which would offer clients the opportunity to participate in sustainable activities such as cleaning up the coast and towns. Participants would take their rubbish bags to the agency and receive a reward of a boat/sailing boat ride in the Slovenian sea. The Agency would hand over the waste to

the communal services and thus receive part of the funds for its activities. In addition to the prize money, in the form of vouchers and a total value of €1,000.00, donated by the sponsor, the members of the winning teams were also given the opportunity to participate in a mentoring programme on entrepreneurship, which was carried out in September by RDC Koper with the help of an external contractor.

The promotion of the project and the competition ran in parallel with the other activities. The Network Newsletter, press releases and other news were regularly published on various social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, as well as on the RDC Koper website and in the local monthly newspaper Podjetniški Glas Primorske (Entrepreneurial Voice of Primorska). Promotional packages were also produced and leaflets about the project, posters and roll-ups were printed for more effective promotion.

In November and December, RDC Koper will continue to promote the BluAct Second Wave project and entrepreneurship within the blue economy in the form of four workshops aimed at (young) (future) entrepreneurs or anyone interested.



SUCCESSES ACHIEVED BY KOPER

At the beginning of the project, Koper prepared a Transfer Roadmap, which provided a framework for implementing the good practice in Koper. The document defined the steps and the timeframe for each step with the activities being implemented within the timeframes defined in the Transfer Roadmap. In the Roadmap RDC Koper set themselves the target of receiving at least 10 business ideas and conducting 2 workshops/events. Prior to the Demo Day, the jury received 15 business ideas to evaluate and RDC conducted 7 workshops/presentations for students/potential participants of the competition.

RDC Koper expected or hoped that at least 40 people would attend the Demo Day. This number was actually well exceeded, with more than 100 people attending the Demo Day event, where the five final business ideas selected by the jury were presented by members of the groups, the audience then voted for the best idea and at the end the three super finalists were announced.

In the Transfer Roadmap, RDC Koper also set a target to incubate 3 business ideas, but one student chose to join the mentoring programme, a member of the Blue Adventure team.



CHALLENGES KOPER EXPERIENCED

Barriers that were identified at the outset of the programme that were felt to limit progress in transferring the good practice to the local environment were:

- The small number of (future) entrepreneurs within the blue economy (and their willingness to participate)
- Youth migration / Brain drain
- Establishing ULG and motivating members in the absence of financial support for their activities
- Motivating students and (potential) entrepreneurs at attending the competition
- Koper does not have an incubator, so another solution for the mentoring programme needs to be found

Another challenge RDC Koper experienced in delivery was the COVID-19 conditions that had to be taken into account and the uncertainty of the form in which the events could take. In order not to complicate the arrangements, RDC Koper decided to hold the Demo Day virtually. Also, some of the lectures/workshops for students and ULG meetings were held virtually due to the conditions. Despite these obstacles, all activities were carried out.

Another challenge that emerged was the lack of interest of the members of the winning teams to participate in the mentoring programme, which only attracted one applicant. There could be several reasons for this, including:

- The exam period for students was organised after the Demo Day and the students focus appeared to shift to passing their exams
- The Summer holidays then emerged and maybe the participants wanted a well-deserved rest after the exam period
- Students may have been “too young” a target group to convince them to start developing entrepreneurial ideas as they are still in college and dedicated to their studies
- The students have developed their ideas as part of a mandatory course at college and are not interested in developing the idea further

The mentoring also showed that there is a big gap between the knowledge of the theory of entrepreneurship and the knowledge of the real world of entrepreneurship. While the theory is learned and understood, the picture of what the real world of entrepreneurship is like is very unclear.

RESULTS ACHIEVED BY KOPER

As indicated above, RDC Koper largely achieved all of the goals set out in the transfer roadmap, apart from recruiting sufficient applicants on to the incubation programme and this in turn impacted on the number of students that followed through to establish their own business.

That said, in common with Boulogne-Sur-Mer, RDC Koper has:

- Built an enhanced multi-stakeholder group for delivering blue growth entrepreneurship competitions in the area.
- Improved the entrepreneurial and work related skills of a cohort of young people in the area, by enabling them to participate in an enterprise competition, through which they could meet other stakeholders in the blue economy and work on practical projects that they might not ordinarily be exposed to.
- Been able to experiment with organising some activities that have been expressly created to try and increase the number of young people that that ultimately end up going on to explore the potential of creating a new business.

At the time of writing though, it would appear questionable as to whether this goal of stimulating higher levels of blue economy entrepreneurship has been fully achieved.

NEXT STEPS

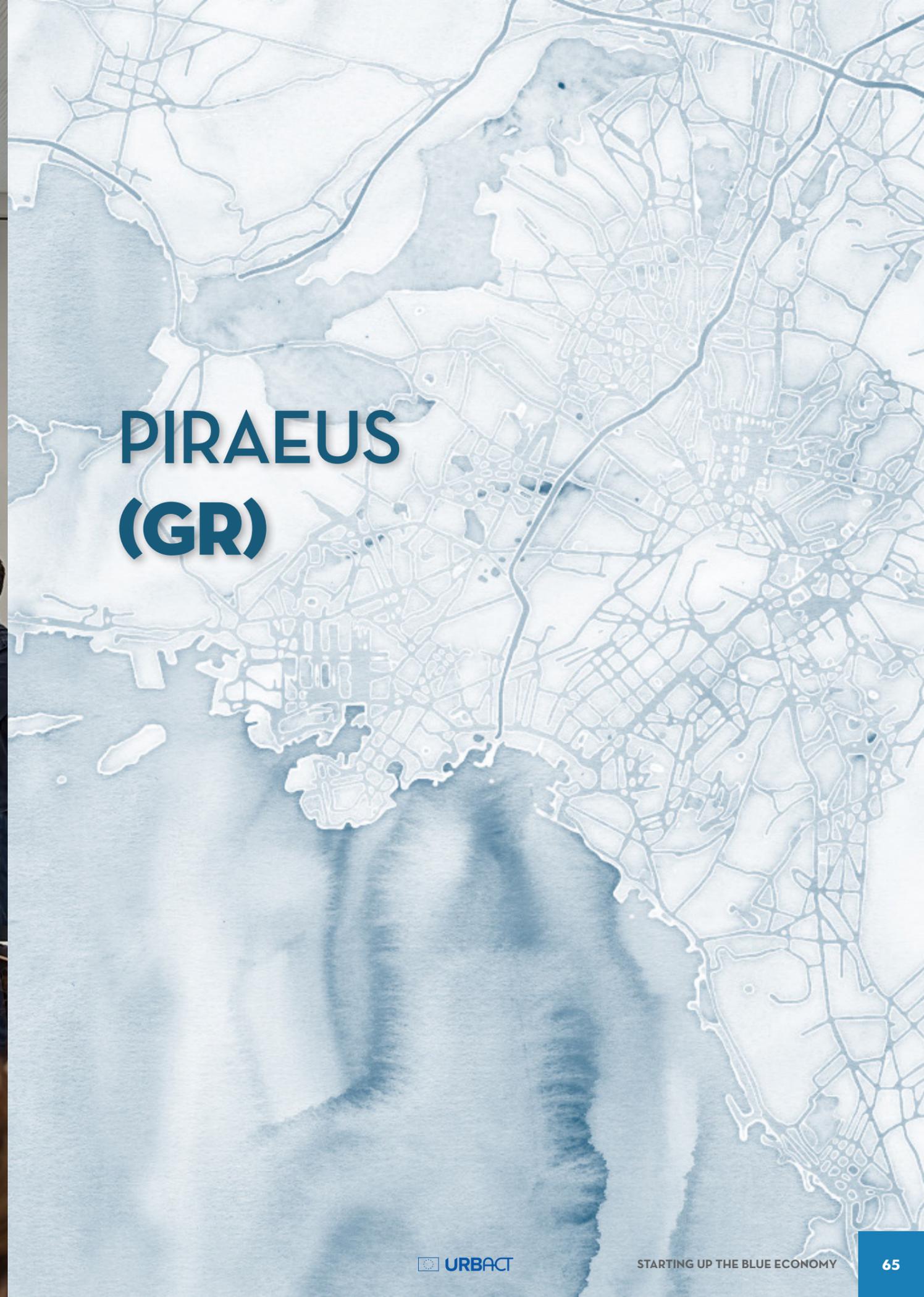
In light of the above issues, we envisage that Koper would benefit from continuing to work with their ULG stakeholders to further strengthen their operations by:

- Reviewing the central ‘Theory of Change’ or ‘Intervention Logic’ that underpinned the project to explore what else might be done to achieve the stated goals of generating more innovative, cutting edge firms in the blue economy in Koper to stimulate the industrial renewal of the area
- Explore the potential of trying to achieve greater thematic and territorial integration in the delivery of blue growth initiatives in the locality, by working more closely with wider regional stakeholders to explore how they might be mobilised more strongly in support of their aspirations to stimulate the blue economy.
- Broadening the delivery activities in Koper to perhaps consider moving away from prioritising young people, to explore the potential of stimulating business ideas from more established entrepreneurs.





BA
BluAct



**PIRAEUS
(GR)**

ORIGINAL AMBITION

As the city that has devised the competition, although not necessarily enshrined in a Transfer Roadmap, the Municipality of Piraeus had a number of goals at the outset of the project, which included managing an effective transfer process, running the 8th Piraeus Blue Growth Competition, promoting their work more widely and continuing to build a dynamic blue growth ecosystem in Piraeus. Of late Piraeus has also started to talk about potentially formalising the governance struc-

ture of the Marine-scape, to see whether it might evolve into a more formal network of cluster of businesses.

As a conclusion to four years of stimulating and reward discussions and joint working in both phases on the BluAct Transfer Network, Piraeus have also undertaken to use the final conference and multi-stakeholder ULG meeting to explore opportunities to further develop some innovative policies / ideas for supporting the blue economy.



MUNICIPALITY OF PIRAEUS

SUCCESSES ACHIEVED BY PIRAEUS

Over the lifetime of the BluAct Second Wave Transfer Network, the Municipality has achieved a number of notable successes, which have helped Piraeus to further cement their reputation as thought leaders in the European Blue Growth arena. This has included:

- Maintaining a strong partnership, to deliver an effective Second Wave Transfer Network
- Running a successful 8th edition of the Piraeus Blue Growth Initiative
- Organising the Piraeus Blue Hackathon Day organized by the Municipality of Piraeus in partnership with the University of Piraeus
- Organising a campaign to showcase and celebrate the many aspects of women's work in the Blue Economy on Women in Maritime Day.
- Organising Blue Park Piraeus, 2 days of activities aiming to create awareness on climate change and its impact to our seas amongst young people in particular
- Presenting BluAct and URBACT to an international audience from all over the 5 continents, during the 4th International Staff Week meeting, organized by the University of Piraeus
- Showcasing BluAct in the Municipality of Piraeus booth at the 86th Thessaloniki International Trade Fair
- Showcasing Blue Growth Piraeus and BluAct's actions during the International Urban Regional Cooperation event in Chile. The Municipality of Piraeus worked together with the Puerto Montt on knowledge exchange around Blue Economy and Nature-based Solutions
- Presenting "The Piraeus Blue Economy" during the 20th European Week of Regions and Cities

CHALLENGES PIRAEUS EXPERIENCED

The barriers Piraeus faced on the journey to growing the Blue Growth Initiative are the following:

- Change of priorities of the local government
- The Blue Economy field, which is vast and unspecified yet, and the fact that it still serves general aims and not specifically defined priorities
- Commitment of BGP collaborators to the program under change of leadership
- Strong competition in the innovation / incubation / acceleration ecosystem in Greece, the EU and globally
- Potential future gap in the funding (after 2023)
- The marine legislative framework still faces serious problems (i.e., problematic maritime special planning)

RESULTS ACHIEVED BY PIRAEUS

In addition to leading this transnational network, and also successfully delivering the 8th edition of the Piraeus BGI, by the end of this project Piraeus will have successfully delivered all the main components and deliverables expected of it as a city in this important Urbact Transfer Network.

NEXT STEPS

Piraeus will continue to develop its improvement plan for the Piraeus Blue Growth Initiative, working in partnership with the University of Piraeus and other key partners.





CONCLUSIONS



The BluAct Network has been an active Transfer Network since 2021, with a strong transfer culture, where all partners have been active in delivering blue growth entrepreneurship competitions in their city, under the strong leadership of the city of Piraeus.

In this second wave of the network, at least two of the partners from smaller and more peripheral cities in Europe have generally struggled to stimulate a high number of new businesses. The reasons for this are complex, but the low levels of natural entrepreneurship in their regions has meant they have had to reach out into local communities to try and organise some structured ideation activities, to stimulate new businesses. Whilst the challenges of supporting projects generated from these kind of activities to set up in business are well documented, what the partners have been able to do is promote the Blue Economy to young people and develop their entrepreneurial skills.

Conversely, one of the other partners in this second wave of the BluAct Network has been very successful at stimulating some robust, cutting edge technology based business ideas, a number of which would appear to have a strong potential to become fully fledged start-up businesses.

All the partners in this second wave network have displayed a strong commitment to supporting the stimulation of the Blue Economy and we sense that its quite likely

that three of the four cities will sustain an element of their work into next year, beyond the lifetime of Urbact Funding.

As we go into the final conference, there are still some issues that are worthy of further exploration to support the network on their path to sustainability, including:

- Better understanding the work that the Municipality of Piraeus has been doing to enhance the Blue Growth Ecosystem in Piraeus - covering their work in developing a Blue Growth Strategy, the Blue Lab, the Piraeus Centre for Start-ups, the Educational Programme on Robotics, the Business Centre Support, the Blue Park, the Blue Economy Cluster and the Blue Growth Initiative.
- Understanding how the partner cities can further evolve and develop your ULG Model to sustain and deepen their activities beyond the lifetime of the Urbact Programme
- Exploring future opportunities to develop the Blue Economy in Europe through territorial cooperation interventions in the blue economy

All that remains is to thank the Urbact Programme for their support over the last four years, and commit this final report to the partners, as a summary of the learning and transfer journeys of the partners.

Remember, the future is blue!



